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PETE'S PUPILS

By S. CLARKE HOOK.



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PETE'S PUPILS.

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

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

CHAPTER 1.

How Potts Proved His Valour.

 N Storm Head, one of the highest points along the coast of British Columbia, stands a large building, surrounded by spacious grounds, enclosed by a high wall.

That building had served for many purposes, until a venturesome man turned it into a college for boys of rich parents. He failed, of course, and the tradespeople had good cause to curse the day that he ever tried to succeed.

Then Jack, Sam, and Pete came to that part, and a brilliant idea occurred to the latter.

He purchased the whole concern—without the pupils—and determined to turn it into a school for unruly boys, well knowing that he would not have the slightest difficulty in getting as many pupils as he required, for there were plenty of unruly boys round about, and, as Pete made his establishment absolutely free, bearing the entire cost out of his own pockets, parents were only too delighted to get their unruly boys there.

If a boy, in the exuberance of his spirits, smashed a few windows, and was brought before the court, the magistrates at once packed him off to Pete's school, knowing he would get all he required there, except the punishment.

Thus it was that Pete's school increased by leaps and bounds—so did his expenses, but being possessed of a vast fortune, he did not mind the expense at all.

His theory was that a boy, brought up without the slightest advantages, and with kicks and blows, needed kind treatment to send him along the right path, and the boys liked that sort of treatment.

But like all great ventures, Pete found his school a considerable anxiety.

On the present occasion he had a little of it, for he had sent Potts, the porter, to the bank to get some money. He should have been back long since, even allowing an hour for wasted time.

Pete was in his study, as he called it, with Jack and Sam, and his dog Rory, and he was grumbling considerably.

"Ain't it enough to disgust anyone de time dat man takes on his errands," growled Pete, knocking the ashes from his pipe on the carpet. "He knows I'm waiting for dat money."

"I reckon he ought to know it, seeing the time he has been," laughed Sam. "But never mind, Pete, he will turn up sooner or later." A

"I'm mighty certain he won't turn up sooner, Sammy. He couldn't do dat if he came an hour ago. Nunno, dat man is going to turn up later,

and dat's exactly what I don't want him to do. I wanted him to turn up sooner."

"Did you give him any money?" inquired Jack.

"Eh?"

"Poor dear creature!"

"I ain't deaf, Jack. You mumble, dat's what's de matter wid you. Still I suppose you can't help your infirmities. I certainly gabe him half-a-crown for a tip for going. He always 'spects a tip when he has any work to do. He looks upon work as an extra to his wages."

"You should not have given him the tip in advance."

"He asked for it, Jack."

"Ha ha, ha! That's Potts all the world over. Well, you can depend on it he has had a stop at the inn."

And this is exactly what Potts had done. Having changed the check at the bank, he saw no earthly reason why he should not change the half-a-crown at the inn, and he entered it with this intention.

Customers were in the bar parlour. There were two men, and a lad about fifteen years of age. He looked considerably older, but that was because he was so big, and had led such a vagabond's life.

They all got into conversation, and Potts accepted something to drink from each of the three in turn, only leaving when it came to his turn to pay.

He carried a heavy stick, by way of protection, for he had to traverse a lonely part, and, although not a fighting man, he now felt fit to meet any foe. He was even communing with himself as to what he would do if anyone dared to attack him, and he would not be the first one who had been attacked along that pathway, for in that part of the world life and property are not quite as safe as they are in England.

He had just settled the gallant fight in his own mind when he heard hurried footsteps behind him, and recognised his late acquaintances.

They were evidently men of business, for without waiting to ask questions they made a rush at poor Potts, whose valour vanished like vapour.

Howling for help at the top of his voice, he brought his stick down on the top of the lad's head with a force that ended his fighting for some time to come, then Potts received a blow between the eyes, and a second one on the mark that sent him to the ground.

After that the next thing he remembered was that one of the ruffians was kneeling on his chest, and the second one was feeling in his pockets.

But help was at hand in the shape of the local constable, who by strange chance happened to be in the neighbourhood. He came rushing towards the spot, and, immediately the ruffians saw him they fled at the utmost speed, while the constable, seeing that the lad was hopeless, gave chase.

"Hold that young rascal!" he shouted, as he sped away.

"I'll hold him," groaned Potts, slowly rising. "Oh, you are recovered your senses, are you! All right! I'll teach you to hit me in the stummick."

Then Potts grasped his stick, and the lad's howls awoke the echoes.

Potts hated boys, and it must be confessed that those unruly ones had cost him a life. He meant to get a little of his own back now. His bump of humanity was not pronounced, and the manner in which he used his stick was brutal. He only desisted when he saw the constable returning.

"I couldn't catch them, Potts!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, is that you, Bill?" exclaimed Potts, recognising the constable.

"Well, I've caught this one for you, and he's the worst of the lot."

"Have they robbed you?"

"No fear! I fought too bravely for that ere! Take him in custody. Got any handcuffs?"

"Yes!"

"Well, shove 'em on!"

"Why, it's young Bull!" exclaimed the constable. "He's the worst young scoundrel in this part, or any other part."

"He's near killed me," groaned the unfortunate Bull.

"I wish I had quite, you varmint," hooted Potts. "You ain't fit to live. That's what's the matter with you."

"You wait till I come out, and I'll pay you for what you've done. I will—straight!"

Potts gave him another vicious prod with his stick.

"Take the brute in charge, mate!"

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

"Well, I don't mind that," said Potts. "If they would only hang him it would do me good."

"Don't you hit me again!" roared Bull, turning fiercely as Potts struck him another blow.

"Not hit you! Won't I! Take that, you varmint!"

The constable did not interfere, and the unfortunate lad had a rough time of it to the gaol, where Potts told the inspector what had happened, and a good deal more, and, having been told he would have to appear the following day in court, Potts made his way back to the college, while Bull was consigned to a cell, where he passed a most painful night, for Potts had belaboured him in the most heartless manner.

Meantime, Potts made his way to the college, and at once went to Pete's study, where he found that worthy in cap and gown, smoking a clay pipe, and groaning a little as he tried to master some of his accounts.

"I've brought you the money, and—"

"Put it down, Potts, and go away!" growled Pete.

"I've had a most terrible time—"

"Go away, den, and hab anoder nice one!"

"I've been set on!"

"Do go away! How do you suppose I'm going to add up figures, when—
Yah, yah, yah! Golly! Ain't you got a nasty black eye!" cried Pete, glancing up.

"And you laugh at me, after the brave manner in which I have defended your property. It's unputupable. That's what it is!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Just look at Potts's face, boys!" cried Pete, as Jack and Sam entered the study. "I tink he's been fighting!"

"I was attacked by three enormous ruffians, and—"

"Well, go away while I add up dese figures."

"One of the prisoners I bravely held while—"

"How much does seven and eight make, Jack?"

"Fifteen, as a rule."

"Stop a bit! I tink dat eight is a free."

"I've got to go to the court to-morrow and give evidence."

"I wish you would go to de court to-night. Funny ting 'bout dese accounts, I always spend more money dan I receive."

"Perhaps that is because you don't receive any."

"I mean, Jack, dat de expenses are more dan de receipts."

"They would be, seeing you are not paid for the boys."

"Nunno! But the receipts from de bank. If I draw free hundred pounds de money I spend out ob it always comes to 'bout six hundred, and I can't make out how dat can be."

"It certainly sounds strange. Let's have a look at your books. Ha, ha,

ha! My eyes, you do keep them neatly to! Do you always shut up your book when the ink is wet?"

"Nunno! Dat must hab been when I forgot."

"What does Cask mean?"

"Dat's ale for Potts. He drinks a mighty lot ob it."

"There's others to help me," growled Potts, who wanted to get on with his story.

"Why, you have got the next cask charged at three hundred pounds," exclaimed Jack. "Then you have got wages entered under cash received."

"Ah, dat was a little slip," explained Pete. "You see dat ain't another cask. Dat is cash, and as I entered it on de wrong side in error, I entered de payments on de oder side to balance it; den when I had got frough de little lot, I went back again to de more reg'lar way. What are you guffawing at now?"

"How do you expect your books to balance when you put cash received first on one side, and then on the other?"

"But it must come to de same ting."

"Of course not! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?"

"As I was telling you, I seized one of the ruffians by the throat, and—"

"I wish some one would seize you by de handle, Potts, and put you on de fire to boil."

"I suppose you think yourself clever?"

"I dunno; but Jack doesn't seem to, de way he's guffawing at my book-keeping. I looked up de rules, too. Dere's de ledger ober dere, Jack. Just see if dat is more in order, 'cos—"

"Then I hurled him to the ground, and—"

"Oh, do go away, Potts! If you want a holiday to-morrow you may have it."

"You can't help yourself. The law says as you shall be imprisoned if you don't let me go to the court—"

"Well, go to the court!"

"I'm going. I'll get that ruffian ten years' hard labour, and —"

"Oh, do go away! Ain't it mighty awful to be interrupted like dis when—"

Here Mr. Carton, one of Pete's masters, entered the study.

"The conduct of these boys is simply outrageous, Pete," he declared.

"Here, when I enter my study—"

"I will enter it in de complaint book," groaned Pete.

"Absurd! Enter what in the complaint book?"

"Your complaint. Here we hab it. C is de letter. Carton. Gross misconduct. Punish accordingly. Dere you are, old hoss. I sha'n't forget dat, now."

"I tell you these boys—"

"M'yes! I sha'n't forget it! Good-night!"

"This is absurd. I tell you—"

"Oh, look here, Carton!" exclaimed Pete, pulling out a mighty bundle of receipted bills. "I wish you would run your eye ober dat little lot, and check de entries in dis book, and— Why, where's he gone to?"

"I don't think he likes your job," said Jack.

"The other ruffian sprang on me," continued Potts.

"Hooroo! Dere goes de dinner gong!" yelled Pete, leaping to his feet.

"Clear out ob de way, Potts!"

And Pete rushed from the room, nearly bowling Potts over as he went and leaving his money on the table.

Potts opened one of the bags, and took a sovereign from it for his expense

on the morrow. He considered that Pete was in duty bound to pay his expenses, and he was determined to make a day of it.

The following morning he dressed in his best clothes, and attended the court, but he was rather snubbed than otherwise by the magistrates, who held a short whispered conference, then remanded the prisoner. Potts wanted to give a little more information, for he had not made it quite clear that Bull had anything to do with the matter except that he was in company of the other two men, who had not been captured.

With a view to making his conduct appear as heroic as possible, he had only mentioned the men, and thus it was that the magistrates decided to send Bull to Pete's school for unruly boys, but about that Potts knew nothing.

That afternoon, when Pete was having another turn at his hopeless books, and Jack and Sam were chaffing him a little, a constable in plain clothes brought Bull in, and explained that he had been remanded to the home.

Pete sighed a little as he eyed his new pupil, who did not look a very promising one. He was a well-built lad, but his face was fierce, while he glared at the three comrades in a manner that betokened future trouble.

Pete gave the constable a tip, and when he left the room, turned to his new pupil.

"What's your name, my lad?" he inquired, opening a book, by way of impressing him.

"Bull. The bobby jest told you. Are you deaf?"

"Nunno!"

"Then you must be thundering stupid."

"Sit down, Bull."

"Sha'n't."

"I was wondering weder you would like a piece ob plum cake?"

"No. You can keep it."

"Rader a nice day."

"Go and drown yourself. If you think as you are going to get round me you are mistook. You had better send me back to prison. I shall be clear of that in a few weeks, and then I can do what I like again."

"You don't quite understand de cistern in dis school, Bull. You see——"

"I don't want to understand it. All I know is that I ain't going to stay."

"But we don't keep any boy against his will."

"I know jolly well you do, else you wouldn't have so many."

"Nunno. Dey like staying."

"Who are you getting at? You won't make me believe as a boy of my sort likes learning."

"Nunno. He don't like dat part ob de business; but he likes de oder part so well dat he puts up wid de learning. I'll explain de matter to you, if—— Go away, Potts. I'm engaged."

"Why, bust me! It's him. How has he escaped."

"Who?"

"That varmint. He's one of 'em as made this murderous assault on me."

"Yah, yah, yah! Why, he's only a boy."

"A boy you call him. He's the worst varmint I ever came across. It was him and two other men as attacked me."

"Oh, I see. Well, de magistrates approve ob dis school, and so dey hab sent him here."

"He has threatened me."

"Well, if he should assault you again, I will make de entry in de complaint book."

"What the thunder is the good of that when I'm half murdered. I ain't standing this 'ere treatment."

"But look here, old hoss, you'm going a lot too fast. Bull has only assaulted you once, and he has been punished for dat by being sent here. Bery well—"

"A pretty punishment that is, when the boys live like fighting cocks, and do jest whatever they like, and when I complain you enter it in your blesseed book, and never look at it again."

Bull was all attention. He rather liked Potts description of the school. Pete was quick to notice the impression made.

"You buzz off, Potts," he exclaimed. "I want to hab a chat wid my new scholar. Shut de door."

Potts had to go, and as he shut the door Pete winked at his promising pupil.

"Now look here, Bull," he said; "I don't want you to form any wrong impressions ob dis place. You see, it is dis way. I argue dat no lad get into de hands ob de police for de fun ob de ting. It stands to reason it is because dey are homeless or hungry, or someting like dat. Bery well, you want be dose here, 'cos you get de bery best ob food, and nice clothes—you can choose your own. After dat you get half-a-crown a week pocket-money. Den we hab all sorts ob sports."

"If you think I'm going to be knocked about, I ain't."

"I am de only one who may flog a boy."

"Well, I'd rather Potts did it than you, and he's bad enough. How ofte do you hit them?"

"I ain't hit one at all, so far."

"What! Ain't they done nothing?"

Pete sighed, and wiped his brow. Jack and Sam laughed.

"Golly! I should say dey had; but hitting dem won't stop dem, and bo will be boys, you see. Nunno! I don't believe in hitting. It ain according to my cistern. I want de boys to be happy, and enjoy themselves."

"Suppose they bolt?"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dey ain't going to do anyting like dat. What should dey do dat for, if dey are perfectly happy here?"

"You ain't going to make me believe that boys are happy at school."

"Well, it's about tea-time now. Suppose you try it for a bit. I will come and show you de tea-room."

Bull followed very sullenly, but when he saw the tea-table he brightened up considerably, and he took a seat next to Lamb, who was certainly the meekest-looking boy in the school, and the most unruly.

"What sort of a show is this?" demanded Bull.

"Hush! You must not speak at meal times," murmured Lamb.

"Go and drown yourself, you cheeky kid. I'll talk as much as I like."

"Then you will be nearly murdered. Pete is something awful, and he's strong as a lion. He broke my arm in three places, and I'm the biggest b in the school."

"You won't be when I've come."

Lamb knew this perfectly well, and he wanted to get rid of him for the reason.

"What's your name?" he inquired.

"Bull."

"Well, mine's Lamb."

"I'll lamb you, if you cheek me. It's a pity Pete didn't break your me while he was about it."

"I can plainly see that this school won't do for you. It's an awful place. We are half starved. This feed is just to make you think you will get good grub. Then Pete flogs the boys nearly every day. He killed one not so long ago, but the doctor declared that he died from natural causes."

"He'd best not hit me. Besides, he says no one hits the boys."
 "That's his artfulness. If I were to show you my back, it would make you faint."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Don't make that noise, boy," cried Mr. Carton, striding up.

"I shall if I like," declared Bull.

"What, boy! You dare to speak to a master like that?"

"I'll speak to you as I like. I'll jolly well make things hum if I stop here."

"Very well! I shall report your misconduct."

"Report your grandmother," answered Bull, seizing a piece of cake, which was provided as well as bread-and-butter.

And Mr. Carton strode from the room to fulfil his threat.

CHAPTER 2.

Pete Upsets Things.

PETE was alone in his study when he heard footsteps approaching. He promptly ducked under the table because he thought he recognised those footsteps, and guessed what was coming.

"Pshaw!" muttered Mr. Carton. "Where can the fellow be?"

And he shut the door with a slam.

"I'll let dat man cool down a bit before he finds me," mused Pete. "It's a funny ting dat I can't be left in peace for half an hour or so. Golly! Here he comes again."

Pete took another dive under the table, but this time he was not so successful. He got entangled with the table-cloth, and wrenched it off the table.

A dense sea-fog had sprung up that evening, and Pete had lighted his reading-lamp, which had been on the table.

It was now on the floor, so were some of his books, and his inkpot. But that was not quite so serious as the lamp; for as it fell to the floor with a crash the oil ignited.

Mr. Carton had returned to leave a note for Pete, and as he opened the door rather suddenly, he heard that mighty crash, while he saw Pete beneath the table with the flames leaping round him.

"Woohooh—hoo—yoorooh!" yelled Pete, leaping up and sending the table across. "Ain't dat fire mighty hot?"

"Are you mad?" gasped Carton, flinging the hearthrug over the flames, and fortunately extinguishing them.

"Nunno! But I was mighty near burnt dat time."

"You must have been in the room when I came before."

"Eh?"

"Pshaw! You surely don't mean to say that you were hiding from me—that you were afraid to see me?"

"What's the matter?" demanded Jack, rushing in, followed by Sam. They also had heard the yells and the crash, and imagined something serious had happened.

"A little upset, boys," observed Pete.

"Are you trying to turn yourself into some old guy. Phew! My eyes, there's a smell of paraffin."

"M'yes, Jack, and dere's a feel ob burning. You see, I was just going to—to move to anoder part when de cloth came off de table, and de lamp fell

wid it. Howeber, dere's no harm done, 'scept to de carpet. I should wid de boys, Carton, so as to keep dem in order."

"That new boy has deliberately insulted me."

"Ah, I 'spect he doesn't know de rules ob de school yet. He may better wid time."

"He cannot possibly get worse."

"I ain't so sure 'bout dat. Still, we will hope for de best, and only complaint in de regular book. Tank you for mentioning de little mat"

"If you are glad I mentioned it, may I inquire why you tried to yourself under the table?"

"Eh?"

"What is the use of that, when you know perfectly well, and the are allowed to insult me in the most scandalous manner."

"But what am I to do, my dear old hoss?"

"Flog the young scoundrel within an inch of his life."

"I'll mark the case for flogging recommended."

"What is the use of that, when you know perfectly well, and the know equally, that you will never do it."

"Why, don't you see, my dear old hoss, it is against de cistern ob school. You try a little kind treatment wid dat boy. It ain't impos dat it may succeed. Good-evening. I'll make a careful note ob de mat"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack, as Carton shut the door with a slam. "have vexed him."

"But it wasn't my fault, Jack. You see, it was Bull who said some to him. He's rader inclined to take offence at trifles, but I daresay he get better when he has had a little more experience wid unruly boys. want to be rader patient wid dem at de start. You see, dey ain't had advantages in life, and you can't expect lads like dat to be all dey might"

"I reckon you haven't done much damage there!" exclaimed Sam.

"Nunno, Sammy. It might hab been serious, 'cos I tought I was to to death dat time; still, it's no good bodering 'bout what hasn't happen I wanted to escape Carton, 'cos de man is such a mighty nuisance when starts bringing in his complaints. I don't like more dan a dozen a and I'm most certain he has brought in 'bout twice dat number. How we will hope dat dere won't be any more to-night."

But Pete was far too sanguine. He was reckoning without Bull.

Potts had hit harder than he imagined, and Bull meant hitting back in own way.

Pete was in the middle of his late dinner with his comrades and masters, when all of a sudden the most extraordinary howls burst fr

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, who had been having complaints with dinner. "Dere's anoder complaint coming along de passage. I tink Potts, and he ain't making much row eider. I wonder what's de ma wid him dis time? Sounds as dough he was hurt."

"I'm p'isoned!" howled Potts, rushing into the room. "I'm a d man!"

"I ain't going to believe dat little lot," observed Pete. "A dead couldn't make all dat row, and I don't believe half a dozen ob dem ob eider."

"That new boy has p'isoned me! He's been and put p'ison in my Here he comes; he ought to be hung straight away!"

"Haw, haw, haw! You will feel it burning hot jest directly," Bull, entering the room. "It ain't no good howling at it. You live long after you feel the burning sensation. Haw, haw, haw!"

"I can feel it already."

"Then you've got about ten minutes to live. It will burn your inside out, the same as it serves the other rats. Haw, haw, haw!"

Now, Pete was not going to believe all this. However depraved a boy might be, he did not credit that he would commit such an action.

"Did you gib him much poison, Bull?" he inquired, with a view to getting at the truth.

"No, not more'n a quarter of a pint, but he'll find it enough to go on with."

"You'll be hung!" howled Potts, seating himself in Pete's easy-chair, and kicking his legs while he gasped for breath.

"No, I sha'n't. They don't hang 'em as young as me. Haw, haw, haw! You'll be buried. I ought to have put in a bit more, and then you wouldn't have had time to get here."

"Put me to bed and send for the doctor, someone!" howled Potts.

"It ain't no good sending for him. You'd best send for the undertaker, and save the doctor's fee."

"Look here, Potts," exclaimed Pete, "I don't believe dere's anyting de matter wid you!"

"It's all your doing for having such boys at the school!" hooted Potts.

"I'm suffering terrible!"

"Speak, boy!" cried Mr. Carton. "Have you poisoned the man?"

"I have so. It will burn his internals out. Haw, haw, haw! He's got to suffer a bit, but it will soon be over, and then we can bury him. Haw, haw, haw! I'll teach you to nearly break my back with a thick stick, you beast!"

"What's de proper ting to gib in a poison case, Jack?"

"Mustard-and-water, but I would not advise anything in this case. My impression is that Potts is no more poisoned than I am."

"That's because you don't know," cried Bull. "Haw, haw, haw! He's turning green now, 'scept his nose, and that's blue. I wouldn't be surprised if he goes yaller directly."

"It's all right, Potts, old hoss," declared Pete. "Bull has only been having a bit ob fun wid you. Dat is de case, ain't it, my lad?"

"That's all."

"Yah, yah, yah! I tought so. You didn't gib him any poison?"

"Nothink to speak on."

"Eh?"

"Not more than a quarter of a pint in his beer. You should have seen him slop it down; and when I told him I'd poisoned him he went off like some old rocket! Haw, haw, haw! Laugh! I'll believe you."

"You depraved boy!" cried Carton. "Do you dare to tell me you have poisoned the man?"

"Of course I have. You have only got to look at him to see that."

Then Potts, feeling he was not getting sufficient sympathy, staggered to his feet, sank gracefully to the floor, much as they do on the stage, and groaned in the most heart-rending manner.

"What did you put in his beer, Bull?" inquired Pete.

"Red pepper and a little salt. Haw, haw, haw! You see, he found it hot, and so believed that he was a dead 'un!"

"You hear dat, Potts? Cayenne pepper ain't at all dangerous."

"It ain't true!" cried Potts. "I tell you I'm p'isoned! That boy ain't truthful."

"Nunno; and he's not de only one."

"I've died in doing my dooty."

"But you ain't dead yet, old hoss; and I don't see dat it is doing your duty to drink ale."

"Oh, how I suffer! I'm all on fire!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull.

"I would advise you to take an arithmetic," said Pete.

"Take a what?" gasped Jack.

"An arithmetic."

"My eyes! You mean an emetic."

"I tink you'm got de word, Jack. I remembered it by arithmetick. Still, it's much de same. I know arithmetic always makes me feel de best ting for you to do is to go to bed, and sleep it off, Potts. see to de locking-up and putting de lights out."

Potts felt he was getting better, and he remembered that he had yet had supper. He glanced at the dinner-table, then he went up to groaning at every stair, and hanging on to the balusters.

"Ain't he a jolly old humbug!" exclaimed Bull. "I only dosed him red pepper, and he nearly broke my back!"

"Did he hit you hard?" inquired Pete.

"Well, he caught me a crack over the head with his thick stick, and all I remember for some time. When I was coming to he went for as hard as he could. I've taken some in my time, but I've never had like that."

"Golly! I won't hab dat sort ob ting. See here, Bull, do you tink could eat some dinner?"

"I could always eat food like that—I could straight!"

"Well, sit down here, and we will see what we can do."

Bull's manners were lamentable, and Mr. Carton kept correcting him, but he did not mind the slightest. He was not nervous, and Carton would not have matters all his own way.

"Hold your knife like I do!" snarled Carton. "You should copy me."

"Am I to slobber my food all down my waistcoat like you are?" quired Bull.

Mr. Carton had done nothing of the sort, but Bull was getting a bit of his own back. Carton gazed at his waistcoat, then Bull burst in a roar of laughter.

"You are the most insolent boy I have ever met!" declared Carton.

"That's nothing to what I'll be in a day or so, if I stay here—no shall, if the grub is as good as this. There's a bell going like winking."

"Dat must be Potts's bell!" exclaimed Pete.

"I'll go and answer it," cried Bull.

"Nunno, you won't, my beauty," growled Pete. "You sit where you are, and go on wid your dinner. I'll answer dat bell, 'cos your nursing might not suit his complaint."

Pete left the room, and returned in a few minutes.

"De man tink he could fancy a little fowl and a glass or so ob wine before he dies," growled Pete. "He says I can bring him de decanter 'cos den he will know exactly how much he will be able to consume—I. He ain't habing dat decanter. Still, I 'spect he had better hab a little fowl."

Pete took it up, but he had scarcely recommenced his dinner when the bell went again. Potts fancied a little more fowl, and another glass of wine. Then he fancied some jelly. He knew some was going to be set up for the comrades' dinner.

After that he fancied all sorts of things, and Pete had to keep running up and down.

"Golly! I ain't standing dis!" he cried, as the bell went again. "You go up, Bull, and see what he wants."

"I'll give it to him, too."

"Do you know which is his room?"

"No, but I will easy find it. You leave him to me, and he won't want so much more after I've done with him, you see if he does."

Pete appeared to be rather uneasy as Bull left the room, and there was cause for it, for presently the most awful yells burst forth, then a door slammed, and the yells became muffled. For a few moments the bell rang violently, then it suddenly stopped, and Bull came back, looking as innocent as Nature would allow.

"What's he want dis time, Bull?" inquired Pete, somewhat anxiously.

"He's all right," answered Bull, going on with his dinner, and prodding potato out of the dish with his fork, much to the disgust of Mr. Carton.

"What do you mean, boy?" demanded that gentleman.

"Don't you know what all right is?"

"Don't talk to me in that manner, boy!"

"Well, don't make yourself so ridic'ous. When I tell you he's all right, it's time for you to shut up."

"Boy!" gasped the outraged master. "You dare to speak to me like that!"

"Oh, go and drown yourself!" growled the promising pupil; and, to make matters worse, Pete was shaking with suppressed laughter, while neither Jack nor Sam dared to look at each other.

It was quite useless for them to give advice, but they were both convinced that Pete's free and easy "cistern," as he called it, would prove a hopeless failure.

"What have you done to that man?" demanded Mr. Carton.

"Chucked a jug of water over him. It's done him no end of good. I say, this is a proper dinner! I don't mind if I dine with you chaps every night."

"Funny dat de bell doesn't ring," observed Pete, thinking that a little of Bull's company would go a long way, and that his presence would certainly upset the harmony of the company.

"He's broke the wire. He got so savage when I chucked the water over him that he gave the bell a wrench as broke it. But that's all the better. He'd keep you running up and down stairs all night. Don't you bother about him. I'll look after him. My eyes! Here comes some more grub!"

Mr. Carton rose from the table, bowed to the company, and left the room. He was far too sensitive to stand that sort of company. Mr. Lindley, the headmaster, looked comical, especially when he glanced at Pete, who pretended neither to see nor hear.

The fact is, Pete had come to the conclusion that Bull would be too many for him, and he determined to hand him over to the masters.

CHAPTER 3.

A Troubled Night.

"I 'M 'most afraid dere's going to be trouble wid dat boy," observed Pete, when they were alone in the drawing-room; the study smelt too strong of oil for their liking.

"That won't be any different to the other boys, I reckon," said Sam.

"I dunno, Sammy. You see dose oder boys hab got some sort ob feelings, wid de exception, p'r'aps, of Lamb. He ain't got any, neider has Bull."

"The two wild beasts of the show," observed Jack.

"You might hab a wild bull, Jack, but I neber heard ob a wild lamb. Dey are always gentle little creatures, and I must say dat I tink Lamb has got a wrong name."

"You had better take Bull in hand," said Jack.

"Golly! I ain't going to do anything ob de sort. Dat boy is more suitable to de ordinary masters, and dey will hab to manage him."

"Then I reckon I pity them!" exclaimed Sam.

At eleven o'clock that night the comrades retired, and Pete went round to do Potts's work, that worthy being fast asleep and snoring.

It was not very long before Pete followed his example, and then he was awoken by a violent barking from Rory, who was sleeping in his room that night, or, at least, trying to do so. He generally preferred one of the other rooms, because of Pete's snoring.

"Oh, do be quiet, Rory! You'm spoiling my beauty sleep. Golly! Dey goes Potts ringing again. He's banging, too. Ain't dis mighty disgusting! Eh? Sounds like outside."

Pete put his head out of the window, and saw a constable standing outside the front door.

"What's de matter, old hoss?" bawled Pete.

"You have left your front door open."

"Eh?"

"You haven't shut your front door."

"Golly! I must hab forgotten it. Just shut it for me, old hoss."

"You will have to come down. I can't fasten it from the outside."

He could have done so, but guessed there would be a tip if Pete came down.

"Some ob de pleasures ob a schoolmaster's life" he growled, getting out of bed, and hurrying on a few clothes. Then he went down without a light, tipped the constable half-a-crown, and shut the door.

"Hope Jack and Sammy did not hear dat ringing, 'cos dey would be sure to laugh at me."

Pete groped about a little, then found the stairs.

"Must pass deir door quietly, so dat— Woohoo! Yah! Murder!" he howled.

He had most stupidly gone down in his bare feet, and just outside Jack's door he trod on something exceedingly sharp.

"What are you trying to do, Pete?" inquired Jack, opening his door.

"Pass your door in silence."

"Ha, ha, ha! It is the noisiest silence that I have ever heard."

"But you see, Jack, I didn't want to wake you."

"Then what did you want to howl outside my door like an excited gorilla for?"

"I wish you wouldn't make dose impersonal remarks, Jack. I went down in bare feet for de sake ob silence, and when I trod on de business end ob a tin-tack de silence disappeared. Go to bed, and don't make dis noise."

"What were you roaming about the house for at this time of night?"

"I ain't got time to answer silly questions. Go to bed."

"Did you leave a window open?"

"Golly, Jack! Do you tink I'm stupid enough to do dat?" growled Pete, entering his room. "Mighty lucky he said window instead ob door dat time!" murmured Pete, as he got into bed.

He was just getting off to sleep again, when he was startled by another violent ringing.

"Golly!" he growled. "I ain't going down again. I 'spect Jack will hear dat little lot. Shall let him go dis time."

Jack did hear it. It was almost impossible to help doing so, but he did not feel disposed to go down. He had an idea that Pete would go sooner or later.

"Golly! Ain't Jack a 'hard sleeper!'" growled Pete, hammering at the wall, for Jack was sleeping in the next room—at least, he would have been doing so had it not been for the abominable noise. "It's too disgusting dat a man can sleep frough all dis row. Aytishoo! I hab knocked some plaster out ob de wall now, and it's got up my nose."

It was no good. Jack pretended not to hear the uproar, and Pete had to get out of bed again.

The constable was still there, and he was busy with the bell and knocker. "You have left two of your windows open!" he shouted; and Pete heard a roar of laughter from Jack's room.

"Why didn't you tell me so de first time, old hoss?"

"Because I didn't know it."

"Can't you close de windows?"

"They must be fastened on the inside."

"Well, fasten dem."

"How can I fasten them on the inside when I am on the outside?"

"Eh?"

"I would have to break the glass."

"Well, break de glass, and go away."

"What would be the sense of breaking the glass? A burglar would be able to put his hand through and unfasten the window again."

"I neber tought ob dat. Well, I will come down again, 'cos dere seems to be no help for it, only dis time I'm going to put boots on. You see, I did de locking up to-night, and——"

"You ain't done it quite as carefully as you ought."

"Well, I tink de back windows are all right."

"Maybe, but you see it ain't much use locking up the back of the house carefully, if you leave all the front open. When you leave your front door open, a burglar don't bother himself about windows."

"Well, dat's true enough, but I wish you had found out all dis in de daytime, 'cos I'm mighty sleepy."

Pete went down, and the constable received another half-crown, and went away rejoicing, and wishing that Pete did the locking-up every night of his life.

Pete got back to bed, and fondly imagined that he was going to get to sleep. As a matter of fact, he did nothing of the sort, and the reason he did not do so was because his pupil Lamb was not sleepy.

At first sight it may appear that this had nothing to do with Pete, but it had; and it had, also, something to do with everyone else in the building.

Being an astute lad, Lamb came to the conclusion that it would pay him best to make friends with Bull, because that worthy looked too big to fight. Lamb, however, found that he had no easy task, his advances being received in a far from amiable manner.

"I rather like you, Bull," observed Lamb, when they entered the dormitory.

"Rats! Who are you getting at?"

"There's no reason why we shouldn't be friends."

"Haw, haw, haw! You won't get anything out of me, 'cos I ain't got nothing, and I don't care for your genteel sort."

"I improve on acquaintance."

"Well, you can't get much worse. What are you driving at? You needn't try to humbug me, 'cos you won't succeed—so I tell you."

"My dear fellow, I don't want to humbug you. But, look here, old Potts is a beast."

"I've learnt that without your teaching."

"He ought to be punished."

"He's punished me enough, and chance it. Jest have a look at my back, and see if it shows."

"Phew! I should say it did!" exclaimed Lamb, grinning. "He has cut you up. I'd like to see him hit me like that."

"You wouldn't like to feel it."

"He tried hitting me once, and I caught him one on the mark, and sat him on the floor. I wonder you didn't do the same."

"I couldn't. He had knocked me senseless with a blow on the head. I was down when he started on me, and couldn't help myself."

"Your back is a fine study in black and white. It hurts, doesn't it?"

"I should say so."

"Why don't you get some of your own back with old Potts? I'll help you."

"I have pretended to poison him, and I've chucked a jug of water over him."

"But that won't hurt him. What you want to do is to hurt him. You ought to get Pete's cane, and lay into him. That would teach him."

"But who would hold him while I whacked?" inquired Bull, who rather liked the idea.

"I think you and I could manage it," mused Lamb. "I would help you."

"What about Pete?"

"I was only joking when I told you about him. He's as soft as putty. He would no more think of hitting one of us than he'd think of hitting a girl."

"He's a decent sort, then?"

"Well, I don't like him, and he doesn't like me. He has got a way of making things nasty."

"How's that?"

"Well, if he wanted to punish a chap he would give an outing to the whole school, and make that chap stay at home, or something like that. All the same, you can do pretty well what you like here, and the food is all to be desired."

"I'm ready to whack Potts, if you will help me. I believe we could manage him between us. He will be in his room now, and——"

"I know he will, 'cos I've locked him in."

"Why, that's splendid! Look here, Bull, I'll show you how to do it. We are not going to let those silly kids into the secret. Let them get to sleep, then we will sneak out of the dormitory. All we need is Pete's cane and a cord. The cord is under my bed, because I use it when I want to break bounds, and the cane is in Pete's study. Get your things on again, and go to bed in your clothes. Lindley will be round presently to see lights out, but I've got a candle, which will be quite enough for us. We will make Potts smart for the shameful manner in which he has cut up your back."

"You ain't going to touch him for that, you beauty, and you needn't try to make me believe it. That ain't what you care for, by long chalks. You want to get your knife into him on your own account, else you wouldn't trouble to help me pay him."

"What does it matter?"

"Not a bit to Potts—he's got to be paid."

"Well, if we two are not capable of doing it, there are no two chaps in this school who are."

"I don't suppose we are any different to the others in that respect. The only thing is I might be able to hit a bit harder than most of 'em. But you've got to recollect he will start howling, and they are bound to hear him."

"We shall warn him if he howls it will be all the worse for him."

"That won't make no odds, mate. When I start flogging him he's bound to howl, whether you threaten him or not."

"Well, it won't matter. Pete will just enter it in his complaint-book, and that will be the end of the matter. Cave! Here comes Lindley!"

The young master spoke a few words to the boys, with whom he was a favourite. He certainly had more control over them than Carton, but that was not saying very much. Pete was the only one who could really make them mind, and they only minded him for fear of losing benefits, and not for any punishment he would give them. A lad named Droog was about the only exception. He really liked Pete, and would do anything he desired.

"I think we might make a start now," murmured Lamb, about an hour later. "Pete is bound to have gone to bed."

Bull was quite ready. The pair got out of bed, and Lamb procured what he called his lowering-line, which was a long piece of clothes-line, and really belonged to Pete.

"Now, you stop at the top of these stairs while I get the cane," whispered Lamb. It was just before Pete had gone down.

"All right. Don't be long," murmured Bull.

Lamb made his way into the study. He saw the window had been left open, but did not trouble about that. He took the cane from the nail where it hung on the wall in a conspicuous position, although it was only there for show.

Next he went to the sideboard. There was sufficient light to enable him to see that there was a cake there, also two decanters of wine, and some glasses. He helped himself to both, and was just drinking his second glass of wine, when he heard a ringing at the bell.

Now he darted upstairs, and led his companion on the floor above.

"We shall be all right here," he whispered. "Pete is bound to go down, and we will wait till he gets to bed again."

"Who's a-ringing?"

"The bobby, I expect. Pete has left the window open. Here, come in this room. We can wait here and listen."

And they heard Pete's conversation with the constable.

"It's all right," murmured Lamb. "He won't be long locking that door, then we will go for Potts, and give him a lesson."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I thought you wanted to do it?"

"Bust it, so I do, but he will go for me."

"Are you frightened of him?"

"No, I ain't. At the same time, I can't tackle him alone."

"Who wants you to?"

"Why, I wouldn't be surprised if you would like to see him give me another whacking."

"Bosh!"

"Well, you ain't going to fool me, so you needn't think it."

"You are such a smart lad, are you not?"

"You'll be a smarter one, if you give me any of your cheek, and so I tell you."

"Perhaps you would find out differently."

"Would you like to try?"

"Look here, Bull, this is rot. There's no need for us to quarrel."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"If you make that row Pete will hear you, and then we sha'n't have to pay Potts for having lashed you till you howled for mercy."

"You'd best be careful what you are saying."

"If you think I am frightened of you, you make a very great mistake."

"Well, if I have any of your cheek, I'll put my fist in your eye."

"You would not find it a paying game."

"Do you think as you could stand up to me?"

"I know I could. Whether I could beat you or not is another matter. All the same, that has got nothing to do with Potts, and he's the one we want to get at. We shall have plenty of opportunities of fighting, if we only do so, later on."

Bull seemed to see the wisdom of this. He was particularly anxious to give Potts a flogging, and he would certainly need Lamb's aid to do so.

"How are you going to do it?" he inquired, changing the subject.

"I'm going to tie him up. I'll show you. All you will have to do is to keep outside the room till I've tied him. I shall take all the risk."

"I don't mind the risk, only I'll pay him. Mind, I'm going to give him the flogging."

"Right you are. We can't do it yet, though. We must wait till Potts is asleep, else he would hear his howls directly."

The conspirators waited until Pete went down, and were just about to enter Potts's room, which was on that floor, when the bell went for tea-time.

"It's a nuisance," exclaimed Lamb. "All the same, we can afford to wait a bit. Pete doesn't take long getting asleep, and he will sleep as sounder for having been disturbed."

They allowed about an hour to elapse, and all the time Lamb explained his plan; then, handing his accomplice the candle, and instructing him to wait outside, they crept towards Potts's door.

Now, the school porter could sleep through a good deal of noise. As a rule, to which there were but few exceptions, when he once got off, he did not wake till morning, and as the ringing of the bell had not awoken him, it was very unlikely that the slight sound Lamb made in unlocking his door should do so.

CHAPTER 4.

Potts's First Lesson.

WHEN Lamb crept into the room he could see the sleeper.

Lamb had made a noose in the end of his cord, and he had cautiously removed the bed-clothes at Potts's feet, and inch by inch he passed the slip-knot round the sleeper's ankles, and drew it tight as he dared.

Once or twice Potts moved in his sleep, but he did not actually wake. Lamb was perfectly satisfied with his work.

Now he climbed on the dressing-table, which was in front of the window, and gave a low whistle.

This was the signal the two worthies had decided on.

Bull lighted his candle, and boldly entered the room, while Lamb remained on the cord, and hoisted Potts's legs over the foot-rail of the bedstead.

Potts uttered one howl, but then he stopped.

"Look here, boys," he cried, making a futile attempt to catch hold of the cord. It was quite impossible for him to do that, though, for as he reached towards it Lamb wrenched his legs the higher. "I'm going to overlook this misconduct on——"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Bull, sticking the candle on the chest of drawers.

"You remember as you flogged me?"

"That was in self-defence."

"Well, what I'm going to give you now is in payment."

"You let go my legs, Lamb, else it will be the worse for you."

"You are mistaken, my dear, kind creature. It will be the worse for you if you don't let your legs go, and, as I haven't the slightest intention to do so, why it is going to be the worse for you. Only, don't you see, we want you to know why we are flogging you. You have not got the right to strike a boy."

"Bull didn't belong to this 'ere school when I hit him, and now——"

"He soon qualified for it," interposed Lamb. "I would say Bull is about the most suitable boy I know for this school, but that has nothing to do with the matter. What we want you to understand is why we are going to flog you, and, if you will kindly listen, we will explain before we commence operations."

"That's right," exclaimed Bull. "I'm ready to begin when you think he understands."

"It grieves us to be under the painful necessity of correcting you, Potts."

"Stow it, and let me loose."

"But we must do our duty."

"If it was your duty, I'm thundering certain as you would never do it."

"We won't discuss that matter. We will keep to the point. You must admit that you thoroughly deserve the flogging we are about to give you."

"I admit nothing of the sort."

"Well, if we, with our superior knowledge, inform you that such is the case, there is an end of the matter."

"Now, see here, if I was to tell about this 'ere conduct, you would get into very serious trouble."

"We are willing to risk everything in the execution of our duty."

"You know thundering well it ain't your duty to hit the porter."

"It is our duty to prove to him that it is unwise to strike one of the boys."

"I ain't going to do it again."

"I quite believe you, Potts. I don't believe you will do it again, after we have chastised you. What's your opinion, Bull?"

"The same as yours."

"I'm sorry I hit you, Bull. You must know it was in self-defence."

"It worn't anything of the sort. You had got me down, and you nigh murdered me."

"Positively shameful," grinned Lamb. "I can tell you, Bull, that your back is in a most terrible state."

"So will his be after I've done with him."

"You can't possibly hurt him much with that cane, however hard you hit."

"Oh, you sinful liar," groaned Potts. "Don't you touch me, Bull. Pete would about kill you if you did. He won't allow no hitting in this 'ere school."

"Well, you gave me plenty of it."

"That was afore I knew you were coming here."

"All right, and what you are going to get is after I have come here. Do you think it will be safe to start on him now, Lamb. I believe he understands what we are going to flog him for."

"Well, I see no reason why we should delay the chastisement. I merely want to point out that the flogging you are going to receive will be a very severe one, although not nearly so severe as the next one we shall give you if ever you offend us again."

"If you was to lay a hand on me, I should go straight to the police and give you both in custody."

"Very well. We would not mind that in the least, because the magistrates would only send us to this school, and we rather like being here. At least, I do, and so will Bull after he has been here for a few weeks."

"I'd howl the house down, if you was to touch me."

"Well, here goes. Jest you start howling," cried Bull, bringing down the cane.

"Mind he doesn't catch hold of it," cried Lamb, hoisting his legs as high as he could. "Give him socks. Ha, ha, ha! Those are the sort."

Potts did not seem to think so. Bull could hit hard, and he did it that time.

Every movement caused Bull pain in his bruised back, but not nearly as much pain as those movements were causing Potts.

One would have imagined that he was being murdered the way in which he howled.

Of course, Pete heard the uproar in the room beneath; so did Jack, and he hurried into Pete's room, to see what was the matter.

"Golly!" growled Pete, springing out of bed, and putting on a few clothes. "Ain't dere a mighty lot ob disturbances in de school to-night? Are pigs being killed?"

"I really don't know," answered Jack, who had awoke even before Pete and had lighted a candle. "Suppose we go and see. I never heard such a frightful row in all my life. Here comes Sam."

"I reckon you fellows are not making much row," exclaimed Sam.

"It isn't us, Sammy. Dat row is in anoder place," observed Pete. "Dis way to London, boys. Golly! Ain't it mighty awful?"

There was not the slightest difficulty in discovering from which room the uproar came. The comrades rushed in, and Bull got in his last cut, which was a very severe one.

Potts uttered a prolonged howl, and gave a kick that smashed the rope.

Lamb, who was wrenching on it, fell backwards, and crashed through the window.

With a couple of bounds Pete was across the room, and he gripped Lamb's ankle as he disappeared backwards through that window, smashing glass and framework.

Had Pete not been an acrobat, it is doubtful if he would have been quick and dexterous enough to have caught the unfortunate Lamb, who was now howling worse than Potts, for he was hanging head downwards over the great height, and each moment he expected to be his last.

That grip on his ankle, however, never relaxed.

"You ain't as safe as you might be, Lamb," observed Pete, holding him with the greatest ease, although he only had him by one hand.

"Woohoo! Save me! I shall fall!" shrieked the terrified lad.

"If you did fall, you would be bound to hurt your noddle on de stones beneaf. Now den, my lad, jest you come dis way."

"Drop the young varmint," howled Potts. "Let him break his neck. He ain't fit to live."

"Hold your row, Potts," exclaimed Pete, pulling the terrified Lamb through the window. "Don't you consider, Lamb, dat you'm making too much noise for dis time ob night."

"Oh, you have hurt my foot."

"Well, dat was unavoidable," said Pete. "I had to catch you somewhere as you went diving frough the window. What hab you been trying to do?"

"Oh, they've nearly murdered me," howled Potts. "I ain't got a-bit of flesh on my back. That young varmint has lashed me suthing crool. Fust of all he p'isons me, and then he near lashes me to death. But I won't stand it—I declare I won't."

"Well, I will enter de complaint in de complaint book, wid a special mark ob consideration against it," said Pete, with a view to appeasing the infuriated man.

"That be blowed," hooted Potts. "If you think I'm going to be flogged and p'isoned by these dratted boys, and nothing done to them, you are mistook, and so I tell you straight."

"But you forget de entry in de complaint book."

"Yes; and you never look at it again."

"Eh?"

"It ain't no good saying 'Eh' to me. I want justice, and it's what I will have."

"Well, we shall take de serious measure ob entering de complaint."

"I won't stand it," howled Potts. "I will put the police on their track."

"Well, I don't know dat it is illegal to flog a porter, if he offends you."

"I'm injured. I'll be laid up for weeks."

"In dat case I shall send for de doctor, old hoss, and get him to cure you. I dunno dat I can do more dan make de entry."

"Bust it! How I suffer!"

"I'm sorry for dat. Still, I 'spect it will be satisfactory if I make de entry."

"Blow me if it will!"

"Eh?"

"I say I will have justice."

Then a bright idea seized Pete.

"Look here, Potts," he cried, "I know what will meet de justice ob dis case."

"What?"

"Why, I will enter de complaint in red ink."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack.

"I wish you wouldn't laugh, Jack, when serious matters occur."

"That be blowed!" howled Potts. "What difference will it make to my back if you enter it in red or yaller ink? I don't care what ink you enter it in, nor whether you don't enter it at all!"

"Well what do you want, Potts, my poor old flagellated hoss?"

"Justice—that's what I want. And justice I will have, and so I tell you."

"What sort ob justice would you like?"

"Jest you take that young hound, and flog him till he faints!"

"Dat's quite against de cistern ob dis school. Boys are taught here by kindness."

"I suppose you will stand me out that he's been kind to me?"

"Well, I should say he hadn't, if he hit you anything like hard."

"Hard! I believe my back is bleeding!"

"Nunno; it ain't as bad as all dat. I dare say it smarts a little, but it will get all right if you gib it proper time."

"If you don't flog that boy, I will!"

"Let him try," said Bull. "Haw, haw, haw! I said I'd pay him, and I have."

"What did you pay him for, Bull?" inquired Pete.

"Hitting me."

"But if I understand de case rightly, you attacked him first."

"Well, that's right enough, but when he'd got the best of me he had no right to keep on hitting me while I was down."

"Dat's true enough."

"I believe he would have about murdered me if the bobby hadn't come up."

"And how is it you were helping in de operation, Lamb?" inquired Pete.

"I had seen Bull's back, and was so indignant at the sight, that——"

"Well, dat will do. I don't believe de first part ob it, and I'm mighty certain dat I sha'n't believe de last part."

"Of course, if you won't believe me——"

"I shall believe you when you start telling me de troof; but I ain't going to believe dat you did all dis out ob indignation, 'cos Bull had received a flogging."

"Potts deserved what he has got, and a lot more."

"Dat may be, but I 'spect you wanted to get a little ob your own back. You ain't going to make me believe dat you did all dis, and nearly broke your neck in de bargain, just because someone else had got hurt."

"Well, look at Bull's back."

"Pull off your coat and shirt, my lad."

"What's it matter? I don't care. I can look after myself," declared Bull.

"Well, dat may be; all de same, you are going to do what I order now."

"Who's going to make me?"

"Just shut dat door, Jack. Now den, Bull, did you hear what I told you to do?"

"Well, I don't care!" exclaimed Bull, after a moment's pause, during which time Pete looked him full in the eyes.

"Nunno! I don't want you to care, my lad. Only I hab trained tigers in my time, so I ought to be able to make a lad mind me. You hab got to mind me now."

"Suppose I won't?"

"I should be mighty sorry for you."

"Well, what would you do?"

"When I gib an order to a boy he obeys it. Do you understand dat? He don't question dat order. He just quietly obeys it, 'cos I neber gib him an order dat he ought not to obey. I rader admire you for refusing to show your back, Bull. It shows dat you ain't ob a sneaking nature. At de same time, I am going to make you show me your back. You ain't got any option about de matter."

"I won't."

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, pulling out his pipe. "Dat's what you tink, but you'm quite mistaken. It ain't at all what is going to happen. Hab you got a match, my lad?"

Bull jerked his head towards the candlestick, and Pete struck a match, then quietly lighted his pipe.

For quite a minute he kept his eyes fixed on Bull, but he never spoke a word, and there was something in that steadfast gaze that appeared to affect Bull's nerves.

"Well, I don't care," he growled, lowering his eyes. "If you want to see my back you can."

"I should like to see it, Bull. It would help me a lot, 'cos I want to know exactly how you've been hit. You didn't belong to dis school when de ting occurred; but no one but me is allowed to strike a boy here, so it can't occur again. It won't make any difference to Potts, seeing dat you attacked him first, and you were not den in my charge."

Bull's sullenness left him. Pete spoke so kindly now. He stripped to the waist, and then he turned his back towards Pete.

"Golly!" murmured Pete, beneath his breath. Then he added aloud:

"Put on your coat, my lad. I would like you two to come to breakfast wid us at eight o'clock to-morrow morning. I may hab a little plan for to-morrow dat I would like to carry out. Good-night!"

And before Potts could protest, Pete left the room, followed by his comrades.

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble with Potts.

"**H**E'S a rummun, too!" exclaimed Bull, putting on his clothes.

"What's he going to do?"

"Take us for a day's outing. That's just his way. We are all right."

"What's he asked us to breakfast for?"

"To talk over the outing, most likely."

"Seems to me he's more likely to jaw us."

"Well, that's because you don't know him. He won't say another word about the matter."

"Won't he, though!" groaned Potts. "I'll see about that, you blood-thirsty vampires!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You got it hot, didn't you, Potts?"

"So will you get it hot to-morrow."

"Yes; the complaint will be entered in red ink. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can laugh, you young varmint!" howled Potts. "But you will be made to laugh at the other side of your mouth to-morrow morning! I ain't going to stand this shameful treatment!"

"Suppose we give him another flogging?" suggested Lamb.

"He's had enough for this journey; but if he comes any more of his nonsense he'll get some more. Haw, haw, haw! You did howl, too, Potts."

"I'll have vengeance for this, jest you see if I don't! Oh, my back, my back!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I hope it hurts you!" cried Lamb. "That will be a lesson to you to behave better in future. You can think that you can do what you like, you beast, but you will find yourself jolly well mistaken. You are a great lazy lout, and ought to be flogged every day of your life!"

"You ought to be hung, that's what's the matter with you! I believe I'm murdered, and I'll show you that I ain't going to be murdered in this shameful manner by a lot of boys. You shall answer for this, and so I tell you. A nice thing, indeed, that I have got to sleep in a room with a smashed winder. I shall catch my death of cold!"

"No matter, Potts. We will come to your funeral. Let this be a lesson to you not to touch your superiors."

"You are my superiors, you young gaol-birds; but I'll cut your wings! You think as you have scored one this time, but you will find out that you are mistook, and that before so mighty long."

"Be sure you clean my boots properly to-morrow morning," said Lamb, by way of a parting shot. "I insist on them being properly blacked."

"I'll properly black your eyes if you don't clear out of this room!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How does your back feel now, my dear man?"

"Not as bad as your'n will feel to-morrow, after I have done with you."

"Poor old Potts! We are extremely sorry for you. Go to sleep, you dear, kind creature. I say, Potts, your nose is getting blue."

"So will your back be to-morrow."

"You drink too much, and it not only inflames your temper, but also your nose."

"I'll inflame you to-morrow. You will be sorry at what I'm a-going to do, and so I tell you."

"Come on, mate!" exclaimed Bull. "We can easy give him another hiding when we consider he requires it."

Then the two worthies left the room, and Potts lay on his bed groaning from time to time, and thinking over the vengeance he would have on the morrow.

At eight o'clock prompt the two made their appearance in the breakfast-room, and they found the comrades there.

"Now den, boys," exclaimed Pete, "take your seats, 'cos we'm all ready! Which do you begin on—veal and ham pie, roast beef, fowls, eggs and bacon, hot rolls?"

It was a grand breakfast, and they did ample justice to it.

Bull was under the impression Pete would refer to the flogging of Potts, but in this he was quite mistaken. It seemed to have gone out of his mind altogether.

"I shall gib you bof a holiday dis morning," ne observed, sipping his coffee. "De same remarks apply to de afternoon, and— Golly! What's all dis? Yah, yah, yah!"

It was Potts, who came hobbling into the room on two sticks, and groaning at every step.

"I'm ill," he said, fixing his eyes on Pete.

"Well, you don't look too well, eider, old hoss. What's de matter wid you?"

"I'm downright bad. I've been assaulted and p'isoned. There's going to be serious trouble over this ere matter."

"Look at dat, now!"

"Yes, you can look at it, but it don't matter in what manner you look at it, there's going to be trouble."

"I'm sorry for dat, my poor old hoss, 'cos you'm had some trouble already, and you don't want any more."

"The trouble will be for you, and so I tell you."

"But I ain't done anyting to you 'scept feed you, and keep you in beer."

"And what have I done for you?"

"I dunno. I can't remember anyting, but p'r'aps Sammy will be able to answer dat question. He can generally answer foolish questions."

"I reckon he has helped you to fill your complaint-book," said Sam.

"I neber thought ob dat, Sammy. M'yes, he has certainly done dat, and I'm rader glad to know dat he's done someting for his money. You ought to do some sort ob work, Potts, 'cos you ain't exactly what one might call an ornamental porter."

"Yes; I may work for you from morn till night—"

"Well, you may certainly do dat, old hoss, only I don't tink dere is de slightest chance ob your starting on de job. You'm much more likely to snore from dewy eve to early morn. Yah, yah, yah! I can't fancy you working at dat break-neck pace, old hoss."

"You encourage these 'ere young villains in the most shameful manner! Here you are going to give 'em a holiday, 'cos I heard you say so, and jest because they nearly murdered me last night. Do you think I ain't got no feelings, 'cos if you do you are wrong."

"Nunno, Potts! I don't tink anyting like dat. No man could possibly tink you had got no feelings if he had heard you yowl like you did last night."

"Then you ought to study the feelings of others as well as your own."
 "If he only studied his own feelings," exclaimed Jack, "I should say he ought to kick you out of the place for your impertinence to your master."

"No man shall call himself my master. I may have an employer, but he certainly ain't my master."

"You are an idiot, Potts."

"Maybe some others will find they ain't as clever as they thinks. I expect to have my feelings studied."

"Did you study Bull's feelings when you hit him like you did, Potts?" inquired Pete.

"That has nothink to do with the question."

"Well, I consider dat, it nas."

"Then I don't. I'm a man, and he's a boy, and——"

"It's a pity you didn't remember dat when you struck him. I should be bery sorry to strike a man like you struck dat boy."

"P'r'aps you would be afraid to."

"Maybe, but we won't argue dat point. I tink I will hab a little more pie instead, and, while I am eating it, p'r'aps you will tell me what you want."

"Compensation—liberal compensation."

"Eh?"

"I say I demand to be compensated for my sufferings, and I ain't taking a sovereign or anything like that. I'm having heavy compensation, else I'll know the reason why."

"Well, I 'spect I'll also know the reason why, but we needn't boder ourselves 'bout dat matter. How much compensation do you require?"

"Seeing all the suffering I have gone through, and all the agony of mind I have endured from the thoughts of the p'ison——"

"But dere was no poison, old hoss."

"I say there was."

"M'yes; I know you do, but as you are incorrect, we can turn off de agony ob mind tap. Stick to de suffering part ob de business, 'cos dere ain't de slightest doubt dat dat was real enough."

"Then my health has suffered from the p'ison——"

"Golly! He's getting on to de poison again. I'm knocking dat off de account. Bring me my cheque-book, Potts, and a pen and ink, also a sheet ob paper to tote up de items."

Potts knew exactly where to find the items, and he was so delighted with the order, that he forgot to hobble as much as he should have done for the effect of the thing. He soon came back with the articles, and as Pete had now finished breakfast, he pushed his plate away.

"Now den, old hoss, we will make out an exact account, and strike a balance. First ob all we hab agony ob mind. How much do you tink we ought to put down for dat?"

"At least fifty pounds, but I will take twenty."

"Nunno! You fix de amounts fairly. We enter de fifty pounds. Next item, please."

"My sufferings—and fifty pounds won't compensate me for them; but under the circumstances——"

"Neber mind de circumstances. What will compensate you for your sufferings?"

"A hundred pounds."

"Bery well; dat makes a hundred and fifty. Anyting more?"

"There is the injury to my constitution, another fifty."

"Well, dat seems reasonable enough. Dat makes two hundred and fifty pounds, and——"

"Here, that makes two hundred!" cried Jack.

"Eh?"

"Two hundred, I tell you."

"I hab got two hundred and fifty here, Jack."

"Then you have got it wrong."

"Well, I don't want to alter my figures, 'cos dey rader neat. Can't you tink ob anoder item, Potts?"

"Loss of sleep, and general upset."

"I can't spell all dat, so we will call it sundries."

"Ha, ha, ha! You can't spell that either," cried Jack. "You don't spell it with a y, you want i-e-s."

"I hab got eyes ob my own widout putting dem on paper. Now you shut up. I'm making up dis account. Hab you got any claim against it, Lamb?"

"Merely nominal," murmured Lamb. "There will be twopence-halfpenny for my work in pulling him up; a penny-farthing for letting him down; penny-three-farthings for correcting him. Then I fine him sixpence for his bad language. And nineteen shillings he will have to pay me for improving him generally. Have you got that, Pete?"

"M'yes! Is dere anyting else?"

"Yes. Two hundred and forty-nine pounds for breaking my cord. If you add that up, and hand him the balance it will square matters."

Pete looked serious, and counted the farthings on his fingers, but he got it right at last.

"Bery well, Potts!" he exclaimed. "I find dat comes to two hundred and forty-nine pounds nineteen shillings and elevenpence-halfpenny, so dat if we hand you dis halfpenny dat will balance de account nicely. You may as well enter de account in de complaint-book, so dat I can see exactly how it was settled. I sha'n't need de cheque-book, 'cos I hab got de half-penny here."

"What!" howled Potts.

"It's quite correct."

"I say it ain't. I am going to be compensated!"

"Well, dere's your compensation. You can't go against black and white. Good-morning!"

"I won't stand this 'ere treatment. I insist on compensation!"

"Well, you'm got it. Dere's de halfpenny. I might hab made it more if you had acted like a human being instead ob a fierce wild beast. I hab seen dat boy's back, and I tell you dis, Potts, de sooner you get out ob dis room de better it will be for your health. 'Nuff said!"

Potts forgot to hobble as he left the room. Pete lighted his pipe, and gradually the stern expression left his jovial face, and a smile took its place.

At that moment Carton entered the room.

"I have a very serious matter to bring to your notice, Pete," he said.

"I am sorry to say——"

"Bring it to de notice ob Jack and Sammy. Come on, boys!"

"But this is a serious matter, and——"

"Jack rader likes serious matters."

"It is not a joking matter."

"Nunno, old hoss! It couldn't be if it was a serious one."

"It is a serious complaint——"

“Den enter it in de complaint-book. Come on, boys!” And Pete bolted. “This is utterly ridiculous!” fumed Carton. “How can I keep order when he conducts the school in this manner?”

“Ha, ha, ha! I admit he is a most aggravating fellow,” laughed Jack. “But think how kind-hearted he is, Mr. Carton.”

“I know that, my dear fellow. I know he is splendid in some things, but he is utterly mad in others.”

“Well, his decisions are extremely peculiar,” admitted Jack; “but you have got to recollect that he always gets his own way. The boys like him.”

“He will make them worse than they are, if that should be possible.”

“I don’t know. He has certainly improved Droog, and some of the others. Droog won’t tell a lie.”

“Yes, that is so; but I tell you honestly I am worried out of my life with the young rascals. Lindley is far too easy with them, while as for Pete he has not the slightest control.”

Now Jack did not agree with this at all. He considered that Pete had more control over those boys than the two masters put together. However, he could see that Carton was angered, and as he did not wish to make him worse, he did not contradict him.

“Well, Mr. Carton,” he exclaimed, “I know that it must be very trying for you, but if I were you I wouldn’t bother myself too much about it. I believe Pete will make it come all right somehow. He has the lads’ interest at heart, and if he only puts a few in the straight path that will be a great thing.”

“It would be far better with severity.”

“I don’t know; I only know he will never use it.”

“Fancy taking those two boys for a treat after their shameful conduct last night.”

“Well, he isn’t doing it for that. The fact is, Potts struck Bull in a most shameful manner. He has marked his back terribly.”

“But I understand the boy attempted to rob him.”

“I believe if you saw the lad’s back you would agree with me that no man had a right to injure a boy in such a manner. At any rate, it is useless for me to speak to Pete. He would merely tell me that I was wrong and obstinate.”

“Consider the money this school is costing him.”

“Ah, that he does not care for at all. He will never feel the loss of it, neither shall we.”

Then Mr. Carton went away somewhat appeased. He liked Jack and Sam, but Pete was quite beyond him.

CHAPTER 6. The Rising Storm.

“NOW look here, lads,” exclaimed Pete, leading his promising pupils towards the shore. “Do you think you would like to come for a sail wid me to-day?”

“I would so!” exclaimed Bull.

“I should like it exceedingly!” declared Lamb.

“Den dat settles de matter, and we will come. You see, I hab been tinkin’ ob de best ting to do to-day, and hab got it all planned out. First ob all, we will come down to de seashore, ‘cos dat’s where our boat is. I’ll gib you a lesson on sailing a boat, ‘cos it’s always a handy ting to know. Dere’s a fine breeze, so we shall get on all right. What’s de matter, Bull? Don’t you care for de idea?”

"I do so, but—well, you see those chaps as were with me. They ain't been caught yet, and I ain't going to give 'em away. All the same, I don't want to go with them any more, and if they was to meet us they would be trouble."

"How's dat?"

"They know you've got money, and wouldn't think twice about attacking you. There's a regular gang of 'em, and it ain't at all unlikely that they are keeping watch."

"Bery well, let dem watch, and if dey feel like attacking me dey are quite at liberty to do so, 'cos I dare say I shall be able to defend myself against dem."

"But you wouldn't be able to tackle them if there was a lot of them."

"I dunno. I 'spect I could take two-free; at any rate, dey would be bound to get hurt. All de same, dey won't be able to attack us if we are on de water, and as dat is de place we are going till we land some where, why it stands to reason dat we shall be perfectly safe."

But Bull, knowing the ways of the gang, did not feel at all easy in his mind.

Lamb, on the other hand, did not trouble himself at all. He would not have minded an attack, as it would have given him plenty of excitement.

The boat was a light one. It carried a spritsail and foresail, and the mast was already stepped, the boat being drawn up in the gully beyond the reach of the tides.

"Now, I'll take de bows," exclaimed Pete, lifting the boat off the ground. "You two shove astern. We shall soon get her into de water dat road."

They quickly ran her down, then Pete instructed the lads to get in and he gave a shove off that sent her skimming over the water.

"Now, you see, we run de foresail up so. Den we tackle de mainsail."

Having run the sails up, he took the helm, and stood out to sea, steering northwards when he had got out some considerable distance.

The day was beautifully fine, and although there was rather a lump of sea, it had no ill effects on the lads, who thoroughly enjoyed their sail.

From time to time Pete gave them instructions, and then he allowed them to take the helm by turns. Lamb could learn as fast as he liked when he wanted to. Bull was not nearly so quick, but he did very well and Pete spent the whole morning on the water, keeping northwards all the time.

"Now den, boys," he exclaimed at last, "I dunno how you'm feeling but I'm getting mighty hungry. You see dat little white building along de shore. Well, dat's an inn, and we are certain to be able to get something to eat dere, if it is only brem-cheese. I'll show you how to bring her in."

There was a man on the shore, and he promised to look after the boat and keep her in the water, as the tide was running out.

The landlord of the inn knew Pete, and received him in a very friendly manner.

"Got anyting nice to eat, Jonathan, old hoss?" inquired Pete, somewhat anxiously, for the voyage had sharpened his appetite.

"I can give you cold roast beef and pickles, and mutton chops."

"That will suit right down to de ground. Serve it up, old hoss. We can begin on de cold roast beef, and end on de mutton chops. Now den, boys, get ready for your hunger."

"I'm in fine form," declared Bull. "You needn't be afraid of my appetite. The question is, will there be enough to take it away?"

"Should say a joint ob roast beef and mutton chops ought to be able to take de rough edge off," observed Pete. "Still, we can easily see dat when we begin."

The beef was all that could be desired, and as Pete looked after the carving there was no stint.

Jonathan urged them on. He knew what a liberal customer Pete was, and the more he ate, the better it pleased Jonathan. He was very pleased that morning.

"What do you tink ob de weather, old hoss?" inquired Pete, glancing towards the sea. White horses were bounding upon the glittering waves. The wind was freshening.

"You will get home before it."

"Before what, old hoss?"

"The storm. The glass is falling fast, and storms do rise here with surprising rapidity; all the same, as I say, you will get home before it—at least, I hope so."

"Yah, yah, yah! You ain't bery comforting, Jonathan. We want a nice fresh breeze, and no storms."

"I want a thousand a year, and no work; but I've been wanting that all my life, and can't get it."

"It wouldn't do you good, Jonathan. You would get too fat and lazy. Nunno, hard work is de finest ting in de world."

"Do much of it yourself?"

"Eh?"

"Haw, haw, haw! That's always the way. A chap as never does any work to speak of, is bound to advise it to those who do."

"Well, I must say I consider it better for oder people dan myself," admitted Pete. "I always like Jack or Sam to do de hard work, and it seems to me dat dey always like me to do it."

"It strikes me they must be badly disappointed at times. Now for the chops. You've polished off that beef pretty fair."

The chops came up, but Lamb did not make much headway, while even Bull stopped before Pete.

"My eyes!" exclaimed Bull. "Haw, haw, haw! You are going it, Pete."

"Well, dat's where it comes in——"

"What, your mouth?"

"Well, some ob it does go in dere. But, you see, I'm in perfect training wid eating. I do it regularly ebery day. Golly! I don't much like de look ob de weather, eider."

"It will be fine if we get a storm."

"So it will, if de boat ain't wrecked."

"It won't be wrecked. I hope Lamb won't start howling like he did last night when he was hanging head downwards. Haw, haw, haw! You did shriek. More like a blessed cat than a lamb."

"I suppose you think you are funny?"

"Don't know, but I thought you funny enough last night. You was worse than Potts, and he made a pretty good row when I was a-flogging him."

"You couldn't have flogged him if it hadn't been for me. You would never have thought of it. You haven't got the intellect."

"I tought it was your little idea, Lamb," observed Pete, pulling out his pipe, for even he had finished dinner now.

"I'm inclined to tink we will make de start now," observed Pete. "Bring up your bill, Jonathan, and we will see what we can do towards settlement."

"This business was soon completed, and Jonathan only wished he could get such customers every day; then entering their boat they put off, and he

taught his pupils how to take in a reef, for it was now blowing really hard. Had Pete been alone he would not have troubled himself concerning this, but, having the two lads with him, he became rather more cautious.

The little boat bounded over the waves—and sometimes the waves bounded over the occupants.

At first Bull seemed to be the more anxious. He was not so accustomed to the sea as Lamb, and when the boat lay over until her lee side was awash with the water, he felt pretty sure that she would go right over.

But he soon became accustomed to it, and then enjoyed it thoroughly.

"You see, we hab to luff like dat, when it starts blowing rader harder dan you tink de boat will bear," observed Pete. "Dere ain't any danger in sailing, if you take care, and de wind don't blow too hard, and de sea ain't too rough."

"But suppose it does blow too hard, and the sea is too rough?" inquired Bull.

"Eh?"

"I say, suppose it does get too rough, and blows too hard?"

"Well, dat's de time when shipwrecks occur; but, as it ain't going to do anything ob de sort to-day, why we needn't boder ourselves 'bout de matter."

"I believe it is," gasped Lamb, as a wave dashed over him. "I'm getting jolly wet, too."

"It's only sea-water."

"I never thought it was river water," snarled Lamb, getting vexed. "It's wet, all the same."

"M'yes! Dat's de nature ob water. I dunno why it is wet, but I dare say one ob your masters would be able to teach you dat. I ain't much good at teaching lessons, 'cos I neber learnt dem myself, but I can teach you sailing, or swimming, or anything like dat."

"I'd like to learn swimming for the start," said Bull. He was enjoying the sail now, which is a good deal more than Lamb was doing. Lamb was daring enough until the actual danger arrived, and then he quickly lost heart. Bull was just the reverse. He got frightened at first, and then, when the time for fighting arrived, he forgot all fear.

"You are too late in the day," declared Lamb.

"What! Too old to learn?"

"No! You will need your swimming directly. We are over now."

"Nunno, we ain't," exclaimed Pete, luffing, as a heavy gust of wind caught the boat. "We'm a long way from ober."

"About a quarter of an inch," muttered Lamb.

"Well, what more do you want?"

"A quarter of an inch is nothing."

"Ain't it. If you'm cutting your nails, and you go a quarter ob an inch too low, you will find it quite plenty for de sake ob comfort."

"I'm not cutting my nails."

"No, you are a-chattering your teeth," growled Bull. "I don't believe you are as brave as you would like to make us believe."

"I'm brave enough to punch your stupid head, if——"

"Are you, then come on."

"Yah, yah, yah! Here, I ain't allowing fighting aboard dis vessel," cried Pete. "Dis boat ain't suitable for a fight in a rough sea. You can hab a boxing contest in de gymnasium if you like, but you ain't fighting here."

"He dursn't fight me, and he knows it," declared Bull. "He's only talking like that because you are here. Why, he's funkng at the sea. Haw, haw, haw! You are frightened, Lamb."

"I'll face any danger that you face."

"Never said you wouldn't. All the same, you can't say as you ain't afraid now; least, if you do say it, it will be a lie. You are as white as a sheet of paper, and about as limp. Haw, haw, haw! I didn't think you was such a funk as all that. Why don't you start howling?"

Pete was too busy with the boat to pay much heed to the lads' squabble. The wind was coming in angry gusts, and he knew any one of those gusts might capsize her unless he was very watchful. He held the main-sheet in his hand, and luffed continually as the heavy gusts of wind caused the little boat to lay over, until at times the water came trickling over her lee side.

This, together with the spray that burst into her, soon necessitated baling, and Pete set the two lads to work.

"Seems to be an island yonder," observed Pete. He knew the little island well, for he had sailed round it on several occasions, although he had not landed there. "I just tinkin' dat we might land dere and wait for de sea to go down. You see, dis wind is rader stronger dan we require for comfortable sailing."

Then Pete put his helm down, and ran towards the island shore.

He steered for a little inlet, and fortunately the shore was sandy at that part. Beyond getting drenched with the waves, they suffered no harm, while Pete soon dragged the boat up beyond reach of the sea.

"I call this jolly," exclaimed Bull.

"Jolly!" gasped Lamb, shivering, for, drenched through as he was, he found it rather chilly; besides, his nerves had been upset. "I call it beastly awful. Here we are, on a desert island, and here we may stick for days, if the storm doesn't go down."

"Well, what do we care. I'm jolly glad."

"What about food?"

"My eyes! You can't be hungry after all the food you have gorged."

"You stupid lout! I suppose we shall get hungry in a week's time."

"See here," cried Bull, striding up to Lamb with his fists clenched. "I know all about getting hungry, 'cos I've done it many a time. That ain't the question. Don't you get calling me them names, else I'll punch your head."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete, stepping between them, for Bull looked remarkably like executing his threat, and Lamb had thrown himself into fighting attitude. "I hab got a nice little handful dis time. But look here, you two beauties. Don't you tink de dissention in de camp had better occur after de camp is broken up?"

"What are we to do for food?" demanded Lamb.

"Let's kill the lamb and cook him," suggested Bull.

"I wouldn't care to eat a diseased bull," observed Lamb.

"Who's diseased?" roared Bull.

"Well, if you are not, you look as though you were," said Lamb.

"Yah, yah, yah! Let dese compliments cease," laughed Pete. "I wouldn't start worrying myself 'bout de food till I needed it, if I was you, Lamb. We may find some nuts on de island."

"I hate nuts."

"Rummy thing that," observed Bull. "Monkeys generally like 'em."

"Who's a monkey?"

"Not you. You ain't as sensible as a monkey. You remind me more of a slug—one of those white, slimy ones."

"Yah, yah, yah! Do be quiet, you two. I tell you we ain't in fightin' trim. If we get killing each oder, we sha'n't hab to boder about food."

"Let's light a camp fire, and build a hut," suggested Bull. "I call this downright jolly, and hope the storm will last for a year or two."

"I don't 'spect it will last so mighty long," observed Pete. "Dere are plenty ob trees and bushes on de island, so p'r'aps dere are some rabbits, or something good to eat. I hab been in a much worse state dan dis many time, and hab come out of it all right."

"Can't we have a fire?" inquired Bull.

"What's the good of a fire when we have got nothing to cook?" snarled Lamb.

"I never saw such a fellow for eating," growled Bull.

"I didn't eat as much as you at dinner, and chance it."

"It's a pity you didn't, mate, and then you might stop grouching. It's sickening to hear you. One would think as it was Pete's fault that we are on this 'ere island. All the same, I don't care whether it's his fault or not. I'm jolly glad of it, and only wish we were going to stop for a long time."

"Well, dat's de way to look at it!" exclaimed Pete. "We will light a fire, Bull, and den we shall be able to dry our clothes. You see, when de tide turns de wind may go down."

"I hope as it won't. I'd like to spend the night on the island, at any rate."

"Well, I wouldn't be surprised if we hab to do dat," said Pete, as an angry roll of thunder burst forth, and a gust of wind came howling across the island. "It's mighty certain dat de gale is going to get up before it gets down. Now, let's come a little way inland, and build a real camp fire."

"What's the good?" objected Lamb, who was in a very despondent state of mind. He hated discomfort, unless engaged on some wild prank that was causing discomfort to other parties.

"Why, we can sit you on it to dry," said Bull. "Come on, Pete! He's a great baby. I wouldn't be surprised if he starts crying directly."

"You go first, Bull. I'll follow next, and Lamb can lead de way behind. I tink dat will be sort ob safer, 'cos I don't want you two to start fighting."

"He's frightened to try it on."

"No, I'm not, you ugly-looking lout!"

"If you call me that again I'll put my fist in your mouth!"

"Now, look here!" exclaimed Pete. "Dis won't do at all!"

"What right has he got to insult me?" demanded Lamb.

"None at all, and you ain't got de right to insult him!"

"He began it!"

"I dunno know 'bout dat, but if he did dere ain't de slightest sense in you carrying it on."

"He won't fight!" sneered Bull. "He's all bounce! When I'm alone with him he's as timid as a blessed kitten!"

"You will find Bull a wonderfully clever scholar, Pete," said Lamb. "If you give him a few years' teaching, I wouldn't be surprised if you turn him out fit to take a scavenger's job."

"You'd get your living as an area sneak," retorted Bull. "Or you might be able to steal handkerchiefs from little girls. You look like a girl yourself. If I was Pete, I'd dress you in petticoats, let your hair grow long, and make you wear it down your back in a plait."

Lamb picked up a large piece of dead wood, and, dodging round Pete, aimed it at Bull's head with extreme precision. It caught him a crack on the ear, and hurt him considerably.

It was the last straw. He dodged round Pete, and went for Lamb with a rush, but he quickly discovered his error. Although he was possessed of

considerably more strength than his adversary, and was taller and broader, he had very little idea of boxing.

Lamb ducked to the round-handed blows, and, leading off with his left, he caught Bull full in the mouth, cross-countered on the mark, then going in with a rush, landed three in Bull's face, and sat him on the ground.

"I would point out to you, Pete, that I merely acted in self-defence!" cried Lamb, fully expecting that Pete would stop the fight.

But Pete was busy collecting firewood. Seeing how Bull had been punished at the start, Pete did not consider that it would be fair to intervene at that moment, nor did he think it would be good for Lamb.

Bull sprang to his feet, and went in with another rush. This time he was far more successful. He landed on Lamb's nose, and made it bleed badly, then he got in a second one between the eyes, and after that Lamb was demoralised. His science was not much use to him against his opponent's strength, and, although he got in a good many blows, they did not appear to have much effect on Bull, who was now slogging away in fine style, and not making the slightest attempt to guard his opponent's blows. He simply went in hammer-and-tongs, and ended the round by knocking Lamb down.

"Now then, get up and finish it off!" growled Bull, warming to his work. "I'll teach you to fling chunks of wood at my ear!"

"I'll fight you when Pete isn't here!"

"Pete won't interfere—not while we fight fair!"

"I have sprained my right arm, and can't use it!"

"Sprained your grandmother! You used it quite as much as I wanted just this minute! You are funking, that's what's the matter with you!"

"I don't tink I would fight any more, boys," observed Pete. "We will call dat a drawn battle. Dere's no sense in punching one anoder's heads, 'specially as we'm got dis fire to light."

"Let's finish it off," grumbled Bull, not feeling at all sure that he had got the better of it.

"I shall not disobey Pete," said Lamb, looking virtuous.

"Haw, haw, haw! That's the latest. You are always so jolly careful to obey him—I don't think!"

"You couldn't think with a brain like yours, you lout!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Your face don't look too pretty, either. If you are frightened to go on, why don't you say so?"

"I should be a miserable coward to be frightened of a lout like you!"

"Well, you are a miserable coward, else you would finish the fight!"

"Now, hurry up!" exclaimed Pete. "We'm got to light this fire, and den we shall be more comfortable. Golly, it is blowing, too!"

Lamb was only too glad to commence operations, but Bull evidently wanted to have a few more rounds; however, he helped to collect the wood, and as there were many large boughs torn from the trees by the storms, they soon had a roaring camp fire.

"Now, you see, Lamb, dis is rader more comfortable dan sitting on de wet grass in de cold—don't you tink so?"

"We shall be hungry presently, and——"

"Haw, haw, haw! He's thinking after his grub again!"

"You miserable coarse brute, you make me sick!"

"Well, I don't wonder at that, seeing the thrashing I have given you!"

"You have done nothing of the sort, and you know it!"

"Well, I will give you one when I get a little more time!"

"Will you; perhaps you will find that you are mistaken!"

"Whether I am or not, I'll make you sit up! Now, shut up, else you won't have to wait so mighty long for that thrashing!"

CHAPTER 7.

Pete Defies the Foe.

PETE was doing his best to bring his fellow prisoners on the island into a better frame of mind, when he saw an expression of terror on Bull's face that caused him to turn quickly, and, in the deepening darkness, amongst the bushes, he saw a fierce face glaring at them.

He saw it for a few moments only amongst the bushes, then it was quickly withdrawn, and the man disappeared.

"Do you know who dat is, Bull?" inquired Pete.

"Yes! It's Giles, and he's a terror, if ever there was one. There ain't a crime as he would stop at. I tell you straight, even some of his own chums is frightened of him."

"Well, I must say de man don't look too mighty amiable. Still, I 'spect we can convince him dat we'm got nuffin' to be afraid ob."

"He's a fair giant of a man, and he's as strong as a lion. He used to be a strong man in a circus once, only he got six months for nearly killing the proprietor. After that he's got his living by burglary, and things like that."

"Is he only a man you hab met?"

"Yes; but I'll have to go with him—that is if he wants me to. I tell you he is a terror, and it won't do to do anything he don't like."

"Do you tink he's on dis island alone?"

"I'm most certain he isn't. He will be with the gang, and a precious lot they are. They know that I know a good deal about 'em, and if they thought that I had told, they would kill me as soon as look at me, and them as I'd told it to in the bargain. I knew they had got some secret hiding-place, but didn't know it was on this island. I wish we hadn't come here. I do straight."

"I thought you were so jolly glad," sneered Lamb. "It's you who are funk'ing now, you miserable coward."

"So would you funk, if you knew Giles as well as I do. What had we best do, Pete?"

"Nuffin'!"

"If they think as you've got money in your possession they will attack you."

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"But suppose there's a lot of them?"

"Den I shall do my best."

"We had better put off and chance the storm."

"Dat ain't possible, Bull," answered Pete, filling his pipe. "It's blowing a full-sized gale now, and, from what I can see ob it, it is going to blow harder still before so long. Nunno! We will wait here and see what is going to happen. Do you tink dey will carry firearms?"

"There's no chance of that. It's a lot too risky for a chap like Giles, 'cos he never knows when the police are going to drop on him. Hark! I believe they are coming now!"

There was a rustling in the bushes, but only Giles made his appearance. He was a man of enormous stature, and his face was just about as evil as a human face could be.

"Why, there's my boy!" he exclaimed. "My only son!"

"He ain't my father at all," muttered Bull, who evidently stood in terror of the ruffian. "What do you mean by keeping him a prisoner?"

"Well, dat is just what de magistrate ordered," said Pete, calmly lighting his pipe.

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, it ain't what I am going to order, not by long chalks. I don't take no notice of magistrates!"

"Nunno, old hoss! It would be rader better for oders if you did!"

"Well, you come here, Bull."

"Funny ting dat his name is Bull if yours is Giles, and yet he's your son. Den again, it ain't exactly usual for a fader to call his son by his surname."

"I suppose I've got the right to call him what I like. Bull is his nickname, and I don't want none of your cheek. What you've got to do is to mind your own business, and I'll mind mine."

"Den trot away and mind it, old hoss."

"That boy is coming with me, for a start."

"What will be de finish?"

"That's my business. I don't know how you come on this island, but I know thundering well you won't find it so easy to get off it again!"

"Nunno; dere is rader a nasty storm, ain't dere? Good-night!"

"Good-night be hung! Do you want me to knock you over the head?"

"Nunno!"

"Well, I'll do it if I have any of your sauce!"

"Den I shall be most particular not to offend you, old hoss, 'cos I wouldn't like to be hit on the head at all."

"You ain't got no right on this 'ere island."

"Look at dat, now!"

"If you insult me in that manner, I'll knock your head off your shoulders!"

"I'm mighty sorry dat I hab insulted you."

"Well, don't do it again, else I shall put my fist in your eye!"

"I'll take good care not to do it again."

Giles looked a little nonplussed. He wanted to get up a quarrel, but Pete was so charmingly polite that it was really impossible to do so.

"I don't stand no nonsense from insolent hounds!" said Giles, having another try.

"Quite right, too."

"It wouldn't go well with a fellow as was to insult me."

"I should say not. You'm a big, strong man."

"Do you mean to say that I'd only hit a man weaker than myself?"

"Yah, yah, yah! I can see you ain't read de story ob de lamb and de wolf, Giles," laughed Pete. "Now see here, old hoss, I ain't going to insult you in any way, 'cos dere wouldn't be de slightest sense in doing so. What I'm going to do is to gib you de worst thrashing you hab eber had in your life. I'm going to gib you a lesson dat you will neber forget; and do you know why? I can see you don't. Bery well, I will tell you."

"You are going to thrash me!"

"I am going to thrash you for your evil influence ober dat lad."

"You'll do which?"

"I am going to thrash you because you hab done all in your power to make him as big a blackguard as yourself, and——"

"If this ain't the limit!"

"And I'm going to try to make him a man ob honour, and a credit to his country. I am going to try to make dat lad start in life on de right course, and I am going to see dat he gets a proper start in any calling he fancies. I am going to find de money for dat start. Now, if ain't de slightest use your trying to work yourself up into a passion. You'm a big, strong man, and it is mighty certain dat we shall hab to fight sooner or later, so we may as well commence sooner. Come on!"

"Haw, haw, haw! All right!" cried the ruffian, pulling off his coat. "If I kill you, you mustn't blame me."

"If you kill me, old hoss, I won't speak a word after the deed is completed."

"You boys will be witness as he brought this on himself," said Giles, turning to the lads.

"Go and drown yourself!" growled Bull. "It's you attacking him, and you are only a doing of it so as to rob him."

"I'll have a nice settlement with you arter I have finished him!" cried Giles, squaring up to Pete, who stood before him with his hands in his pockets. "Come on!"

"It's for you to do dat, old hoss," said Pete. "You'm got to strike de first blow."

"Then there it goes, and most like there won't be no second one."

The ruffian led off with his left, and he put all his strength into the blow. Pete ducked to the right, and the blow passed over his head; then he placed himself in fighting attitude, and Giles became more cautious. He knew that he had a boxer to contend with.

This, however, did not daunt him by any means. He relied on his great strength. Watching his opportunity, he led off again with his left, then brought his right up with a view to catching Pete on the jaw, for Pete had guarded with his right, and countered with his left.

The blow he delivered caught Giles between the eyes, and drove him backwards, stopping his cross-counter. But severe though the blow was, it's only effect was to infuriate Giles the more. He went in with a rush, striking out right and left.

Such a mode of fighting might have served its purpose with a weaker opponent, but Pete was not only very watchful, but also possessed of enormous strength, while his reach was very long. He punished Giles severely, while the only blows he received were on the body, and he took particular care that none of those were on the mark.

For some moments the in-fighting continued, then Giles drew off a little. Pete saw the opportunity. Springing in, he landed heavily on his adversary's face with his left, ducked for the counter, and delivered his cross-counter on the mark.

The two blows were almost simultaneous, and the cross-counter so severe that Giles went down.

"We will call dat de first round, old hoss," said Pete. "You ain't killed me yet, you see; but I dare say if you keep on long enough you will be able to succeed, only I would advise you to fight a little more cautiously dan you hab begun, else de killing part ob de business will take a mighty long time."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull. "Why you are a-walking over! You ain't no good agin Pete, Giles, and the best thing you can do is to muzzle off!"

"You little demon!" snarled Giles, rising to his feet, and glaring at Bull in a murderous manner. "I'll pay you after I've paid him! Come on, you demon! I'll show you who's master!"

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete. "I tink I know who's de master widout de showing. Now you'm going to be punished."

Giles fought far better now, because he was more cautious. He fondly imagined that if he got in one blow he would knock Pete out of time, but he soon discovered his mistake.

Pete could stand any amount of hammering, and he kept tapping Giles in the face in a manner that was very exasperating.

Giles was getting the worst of it, and he knew it; he also seemed to realise that Pete was not hitting with all his strength now. The ruffian

had help at hand, but he did not want to avail himself of it if he could possibly avoid it, for he had often boasted to his confederates of his prowess in the ring, and it was a fearful come-down to have to confess himself beaten, especially as he had the advantage of Pete in both height and weight.

At last Pete delivered a blow on the mark that caused his adversary to gasp for breath and retreat.

But now Pete followed him up, and delivered blow after blow in the face. There was no help for it. Giles knew that he was badly beaten, and that unless he received help he would be knocked out of time.

"Come on, mates, and finish him off!" he shouted. And two fierce-looking ruffians sprang from the bushes, and made a rush towards Pete.

"Den I hit my hardest," cried Pete, delivering a terrific blow between Giles's eyes, then cross-countering with his right on the mark.

The ruffian went down with a deep groan, and lay quite motionless.

"Now, you see here," cried one of the others, stopping in his rush, for he preferred waiting for Giles's assistance before attacking such a formidable opponent. "We ain't going to stand any nonsense from you!"

"It's all right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, eyeing him contemptuously. "I know you want to gain time till Giles gets up, and I'm quite willing to allow you to do so, 'cos I rader tink I shall be able to tackle de free ob you. He won't be ready yet for some little time."

"Do you think as we are afeard of you?" cried the second one.

"I don't tink about de matter, old hoss. I'm mighty certain dat you'm afraid ob me, and what's more, I don't believe Giles will care for de job ob attacking me again. If he does feel as dough he would care for de start, I'm mighty certain he won't care for de finish."

"You say as you will fight the three of us?"

"Yah, yah, yah! You ought to be a Member ob Parliament on de stump. You keep on saying de same ting ober and ober again in different words. I 'spect you heard what I said."

"I wasn't certain."

"Go on. Can't you tink ob any more to say to keep you going till Giles gets up? Yah, yah, yah! You wouldn't do to take a bill out in Parliament, eider."

"I'll give you something as you will be sorry for just directly, if you ain't careful what you are saying to me, and so I tell you!"

"De man is going on Giles's lines now. He's going to get indignant. It's all right, old hoss. Don't you boder dat brain ob yours to find words to prolong de agony, 'cos I am perfectly ready to wait till Giles has recovered his wind. After all, I am fighting him, and not you, but I ain't de slightest objection to you being frown in, 'cos you ain't at all likely to do any harm to me."

The two ruffians spoke together for a few moments, and then approached Giles; but he was completely winded, and certainly not in a fit state to renew the combat at present.

They were whispering together, but Pete did not trouble himself at all concerning what they were saying. He had little doubt that they were arranging some plan of attack, but, reliant on his strength to conquer the three miscreants, he left them to make their plans, while he smoked his pipe.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull, delighted at the turn of events. "You've sewed him up this journey, and it jolly well serves him right. He'll about kill me when he gets hold of me; büt it won't be the first time, and it's done me good to see him get a thrashing. Jest look at his face! Haw, haw, haw!"

"Dat face will get all right in time, Bull," said Pete. "You can't possibly do much damage to a face like his. Still, you need not tink dat I'm going to let dem conquer me, 'cos I ain't going to allow anyting' ob de sort."

"But you can't possibly fight three on 'em."

"I rader tink I can. At any rate, I'm going to hab a good try."

"Me and Lamb will help you—won't we, Lamb?"

"I'm going to have nothing to do with you," retorted Lamb. "And if Pete takes my advice he will hand you over to your father, and I hope he will give you what you deserve."

"Well, he ain't my father to start with, and he ain't any relation of mine. I dessay I've got some bad 'uns among 'em, but I haven't got him for one of them."

"That's a lie!"

"Then you've told it. Just you shut up. Pete's fight is enough to go on with, and if you ain't going to chip in, why I am. He's stood by me, and he's about the only man on the face of this earth as would have done so under all the circumstances. Very well, I'm going to stand by him."

"A nice little speech!" sneered Lamb. "I suppose you want to impress Pete. What do you expect him to give you?"

"I hope he'd give me a thundering good thrashing if he thought as bad of me as you do."

"Yah, yah, yah! I don't tink badly ob you at all, my lad, and I don't believe you said what you did to get any benefit from me. Dere's just one order I am going to gib you, Bull, and I shall expect you to obey it. You ain't to interfere. I don't need help. If I do happen to need it I'll call on you, but you ain't to help till I give dat call. 'Nuff said! Yah, yah, yah! You don't look as well as you did before dis fight commenced, Giles. Feeling rader sick and sorry?"

"If we put you under you will have yourself to thank!" growled Giles, breathing hard, but it was not with fury now. That blow on the mark had told its tale. There were few men who could have come up to time after such a blow.

But he meant to have vengeance for it, and, knowing he could not get it by fair means, decided on resorting to foul.

CHAPTER 8. The Combat.

GILES stepped up to his formidable adversary, while the other two slunk behind Pete, and one of them suddenly leapt upon his back. At that moment Giles lashed out at Pete's face, but, instead of ducking, he swung round swiftly, and the miscreant on his back received the blow at the back of his ear. Then Pete grappled with the third ruffian, and, giving him a bear-like hug, fell backwards holding him in his arms.

Giles leapt upon them, fondly imagining that the combat was now in his hands. He aimed a blow with all his strength at Pete's upturned face, but, jerking it aside, the blow caught the man beneath him, and caused him to howl with pain.

It was then that Pete put forth his full strength.

Struggling to his feet, he raised the miscreant above his head, and hurled him at Giles, who went down in a heap.

"Free one ain't fair," cried Pete. "You ain't got de right to knock me about like dis, Giles. Yah, yah, yah! You look worse dan eber dis

time. I tink you need a tonic. Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, but you'm too funny for words."

Giles sprang to his feet, although the other man lay where he had fallen, and he lay so motionless that Pete began to fear he had seriously injured him.

Giles drew a long-bladed knife, and uttering a howl of fury, sprang at Pete. But the miscreant's upraised wrist was gripped, and the weapon dropped from his grasp. Then Pete gripped him round the body, and his face grew purple.

"Now den, Giles," exclaimed Pete, lifting him from his feet. You'm in my power. Do you tink your strength can cope wid mine?"

"Mercy!"

"Well, dat's where it comes in. You are de first to squall for mercy, and de bery last to gib it. You are a miserable coward, and I am going to make an example ob you. You can bully and beat a lad, knowing your strength is far greater; but when you hab to fight a man, you yell for mercy. I'd like to make you stand up to me for a few more rounds, you scoundrel. I'd like to gib you what you deserve."

"You—are breaking—my ribs!" howled Giles, round whose body the pressure was so great that he could scarcely draw his breath.

"Nunno, I ain't, but I could do it if I chose. You hab been a strong man in a circus. Well, so hab I, but I hab been a stronger man dan you hab eber been; and I hab tamed wild beasts. Now I am going to tame you."

"Mercy—— You are—a—killing me!"

"Nunno! I ain't going to do anything like dat. Where are your comrades now. Grovelling on de ground. Yah, yah, yah! You'm all afraid ob me."

"Let—me go. I'm choking!" howled Giles.

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, releasing him. "You shall go just directly, but I want to hab a word wid you first, so I will just hold your collar like so. Now den, Giles. Hab I convinced you dat your strength is no good against mine?"

The ruffian made no reply. He turned his fierce face towards Pete, and glared at him in silence.

"Well, I mean to convince you before I let you go, so dat you mayn't boder me in future. You hab got to answer my question."

"I'll have your life for this."

"Dat ain't any answer to de question. Are you convinced dat I can beat you?"

"No. It's a lie."

"Bery well! I can't tell weder you are convinced or not, but I'm going to manage it somehow. You had best answer my question truthfully, 'cos I sha'n't gib you anoder chance."

"I'll live to see you grovelling at my feet, and howling for the mercy that I won't show you."

"I dunno weder you will be able to manage dat little lot," observed Pete, dragging him aside. Then, seizing a sapling, he tore it up, and commenced to flog the miscreant until he howled for mercy, while neither of the others attempted to interfere."

"Before you begin speaking, Giles," exclaimed Pete, "I may as well warn you dat if you utter any words dat I consider show dat you don't know you are beaten, I shall start beating you again."

"I've got this 'ere to say——"

"M'yes! Go on," exclaimed Pete, raising the switch. "I'm listening al' de time."

"I ain't got nothing to say," growled Giles.

"Oh, I thought you said you had."

"No, I didn't."

"I must hab been mistaken. It sounded exactly as dough you said you had."

"Well, I didn't."

"Seems almost a pity not to make a few remarks."

"You let go."

"Suttingly. Dere you are. Buzz off, and de same remarks apply to you two oders. You'm got your marching orders."

And, to enforce those orders Pete gave the pair two stinging cuts, while they slunk away into the bushes.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull. "You have given them socks this time."

"M'yes! But you'm got to recollect dat dey deserved it."

"There ain't a doubt about that, and you would think it all the more if you khew 'em as well as me."

"You ought to know your own father," sneered Lamb, who could not forgive him for the thrashing he had received.

"Well, I know you, mate, and I must say I don't think so much of you."

"I would greatly prefer not having the good opinion of such a creature as you."

"I don't see how you could get the good opinion of anyone as knew you."

"I don't know which is the more pleasing, your grammar or your father, but I think that charming creature takes precedence. Do you kiss him when he puts you to sleep of a night?"

"I'll put you to sleep if you ain't careful what you are saying. Grammar or no grammar——"

"Decidedly no grammar."

"Well, if you think as you are going to crow over me, you are mistook. I ain't standing any of your nonsense, and so I tell you."

"I can plainly see that we shall have another fight."

"Blest if I agree with you there. I don't believe you will ever fight me again, 'cos you know that I can beat you in the long run, although you may be able to box a bit better. All the same, you ain't got any pluck, and the first whack on the nose makes you sing small."

"Well, boys," exclaimed Pete. "I don't tink we need to discuss dat matter just now. You see, we may get anoder attack from de foe, and if dere's fighting in our own camp, why we sha'n't be able to beat dem off so nicely."

"Here comes the rain," exclaimed Bull. He was quite willing to allow the matter to drop. But then he considered himself the victor.

"M'yes! I'm most afraid dat we are in for a dirty night," observed Pete, "and de worst ob it is dat we may get anoder attack at any moment. Still, we can easily repel de boarders, so we won't boder ourselves about dem. Golly! Hark at de wind. I'm mighty certain dat we sha'n't be able to make a start to-night, so de next best ting to do is to make ourselves as comfortable as de circumstances of de case will permit."

"Then we will build up the fire for a start," said Bull, collecting some more wood. "Haw, haw, haw! Blest if you don't give it to them. I say, Pete, you can fight. I'll bet Giles won't attack you again."

"Nunno! I tink dey hab had enough ob it. You see, de man is strong enough, and he knows a little about boxing; but de ting is to be quick enough, and dat only comes wid long practice."

"Lamb can box better than me, but I whacked him easy."

"That's a lie. I'll fight you any day."

"I should advise you to use de gloves, 'cos dey don't hurt to speak ob. You would hab a mighty good chance wid de gloves, Lamb, if you stuck to him."

"I don't care how I fight him, but I will show him that he can't beat me."
 "I dunno. My impression is dat he can, dough he might get hurt in doing

it."
 "Well, I don't mind that," declared Bull. "I've been used to being hurt all my life, and a little more of it won't matter."
 "Dere's no disgrace in getting beaten by anoder chap," observed Pete, desirous of making peace. "Specially if de oder man happens to be heavier."

"Well, I'd say. Giles is heavier than you, and—haw, haw, haw!—he didn't beat you by long chalks. It was Lamb as started it, and he ain't got to blame me if I whack him. He'd do the same if I was smaller than him. I say, Pete, you ain't surely going to sleep?"

"Eh? Oh, nunno. You two can go to sleep while I keep watch, dough I don't expect dat dere are any savages on this 'ere island."

"Giles is worse than any savage. I tell you straight, he would think nothing of killing you after what you have done to him. It ain't anything like safe for you to go to sleep."

"Nunno! We will keep awake all right, only de sea air always makes me sleepy."

"This rain ought to have another effect, and chance it. Still, I call it jolly. I'd like to camp out like this every night."

"You stupid lout, you will tell a different story in the morning," snarled Lamb.

"Can't get over the whacking I've given you," laughed Bull. Well, it don't matter much, 'cos I'm bound to give you some more, and by the time you are getting over this one you will have the next to get over. Haw, haw, haw! You will always be getting whacked if you don't behave yourself."

Lamb was very sullen. He was trying to plan some mode of having vengeance.

Pete and Bull chatted until far into the night, and Pete found considerable difficulty in keeping awake. The fact is he did not stand in the slightest awe of the gang of ruffians, whereas Bull did, but then he knew them better than Pete did.

It was past midnight, and vivid lightning now accompanied the storm, while the wind was howling with a fury that must have made Jack and Sam very anxious concerning the comrades.

The waves were now bursting on the island with a roar that could be distinctly heard above the fury of the storm.

Now the sound of heavy blows became audible, and Pete sprang to his feet.

"Golly! I hope dey ain't smashing our boat," he exclaimed, darting towards the shore, to the spot where he had left the boat.

As he came in sight of it, he saw the three ruffians, and Giles was smashing in the side of the boat with a jemmy.

Pete caught sight of them only for a moment while the lightning played, and then all was veiled in blackness; and when the lightning played again the men were no longer there.

"Look at dat now," he growled, examining the boat, which was past repair. "It's what you might call mighty awkward. At de same time, it will be rader awkward for de gang, especially if we find deir boat. It stands to reason dat dey must hab one, else dey couldn't hab reached dis island. Come along, boys. We will see what we can do in dat direction."

Pete's idea was to walk round the island shore and find the other boat, but he soon found that this was not such an easy matter as he had anticipated.

He came upon great rocks in several places, and as it was necessary to keep close to the shore, they were compelled to climb these rocks. Even then

there was the chance of missing the boat in the darkness, which was intense between the flashes of lightning.

The three were soon drenched to the skin, not only with the rain, which was coming down in torrents, but also by the spray from the bursting waves, as they dashed upon the rocks.

Bull slipped several times, not being nearly so active as Pete, nor so sure-footed; while Lamb shared a similar fate, a thing that appeared to afford Bull much delight.

"Haw, haw, haw! I hope you haven't hurt yourself, Lamb!" roared Bull, when the lad went sliding down a jagged rock, slippery with wet seaweed.

"You stupid lout! Of course I'm hurt!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Well, I'm sorry, 'cos it serves you right. You ought to be hurt."

"I've broken my arm!"

"Haw, haw, haw! That's nothing! Soldiers get worse wounded like that. Don't you take any notice about that 'ere broken arm. All you have got to do is to exercise it a bit, and it is bound to get all right. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Golly!" gasped Pete. "I must say de boy don't seem to hab much feeling."

"Oh, he's got feeling enough!" answered Bull. "You can hear him groaning."

"But I mean you ain't got much feeling."

"Well, I ain't being hurt. It's for Lamb to have the feeling."

"But you ought to feel sorry for him."

"Well, I've told him I'm sorry."

"But, don't you see, he won't believe in your sorrow if you guffaw at him."

"What do I care for the senseless brute's sorrow?" snarled Lamb.

"I'm rader glad ob dat, my lad," said Pete; "'cos I hab de idea you won't get so mighty much sorrow out ob him, unless—yah, yah, yah!—he happens to hurt himself. Are you much hurt?"

"I am suffering intense pain!"

"Haw, haw, haw! I am sorry, too!" cried Bull.

"You beast!" yelled Lamb, springing to his feet and charging against Bull with a force that sent him sliding down the rock, to plunge into a pool of water.

"Are you hurt, Bull?" inquired Lamb. "Ha, ha, ha! I'm so sorry! Have you broken your dear little neck?"

"No, I ain't; but I will jolly well break your'n when I get hold of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I am so delighted that you haven't hurt yourself in any way, because you really don't deserve it, you dear, nice little boy!"

Bull made no reply. His hand had come into contact with something soft and clammy. It was an enormous jelly-fish, and he got it up in his hand, then, rising to his feet, waited his time for revenge.

Pete tried to smooth matters over, and then led them onwards, stopping from time to time to search for the boat.

Needless to say, Lamb took particular care to keep out of his enemy's reach; but when they had proceeded for about a mile, he became less cautious, for Bull was chatting with Pete so amiably that he appeared to have forgotten the little incident.

Suddenly, however, Lamb heard hurried footsteps at his back, and before he could get out of the way Bull was on him, while they both bowled over down the rocks.

Then Bull got on the top of him, and having slapped the jelly-fish in his face, rammed it home with his fist.

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "Ain't you two boys enjoying yourselves! Mind you don't hurt one anoder."

"Grooh! The beast has hurt me! Woohoo! He's stuffed a pint of jelly-fish into my mouth."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull, retiring, and feeling quite satisfied with his little success. "You said you were frightened of getting hungry, so eat that. Haw, haw, haw! And I hope you will enjoy it."

"Dere's nuffin' poisonous in a jelly-fish," observed Pete.

"I won't stand this!" blubbered Lamb. "It's too disgusting!"

"There's no pleasing you any road."

"You filthy brute!" spluttered Lamb. "Do you expect to please me by stuffing a slimy jelly-fish down my throat?"

"Haw, haw, haw! Don't you like it? They are harmless little creatures, if you treat them kindly."

"I dunno dat it is remarkably kind to yaffle dem up," observed Pete.

"Well, he kept growling about having nothing to eat; now he's got something!"

"I rader fancy he wanted something a little more solid, and a little less slimy."

"Well, you are always telling people that they can't have all they want."

"Dat's so, Bull. At de same time, I would advise you to let de quarrel end at dat particular spot, 'cos you are certain to hurt each oder if you don't."

"Will I let it end there?" cried Lamb, rising, although he kept at a distance from his foe. "He will find that I am a dangerous enemy."

"Yah, yah, yah! Now you'm talking nonsense."

"You will find that I mean what I say! Do you think I am going to allow that brute to stuff a rotten jelly-fish down my throat?"

"I've done it, Lamb!" exclaimed Bull. "You can't get over that. You won't be hungry again till to-morrow morning, and then I will stuff another down your throat. I'll jolly well feed you on jelly-fish till we are able to get off this island!"

"Well, come on, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "Dis ain't de time to quarrel. You ain't supposed to fight in de school; and if you feel dat you must, I would strongly advise you to put on gloves, 'cos dey save a lot ob pain, one way and anoder."

All through the night Pete continued his search. They rounded the island, but they saw no signs of the boat.

Pete knew that they might easily have missed it in the darkness; but he also knew that the gang would not dare to put off in a small boat in such a storm as was still raging, so that when it got light he fully expected to find the boat.

CHAPTER 9.

What Happened on the Island.

TOWARDS morning the fury of the storm abated, but when day broke the sea was very rough.

"Well, boys," exclaimed Pete, "I should say we are bound to be able to find de boat now. We will hab anoder turn round de island."

"I'm tired," exclaimed Lamb.

"Eh?"

"I say I'm tired."

"Well, I don't see how dat can be helped," observed Pete. "I 'spect we'm all tired, more or less."

"I'm hungry, too."

"Come down to the sea, mate, and I'll stuff another jelly-fish down your throat."

"You stupid brute!"

"That's all the thanks I get for feeding you on jelly-fish. You ain't at all grateful. You ought to be very much obliged to me for looking after you."

"Neber mind de tiredness and de hunger, Lamb," said Pete. "If we can only find dat boat we shall get ober bof ob dose."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Bull. "There she is, in yonder little bay."

He was right. The boat lay at anchor in a natural bay, and the three men were in her. Although they were sheltered from the full fury of the storm, the water in the bay was very rough, but the boat rode the heavy seas all right.

They were comparatively close to the shore, but Pete knew that it would be absurd to attempt to reach them by swimming, for directly he took to the water they would pull their anchor up and row away.

He was considering what would be his better plan, when Giles shouted to him:

"Now you know who's master, I reckon!"

"You may be master wid your tongue, old hoss, but you ain't wid your fists!"

"Well, see you here! It may be a twelvemonth, or more than that, before anyone comes to this island. We are going to leave you on it, and you can be thundering sure we sha'n't tell anyone you are here! You can't live for long, 'cos there ain't no water on the place! Haw, haw, haw! Who's master now?"

"It's a mighty funny ting dat free men are frightened ob me," observed Pete. "Why don't you come ashore and tackle me?"

"'Cos we are going to leave you to die of hunger and thirst!"

"Dat ain't de reason, eider. You know pretty well dat I hab a good deal ob money in my possession, and if you weren't frightened ob me, it's mighty certain dat you would come and take it."

"Go and drown yourself! We ain't going to do anything of the sort!"

"Nunno! I know dat; and I also know de reason is dat you can't. Dere's one consolation—you will hab to stop dere for some little time. Now, boys, it ain't de slightest use us talking to dose creatures, 'cos we'm only wasting our breath. What we'm got to do is to see if we can gain de mainland, and I rader 'spect we shall be able to do it somehow. If I had an axe, dere wouldn't be any boder about de matter; but, seeing-dat I ain't got one, we must try some oder means. First ob all, we will come to de boat, and save de sail, and all de rope dat is aboard her."

"What's the good of that?" inquired Lamb. "We shall not be able to anything to eat or drink on the island, and it is certain that we can't get off it without a boat."

"Nunno!"

"Then what's the good of a sail without a boat?"

"Eh?"

"It's ridiculous! We shall be starved to death on this island. What are we to eat?"

"You can have some more jelly-fish directly you are hungry," said Bull. "Haw, haw, haw! I should say you would be able to find enough jelly-fish to keep you going, and you'll get to like them in time."

"I don't see anything to laugh at when the senseless brute makes remarks like that!" snarled Lamb.

This was intended for Pete, who was laughing.

"Well, de only ting dat I can see for us to do is to make a raft, and set a sail on it."

"How can you make a raft without an axe or any sort of tools?"

"Eh?"

"Oh, you heard what I said! It's no good asking you questions!"

"Well, I must say I tink dat question is more suited to Sammy to answer. But p'raps I shall find a way out ob de difficulty. De first ting to be done is to get de sail and mast. After dat we will make a search for a fallen tree. Bery well, when we hab found dat we shall be able to set de mast and sail on it, and after dat—well, I ain't got time to tell you exactly what will happen next, but I 'spect it will be all right."

Lamb was not nearly so sanguine. But Pete set to work, and cleared the smashed boat of everything in her.

Then they roamed about the island in search of a fallen tree; but although they found several, none of them were sufficiently large for their purpose, neither were they near the shore.

At last Pete went to the side of the island where the full fury of the storm had blown, and here he found the very thing he wanted.

A huge tree, which had been dead before it had fallen, had been blown down, and it was comparatively close to the water. Most of the branches had been broken by the fall; and Pete was able to smash off many others, for the wood was very rotten.

"I 'spect dat will float all right," he said; "and if dat's the case, we shall all be able to go on it, 'cos it's bound to carry us."

"We are certain to get drowned," declared Lamb, who could see no comfort in anything.

"Well, dere's only one oder way," said Pete.

"What's that?"

"I could swim to de mainland, and bring you help."

"It would be leaving us here to die of hunger."

"Nunno! It wouldn't take me all dat time."

"And while you were gone those demons would return and kill us," said Lamb.

"What would they want to do that for?" inquired Bull. "Besides, I don't expect they would know that Pete had gone. It wouldn't do to let 'em know, 'cos they would be able to knock him on the head, and prevent him ever reaching the shore."

"And then we should starve!"

"Haw, haw, haw! He only thinks of his own eating. You have a try to swim, though. It's a thumping long way, and I don't see how you could manage it."

"I could do dat all right. Dere ain't de slightest doubt 'bout de matter."

"Then why don't you do it?"

"Why, you see, Bull, I dunno what you two would get up to. I 'spect dere would be a lot ob fighting. Den again, if I didn't happen to reach de shore, it would be mighty inconvenient for you."

"I could feed the little brute on jelly-fish. Haw, haw, haw! I'd give him three meals a day regular, whether he wanted them or not."

"Nunno! I think we will trust ourselves to de safety ob de raft. Just you help me to get it down to the water's edge, only it wouldn't do for us to start in a sea like this. Den again, it wouldn't do to start till we get de wind blowing on de mainland. Dere's too much south in it for de present; but we'm got plenty ob time, and you'm got to recollect dat while we are waiting for de wind, you are getting holidays from school."

"And no food," grumbled Lamb. "I'd rather have lessons and food. Besides, we are drenched to the skin."

"Well, I would only boder about one ob us in dat respect," said Pete, "'cos I'm mighty certain dat you don't care 'bout de oder two. Now den, boys, altogeder!"

They used the broken branches as levers, and after a couple of hours' work succeeded in getting the log as close to the water as Pete required for the present.

Now he lashed the mast to one of the broken boughs, and put some stays. After that he fastened some of the floorboards of the boat to other branches at the sides, forming a sort of deck, so that it would be impossible for the log to turn over, especially as he would be able to balance it with the weight of his body.

"I think we'm all ready to put to sea now, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "All we hab got to do is to wait for a change ob wind."

"We may have to wait for a week or more," said Lamb.

"Well, it can't be helped. We wouldn't be able to start in a sea-like dis. De tide is going down now, and by de time it returns de wind may hab changed."

Pete was too sanguine. The wind did not change, nor did the sea go down sufficiently to enable them to make the start.

Once they went towards the bay, to see if the boat had started, but even they feared to make the start in such a sea. The ruffians, however, were far better placed, for they were provided with both food and water, so that it would not matter to them if they had to wait for a day or two.

By night Lamb was complaining bitterly of hunger and thirst, while Bull chafed him mercilessly.

"I 'spect you are hungry, too, Bull?" exclaimed Pete.

"Well, I could do with a feed and a drink but I've often been a lot hungrier than this. I can go days yet, 'cos I've done it before. All the same, I don't like it; but as there ain't no way of getting any food, all we've got to do is to grin and bear it. We are all in the same boat, so it's as bad for us as Lamb, only he can't help snivelling about it."

They kept no watch that night, as they did not expect that the three ruffians would attempt to land.

The following morning things looked more hopeful. The wind had shifted to the west, and a good breeze was blowing.

"Dere you are, Lamb," exclaimed Pete. "You see, we didn't hab to wait so mighty long, after all. We'm going to make de start dis morning when de tide comes in. And now all we hab got to do is to get our vessel into position to be ready to float her."

"Here, you ain't any good at lifting, Lamb!" exclaimed Bull. "Jest you go and see if that boat is putting off, 'cos if they was to attack us on the water it would be rather awkward."

"Go yourself, you lazy brute! I am not going to obey your orders."

"It doesn't matter 'bout de boat," declared Pete. "We sha'n't wait for dem, and if dey do attack us dey won't come off first best. I shall use dis bough for steering purposes, and it will also do to clump dem ober de head if dey try to attack us. You leabe me to deal wid dem, and we sha'n't go far wrong."

Pete's strength surprised the lads. He got the great trunk far down the shore, then turned one end seawards, so that when the tide came up it would float.

"Now den, boys," he exclaimed, "climb on, and all we hab got to do is to wait for de tide. And just remember dis, if you feel like fighting

you will hab to defer it till we gain de mainland, else dere will be trouble aboard dis vessel. I am going to attend to de steering and de sailing, but I can't attend to you two at de same time. 'Nuff said!"

The tide came rolling in, and although the sea was not as calm as Pete could have wished, he determined to lose no more time in making the attempt, especially as the wind was in their favour.

At last the trunk floated, then Pete pushed it into deep water, and set his sail.

"Yah, yah, yah! Dis is a splendid vessel, I must say!" he exclaimed, as the trunk moved slowly before the wind. "You see, de great advantage ob it is dat she can't spring a leak. Why, she floats like a duck."

"Here comes those ruffians!" cried Lamb. "Bull's father will certainly murder us. I don't wonder at Bull being a murderer, seeing what his father is."

"Can't see dat Bull has murdered anyone," growled Pete. "And you know as well as I do dat Giles ain't any relative ob his. I ain't pleased wid you, Lamb. You'm moaning and groaning all de time 'bout one ting or anoder."

"It was you who got us into this mess."

"All right. Den I'm going to get you out ob it, and de next time I want to take you for an outing you ain't obliged to come if you don't want to."

"The boat is overhauling us," said Lamb, thinking it judicious to change the conversation.

"Dey will do dat easily," said Pete; "and when dey hab done it dey will wish dey hadn't. You leabe me to deal wid dem, and I will convince dem dat it ain't safe to attack us on de high seas."

The long bough with which Pete was steering was far in the water, and probably Giles did not reckon on how long it really was. He brought the boat so close that he could have struck Pete with his oar, and this is exactly what he was watching for an opportunity to do.

"I suppose you think you are safe?" he cried.

"Perfectly safe, old hoss," answered Pete cheerfully. "We are quite satisfied with our boat."

"Oh, you are, are you?" cried Giles, standing up, and holding the oar in his hands. "Well, p'r'aps you won't be so satisfied when I have done with you. Take that, you brute!"

But as he raised the oar above his head to deal the blow, Pete swung the long pole round, and struck the oar with a force that smashed it in half, while Giles uttered a howl of pain, and dropped the end of the broken oar.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I dunno how you are going to row now, old hoss; but I 'spect you will manage it somehow. Suppose I was to shove dis pole frough your boat, where would you be den. Or I might eben gib you a clump ober de head wid it, like so."

And Pete gave him a clump over the head that caused him to sit down.

"Now den, old hoss, who is master ob de situation now. I could easy turn your boat ober, while you couldn't possibly upset ours. Yah, yah, yah! Dat's de wisest ting for you to do, Giles."

He had paddled round with the other oar, and got beyond reach of Pete's pole.

"You'll be sorry for this 'ere," he cried. "I'll admit you've got the best of me so far, but I'll have vengeance for it, as sure as I'm a living man!"

"All right, old hoss!" laughed Pete. "You come and take your vengeance as soon as ever you like. You will find dat I am quite ready for you. 'Nuff said."

Giles sculled the boat back to the island, and Pete kept on towards the mainland.

It was a very slow voyage, and the tide was drifting them along the coast, but he knew that when it turned it would drift them back again, so this did not matter at all.

All the time the wind was blowing stiffly, and the log rolled considerably, but they were really in no danger the whole voyage, and at last the log ran on to the shore.

"I dunno exactly where we are, boys," observed Pete, gazing around, "but I rader fancy we are not so mighty far from de school, so de best ting for us to do will be to go on till we are able to find some house where we can get something to eat."

"There are no houses in sight," said Lamb.

"In dat case we must walk on till we come in sight ob one ob dem. Dere must be plenty ob houses in de place, and, seeing how mighty hungry we are, it stands to reason dat no one will refuse us food, especially as I am willing to pay for it. Dis way to London."

Pete kept along the shore, but seeing no habitations there, he presently struck inland.

Then they came on a small stream, at which they quenched their thirst.

"Golly! If we could only find a joint ob roast beef it would be all right."

"You won't find roast beef in the fields as a rule," sneered Lamb. He was frightfully hungry, and it quite upset his temper.

"Nunno! I know you don't as a rule, but don't you see in dis case dere might be an exception."

"There's some unroast beef," said Bull, pointing to some cows grazing in a field. "I suppose we couldn't catch 'em and get some milk. That would keep us going till we reached home."

"I'm most afraid it would be rader too long a job," mused Pete. "Still, de idea ain't at all a bad one. Howeber, we will see if we can find de owner ob de cows, 'cos he's bound to hab a house ob some sort."

CHAPTER 10.

The Unexpected Meal.

BULL was leading the way, and he was just climbing a gate to get into the next field, when he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"My eyes! Jest look here! Why, here's our dinner waiting for us! Jest laid for three. Who could have done that, now?"

"Golly! Dat's mighty strange!" exclaimed Pete, gazing at a very appetising lunch spread on a tablecloth on the grass. "I wonder if it is Jack and Sammy—tinking we might be hungry, and——"

"You can bet it is!" cried Bull, commencing on the lunch, which consisted of a pair of cold fowls, a game pie, a ham, and one or two other little delicacies. Fire ahead, Pete! This is prime, and no error!"

Pete had his doubts. It seemed such an utterly unlikely thing that Jack and Sam should leave a lunch like that on the off-chance of their finding it. However, Bull and Lamb had buried the axe for the moment, and were going into that lunch in fine style, so Pete saw no earthly reason why he should not help them.

"Rader good, dis!" exclaimed Pete, slashing into the ham, for they soon finished the pie. "You slash up de fowls, boys. I hope you are right

'bout Jack and Sammy habing left dis for us. Yah, yah, yah! I hab my doubts about it."

"There cannot be the slightest doubt," said Lamb, looking innocent. "Bull is such a clever fellow that he would not be at all likely to make a mistake. It would be disgustingly stupid not to eat it, seeing how kindly Jack and Sam have provided it."

"Eh?"

"Of course, they knew exactly where we would look for it."

"Golly! I don't see how dey could know dat. Still, seeing dat we'm begun lunching, we may as well finish. I rader like dese rolls and butter."

"Here come three old boys!" growled Bull, redoubling his efforts on the fowl.

"M'yes!" exclaimed Pete, glancing round. "Why, dat is Professor Hawke, who keeps de school for ruly boys, dough I must say his boys ain't so mighty ruly eider. Good-morning, Hawke, my dear old hoss! How are you?"

Professor Hawke and two other gentlemen strode up, and their faces were red with indignation.

"You vagabond!" howled Hawke, actually trembling with passion. "You thieving rascal!"

"Eh?"

"Don't you dare to say 'eh' to me, you utter scamp. Why, the villain has eaten the whole of our lunch!"

"Wasn't de lunch intended for us, my dear old hoss?" inquired Pete, gazing at the ham-bone and sighing, for there was very little left upon it.

"You know perfectly well that it was not intended for you. The lunch was for myself and these two gentlemen, who are accompanying me for a day's shooting."

"Den I tell you de best arrangement to make, my dear old hoss. You go on wid de shooting, and we will go on wid de lunch. You see, we'm so nearly finished it dat it would be no good your starting now. What you had better do is to hab a good dinner to make up for de lost lunch. I'm sorry for you, but we were so mighty hungry dat we couldn't resist de lunch. Being laid for free, Bull naturally tought Jack and Sammy had placed it here for us. It's just a little mistake; but don't you boder yourself 'bout de matter, 'cos mistakes will happen. Good-morning!"

Hawke did not take the hint and go, and as Pete had now finished the lunch, he pulled out his pipe and commenced to fill it, while Hawke gave expression to some of his indignation.

"Well, what you say may be quite true, old hoss; but you must see dat all de yowling in de world won't do any good now. Buzz off home, and get your dinner!"

"I'll shoot the brute!" yelled Hawke, actually levelling his gun at Pete. The gun was not loaded, but Hawke wanted to frighten him. It was quite a failure. Pete knew that he would not dare to fire, and he struck a match and lighted his pipe.

"Well, I admit what you say may be perfectly correct, my dear old hoss, and dat your man only left de lunch for a few minutes to find you, so as to tell you it was ready; but don't you see, we were mighty hungry. We had had no food for two days, and——"

"I don't care if you haven't had food for a fortnight. You are not going to steal mine."

"Nunno! Dat wouldn't be at all fair, so I will pay for de lunch, and dere will be de end ob de matter."

"No such thing. I can assure you it will not be the end. I shall put you in prison. You have no right on this ground at all. It is private."

"But it ain't yours."

"I have the shooting over it, and I'll make you suffer for having dared to trespass. This is not the first time that I have been annoyed by you and your blackguardly boys; but I will put a stop to it. I will make an example of you."

"You couldn't get a better chap to take an example from," declared Bull. "He's worth ten of you, and if you had been half-starving he would have been the first to give you food."

"Don't you dare to talk to me like that, boy. I suppose you are another gaol-bird for his school. It is a disgrace to the neighbourhood, and I will have it put down."

"You said you were going to do dat a long time ago, old hoss," observed Pete, puffing at his pipe, and taking matters so coolly that Hawke lowered his gun. He came to the conclusion that it would be quite impossible to intimidate Pete.

"I declare I will give you in custody. Here, James! Come here!"

This was to the man who acted as keeper. He advanced, and gazed at the remnants of the lunch.

"Fetch a policeman immediately. I intend to give this scoundrel in charge for stealing my provisions."

"Beg pardon, sir. It would be hours before I could bring a policeman here, but I can easy take him to the station for you."

"Do so, James."

"Now, you come along with me, young fellow, and let there be no nonsense!"

"But, my dear old Jimmy, I don't want to go along wid you," said Pete.

"You see, I want to go home wid dese boys."

"Then you won't. You will come with me!" cried James, seizing him by the collar.

"Now, ain't de man mighty obstinate?" growled Pete, still remaining seated. "Look here, Hawke, my dear old hoss, seeing dat a little mistake has occurred——"

"Why don't you punch their heads, Pete?" inquired Bull. "Give 'em a good thrashing, and teach 'em better manners."

"Yah, yah, yah! You see, Bull, we appear to be in de wrong, and under dese circumstances I don't consider myself justified in punching deir heads. I don't tink Hawke would like his noddle punched. He has to teach in his school; and after I had punched his head, it wouldn't be much use for learning purposes, nor for teaching purposes eider. Nunno; de best way to appeal to Hawke's feelings is frough his pocket. I am ready to pay for what we hab had, my dear old hoss, and all dat remains for you to do is to name your price; den I'll find de money."

Had Hawke been alone he might have accepted this arrangement; but, being with friends, he became indignant.

"Do you think that I am going to cater for you, fellow?" he cried.

"How dare you make me such an offer? Take him to prison, James!"

"Well, look here, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Seeing dat a little mistake has been made, I am willing to rectify it by handing you de sum ob five pounds, which will pay for de provisions and compensate you for your loss ob appetite."

"Preposterous! Do you suppose that I am going to allow my guests to be treated in this manner?"

"Well, you can compensate your friends out ob de five pounds. I should say if you gabe dem twopence apiece dat would about meet de justice ob de case. Are you going to take dese five pounds?"

Now, there is not a doubt that Professor Hawke would have taken the

money with joy had he been alone, for although he had a large school, he was one of those men who are always in difficulties. But as he had friends with him, he only pretended to be very indignant.

"It is theft!" he declared.

"But, don't you see, we were nearly starving, and had to eat something. Den, as I knew I could pay ten times its value if I chose, it was natural dat we took a snack."

"Took a snack, you greedy villain! You have eaten it all!"

"Well, I must say dere ain't so mighty much left," said Pete, winking at Bull and making him laugh. "Are you going to take de five pounds?"

"No; I am not."

"Den we will go home, boys, and I ain't got de slightest doubt dat Hawke will turn up for his five pounds later on when he ain't got dese old swells wid him. 'Nuff said!"

"No! I will not allow the prisoner to escape me like that. Seize him, James!"

James made the attempt, and Pete coolly picked him up in his arms, and, in spite of his struggles, carried him across the field, while Bull yelled with laughter, and even Hawke's guests looked far from serious.

"Let me down, you villain!" roared James. He prided himself on his strength, and had often boasted that he could always tackle three poachers easily. Now he found that he could not tackle Pete singly, and it put him out of conceit with himself.

"I ain't going to put you down, James. You must learn to obey your orders, and dey are dat you'm to take me to prison. Bery well, we'm going dere, only we'm going to de college first, 'cos Jack and Sammy will be bery anxious concerning us, and it will be as well to set deir minds at rest. Dis way to London, old hoss."

"Well, set me down, and I'll walk," said James, finding his struggles were quite in vain.

"Nunno; dat would make Hawke tink you were taking me to prison, while I'm going to take you. Yah, yah, yah! It will rader surprise de bobbies to see de prisoner carrying his captor. I like to surprise dem now and again, 'cos dey are so fond ob surprising oder people."

As Pete proceeded a mile or so, he began to recognise the country. At almost every step James demanded to be put down; but Pete would not take the slightest heed, and he actually climbed several five-barred gates with James in his arms. Then at last they struck the footpath that led to the college.

"Here we are, James," exclaimed Pete. "It has been rader hard work; but seeing dat I hab carried you so far, I'll carry you in. Why, here come Jack and Sammy to meet us."

"You silly owl!" gasped Sam. "What ever are you doing? Is the man injured?"

"Nunno, Sammy. He has arrested me, and he's going to take me to de police-station, only we tought we would come dis way to hab a snack ob refreshments. Dis is James, de gamekeeper, and a bery nice man he is. Oh, do be quiet, James! I ain't going to let you go."

"What happened to you, Pete?" inquired Jack. "We have been terribly anxious."

"Got wrecked on an island. You ain't got a snack to eat?"

"Yes, we have. We guessed you would be hungry when you turned up, and the cook has kept a dinner ready for you. You can begin at once. Come along, only you had better put that man down."

"Don't be so mighty obstinate, Jack. I tell you I ain't going to put

him down. Golly! Dis looks all right. Well, Rory, you see I am back again all right. Yah, yah, yah! I tought you would be rader pleased to see me. Ain't it funny how fond dat dog is ob me?"

"I think it would be funnier if he were not fond of you, seeing the abominable way in which you spoil him," laughed Jack. "But look here, James, don't you bother about my comrade's playful ways. You won't lose by it."

"Nunno, James; you sit dere, next to me, 'cos I'm de carver, and you should always get near him. Do you drink wine, spirits, or ale?"

"Why—well, you are a rum 'un. Ale is my favourite."

"Bring up a jug ob ale, Bridget, my dear, and let's hab dinner as sharp as you can. Sit down, boys! I know you must be hungry again."

It was a special dinner, prepared to suit Pete's requirements, and it is doubtful whether James had ever sat down to such a sumptuous one.

They had got as far as the joint, and Pete was going in for his third plate, while James was drinking his health, when Hawke came rushing into the room.

"Fellow," he roared, turning his fury on James, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Why, it's de dear old professor," exclaimed Pete. "I dunno what he's a professor ob; but I should say it is not ob music, de way he's yowling, 'cos dat ain't a bit musical. Look here, Hawke, sit down and hab some food, and dat will balance matters."

"I'd rather starve!"

"That's 'cos you ain't tried it, old boy," growled Bull. "I have, and know."

"You dare to talk to me like that, you little thief?"

"Dat's libel, old hoss," said Pete. "Bull is not a thief."

"I say he has been a thief!"

"Nunno, you didn't. You said he was a thief."

"So he is. He is a young thief, and an utter scoundrel! I do say it, and I mean every word I say. I know something of his past life."

"What do I know ob your past life, Professor Hawke?" demanded Pete. "Suppose I was to blurt out what I know ob your past—ebery incident in it, mind? I ain't talking ob dat affair in New York, but ebery one ob dem."

Pete knew that Professor Hawke had spent many years of his life in that city, and that is absolutely all that he knew; but he was disgusted that the master should rake up Bull's past, which, no doubt, had been very bad. Pete took into consideration the poor lad's fearful bringing-up, and he guessed that Hawke had certain skeletons in his own cupboard, so determined to fight him with his own weapons.

That they were very effective ones Pete knew at a glance. Hawke's face changed, and a frightened expression came into his eyes as he fixed them on Pete. Then he lowered them, and Pete looked very serious.

But Hawke determined on taking the upper hand, which was the very worst thing he could do with a man like Pete. The only way with him was to appeal to his feelings, and then he became childlike and ridiculously indulgent.

"You have insulted me," cried Hawke, "and you have robbed me! Now you shall answer for it. I will put you in prison!"

"Bery well, old hoss. You can try all dat, but don't make such a noise about it. Go and do it straight away."

"And so I will."

"Den what's de sense ob your coming here to tell me you are going to

do it? You see, you are showing your hand, and I might run away, or do anything like dat. If you want to arrest a man, you ought to take him unawares."

"What do you mean, James, by allowing the villain to treat you like this?"

"Well, sir, you see I'm quite satisfied with the way he's treating me now. As for the carrying part of the business, why, I couldn't help myself. He's as strong as a couple of lions."

"You are my servant, and——"

"Well, you offered to give me half a crown for the day's work, but——"

"Dere's de half-crown, James," exclaimed Pete, handing him the coin. "Now you won't hab to boder de professor for de payment, and I must say I tink it ain't at all exorbitant for a full day's work. Now den, Hawke, I'm willing to pay you for de food we ate, and which you say we stole."

"I would not think of looking at less compensation than a hundred pounds, seeing all the insults that have been heaped on me, and I make this offer without prejudice, and reserve my rights to put you in prison."

"In dat case I don't see dat I should be any better off by handing you a hundred pounds for, say, a sovereign's worth ob food."

"If you pay me that sum I shall take no further action."

"Well, look here, James," exclaimed Pete. "I consider dat all de insults hab been heaped on your shoulders 'cos it ain't pleasant to be carried two-free miles against your will, especially if you hab to walk back again. Now, I tink it only right dat you should be compensated for your loss ob time and dignity. Dere are five sovereigns for de purpose."

James gasped. It was a big sum to him, for he was only an under-keeper, and did not get regular employment.

"Well, I'm blowed! If this ain't a bit of luck!" he exclaimed. "You really mean me to keep this?"

"Yah, yah, yah! I would tink you mighty stupid if you didn't, old hoss. Are you satisfied wid de remuneration?"

"I am so. You may carry me all over the world at the same rate of pay. I say, I suppose you couldn't give me a job of some sort in this college——"

"That he couldn't!" bawled Potts, rushing into the room. He had been listening outside the door, but that request was too much for him. He knew perfectly well that the biggest idiot on the face of the earth would be able to take his job, and he had always treated Pete so rudely that he had an idea that worthy would like to make a change. "You ain't got the right to talk like that, James, trying to take the bread out of other men's mouths."

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm been listening again, Potts," cried Pete.

"I jest happened to overhear the shameful words, as I was a-coming along the passage."

"Well, it's all right, mate," exclaimed James. "I ain't trying for your job, only if I could get something regular. I used to be a gardener once."

"You ain't wanted here," cried Potts. "I can do all that is required; besides——"

"Turn these insolent rascals out of the room, and tell me what you are going to decide on with me," cried Hawke.

"I can't employ you as a gardener, old hoss," said Pete, winking at James. "You would want de flowers to grow all your own road, and——"

"I never heard such insolence."

"Den buzz off home, and you won't hear any more ob it. You see, James, de garden ain't certainly kept in bery nice order. Are you a married man?"

"No."

"Well, dere's a nice room ober de stables, which I could furnish for you. Tink dat would suit?"

"It would so. I'd be downright grateful to you if you could see your way to do it."

"It ain't fair towards me," declared Potts.

"But you get thirty shillings a week, and tips, and your living, old hoss, and it won't make any difference to you. What wages would you want, James?"

"I'd be thankful for a pound a week."

"And your food?"

"No. I wouldn't expect that, of course, and, if as you think as a pound is too much, why, I'll be glad to come for fifteen shillings. I want something regular, and ain't had it for years."

"Yah, yah, yah! Fifteen shillings a week for a full-sized man. Look here, Jimmy, dere are two sorts ob men; dose who ask too much, and dose who ask too little; and de last lot are de worst, 'cos dey neber get on. Always ask enough, 'cos you won't get all you ask as a general rule. In your case you will get a bit more, 'cos I don't consider fifteen shillings fair wages. Now, I'm a bery strict employer. I wish you wouldn't guffaw, Jack. What's dere to laugh about?"

"Your strictness."

"Well, shut up, and laugh about someone else's strictness. Let me see, you will hab rooms free; den I daresay dere will be a few perquisites when I want you to run errands, and——"

"That's just it. Taking hard-earned money out of my pocket," cried Potts. "Here, I slave away my life for you, and these are all the thanks I get. You take on an anteloper, and——"

"James ain't a deer," exclaimed Pete. "He ain't a bit like an antelope, 'cos dey are pretty animals, and you couldn't call James a pretty animal. Yah, yah, yah! You neber saw a pretty animal wid whiskers. You ain't a pretty animal, Potts."

"I'm quite satisfied with my looks, and so I tell you."

"I'm glad to hear dat, Potts, 'cos no one else could possibly be satisfied wid dem. Still, you can't all be as beautiful as dis child—— I wish you woud stop your laughter, Jack. What are you guffawing at now?"

"Your beauty."

"I don't wonder at it pleasing you; still, you mustn't laugh at it. Now, 'bout dese wages. I consider dat a fair rate ob pay—for your whole time, you know, James. You will hab to start work in de morning, and keep on wid a break for meals—until de afternoon—well, we will make de wages two pounds a week, and——"

"What!" howled Potts. "Why, it's ten shillings more than I get."

"But you get your food."

"So will he. You know that jolly well. He will get more food than he can eat."

"Eh?"

"You will send him in each day to all his meals. You know that."

"Well, I don't suppose de man will mind."

"But I mind."

"It can't make any difference to you, old hoss. Dat's de arrangement, James, and if you like to hab your meals each day as Potts says, why, you are welcome; only you must remember dat I sha'n't force you to eat against your will, and I only allow eggs and bacon for breakfast when dere happens to be nuffin nicer. Dere are two sovereigns for de first week's wages, 'cos I always pay a week in advance."

CHAPTER 11.
Pete's Return.

JAMES'S astonishment at Pete's extraordinary manner of engaging a gardener was only equalled by his joy. It quite spoilt his appetite for the remainder of the dinner. He was really a decent fellow when properly treated, and he wanted to get to work at once.

"Well, dere ain't all dat hurry," observed Pete, when he asked where he could find the tools. "De first consideration is to furnish your room. You wait a minute, Hawke. I'll just finish dinner, and den tell James what furniture he can hab."

And all the time Pete was finishing dinner Potts was complaining about his wages, and he astonished James a little more by the impertinent manner in which he spoke to his employer.

Pete was a long time finishing his dinner; then he dismissed his pupils, and went with James to select such furniture as Pete considered he required, and after that he infuriated Potts by telling him to help get it into the room over the stables.

"I simply won't," cried Potts. "I'm engaged here as the school-porter, and not as the carrier of another man's furniture—what ought never to have been lent to him—and who never ought to have been engaged."

"Well, look here, James," exclaimed Pete. "You will hab to do it by yourself, but, as dere are proper stairs up to de room, why, you won't hab much difficulty. Dere's a sobereign for de extra labour, 'cos you ain't supposed to do dat sort ob work."

"Of course, if there's pay attached to it—ill as I am—I'll undertake the work," cried Potts.

"Nunno, old hoss. I ain't making you iller. Just you go and rest your weary limbs. James will manage it; you ain't to allow Potts to help you, James. 'Nuff said. Clear out, 'cos I want to deal with Hawke."

Hawke was very indignant, but he was not the sort of man to allow his indignation to stand in the way of a hundred pounds. He pointed out that he was dealing very leniently with Pete.

"It was a theft, and there is not a doubt that I could put you in prison for it, but——"

"Den I tell you what it is, old hoss," cried Pete. "You ain't got de right to compound a felony, and de proper ting for you to do is to put me in prison."

"I am prepared, under all the circumstances of the case, to accept a hundred pounds."

"Well, I ain't prepared to pay it—least, I ain't going to pay it. You can hab five pounds if you like, but I won't gib you five pounds and a penny, 'cos you don't deserve it."

"Listen to me——"

"Oh, buzz off. You make me tired. I ain't going to listen to you."

"It will be de worse for you if you do not."

"It will be de worse for you if you don't clear out ob dis room."

"I tell you——"

"Well, I'll tell you dis, old hoss, and you can consider dat is a fact. Dere's a five-pound note, and you can take it or leabe it, just as you please; but if you ain't out ob dis room before one minute is up, I shall take you up in my arms, carry you to de front gates, and drop you in de road. Now, please yourself."

Then Pete placed a five-pound note on the table, and fixed his eyes on the clock.

"You do not appear to realise the seriousness of your action," cried

Hawke. "I can assure you that I am not a man to be trifled with. I shall take very serious action in this matter unless you agree to what I have offered. You have grossly insulted me in the presence of my friends, and, unless you compensate me for your outrageous conduct, I shall place the matter in the hands of the police——"

This was as far as he got. Pete rose.

"Time's up!" he cried. "Now for action."

But action was not necessary. Professor Hawke picked up the five-pound note and left the room, threatening some of the things he said he was going to do.

"Yah, yah, yah! He's a funny old hoss. At de same time, you can always smooth him down wid a little money."

"Well, tell us what has happened," exclaimed Sam.

Then Pete gave them an account, but it was a very disjointed one.

Meanwhile Lamb had made his way across the Close, and all the while he was wondering how he could best have vengeance on Bull.

Pete's suggestion of putting on the gloves was not to be thought of. In the first place, Bull, although he might not be able to box, was a remarkably hard hitter, and Lamb knew that even if he got the better of it, he would not be able to hurt his opponent as much as he desired and was determined to do.

However, he was a resourceful lad, and at last he hit on a plan which he felt would be quite satisfactory from his point of view.

He found Bull that evening, and at once approached him.

"Look here, Bull," he exclaimed. "There's no sense in us quarrelling."

"Haw, haw, haw! Wouldn't be much sense as far as you are concerned."

"Hawke is going to give Pete into custody."

"Pete don't seem to care."

"Well, that's just his way. You never know whether he is caring or not; but I happen to know that he does care very much."

"Then he's got a rum way of showing it, I must say. But what are you driving at?"

"Why, seeing that you and I were parties, it stands to reason that we ought to take our part. Pete has been swindled out of a hundred pounds. Hawke has robbed him of that amount. See?"

"Yes, but you surely don't expect I can pay my share of that 'ere."

"Of course not. Who ever thought of such a stupid thing. It is true that Pete can afford to lose the money, but we ought to punish Hawke for his villainy. I know it is what Pete would like, but he does not care to ask us to do it."

"But how can we punish the chap? I know your little game. You want to land me with the row, and then start grinning at me."

"Nonsense! What should I want to do that for?"

"Because of the jelly-fish I stuffed down your throat."

"That's nothing. Merely a joke. I'm not going to bear malice for a joke."

"Well, what do you want?"

"The question is, will you join me? I mean have you pluck?"

"I'll bet I've got as much as you!"

"I am glad to hear that. Of course, if you are frightened I can get Droog, or one of the other fellows."

"There's no need to get them, 'cos I'm ready if you are not going to land me with a row."

"Oh, I dare say there will be a row, but if you are not ready to take your fair share of it, I can easily get a fellow with more pluck who will be glad enough to come."

"Well, I'm ready, so long as you do take your fair share of the consequences."

"Of course I shall get more than my share, because I am an older boy; but that doesn't matter. I am quite used to that. However, what I suggest is this, that to-night, when all the boys are asleep, you and I leave the dormitory, and make our way to Hawke's place, then give him one of the worst hidings he has ever had in his life."

"My eyes! How about the boys there?"

"Hawke keeps very late hours. He pretends that he studies half the night. My impression is that he drinks; but that doesn't matter a bit. He will be in his study. Well, we will enter it, take him by surprise, then deal with him."

"How?"

"Why, empty the ink bottle down his throat——"

"Haw, haw, haw! That's a good idea! Haw, haw, haw!"

"I knew you would like it!"

"Well, I was thinking of the way I stuffed that old jelly-fish down your throat. I say, Lamb, I believe it was a bad-un! Smelt powerful, didn't it?"

"Of course, if you are going to play the fool, and are frightened to come, why there's an end to the matter. I shall go alone."

"Yes. I think I see you doing it. And I'm not believing that you are doing this just to have vengeance on Hawke because he's done something to Pete. I'll bet he's done something to you as well."

This was absolutely true, but Lamb did not expect Bull would have guessed it. Hawke had on one occasion given him a thrashing that he was never likely to forget, and Lamb was very fond of killing two birds with one stone. His object on the present occasion was to do Bull harm, and pay him out, but if he could pay out Hawke at the same time, it would please him all the better.

"Can I rely on your coming?" he inquired.

"Yes! I'm ready. But when are you going?"

"Certainly to-night. We shall be able to get out. I don't suppose old Potts will be going out."

"All the better if he is, 'cos he won't be able to stop us."

"Well, if he goes out he always comes in late, and we might meet him. Suppose we come and question the silly brute? He will be at supper now. He's generally at some meal, for all he does is to eat and sleep, and he does both of them pretty well."

Bull was always ready for some fun, so the pair made their way to the porter's lodge, and as Lamb had anticipated, they found Potts just commencing his supper.

"I say, Potts," exclaimed Lamb, "I hope I'm not interrupting you——"

"Yus, you are!" roared Potts. He was in a very bad humour because James had been employed.

"Well, I'm sorry for that; but you see, I have a confession to make, and——"

"Now, if you ain't out of this in two minutes, I'll fling you out!" cried Potts. "It's bad enough to be kept at work all day, without having my meals spoilt by a lot of young gaol-birds. You'll come to bad——"

"Well, that is why we have come here!"

"I know it is!" cried Potts, missing the point of Lamb's sarcasm. "You ought both to be in prison, and that's where I would put the lot of you if I had my way."

"But don't you see, Potts, if we were sent to prison no porter would be

required here, and you would lose your hard work and meals. You would have to live on turmuts or——”

“Jelly-fish!” suggested Bull. Haw, haw, haw! Let's stuff jelly-fish down his throat!”

“I am afraid you have only one idea, Bull, and that a remarkably stupid one,” said Lamb severely. “Now, look here, Potts. You are going out to-night——”

“That's a lie!”

“Well, to-morrow?”

“That's a different thing. Now, are you going to clear out of this, or are you not?”

“Of course, we will certainly go if you wish it; but I have something to say to you that you may consider rather important. Mind, I am not going to declare that it is true, because——”

“If you tell me there ain't the slightest chance of it being true.”

“I'm really glad of that, Potts. I was hoping it was not true, and I hate getting a boy into a row if there's no cause for it. I was under the impression that there was no truth in it.”

Lamb knew Potts's nature. It was only necessary to excite his curiosity, and then they would be sure of gaining his attention.

“Well, jest you tell me what you have heard,” he said, as Lamb moved towards the door.

“I'd rather not, if there is no truth in it, because I don't want to get Droog into a row.”

Droog was one of Potts's special foes.

“What's he been and done now?”

“How did you offend him?”

“Never mind that. Just you let me know what he's been and done.”

“You will tell Pete, and that will get him into a row.”

“I shall do my dooty. I'm porter in this college, and it falls on me to do my dooty by the young varmint's what is brought here. I know as he's been and done something agin me.”

“Well, I don't know for certain, and if you think it is not really true, there's no sense in frightening you by repeating it, is there, Bull?”

“I don't know what it is!” growled Bull.

“What an empty-headed lout the fellow is!” mused Lamb. Aloud he said: “That is true enough, but you will know when I tell Potts. The question is whether it is my duty to tell him.”

“That makes no odds with you,” growled Potts, going on with his supper.

“You don't care a hang whether it is your dooty or not.”

“I wouldn't like to repeat a thing that isn't true, Potts. I begin to believe that you are right, and that I am wrong. I don't think there can be any truth in it, otherwise you must have noticed it, unless, of course—— Still, that is hardly likely.”

“See here, if you don't tell me every word it will be the worse for you.”

“Well I don't want any harm to come to you; at the same time, I don't want any harm to come to Droog. It is a pity you offended him, and a greater pity still that he is such a vindictive fellow. All the same, I think he has gone too far with you this time.”

“What's he been and done?” demanded Potts.

“Well, of course, it wasn't my fault, you know.”

“Who said it was?”

“Besides. I don't know for certain. I don't know all about it.”

“Well, jest you let me hear what you do know, or it will be the worse for you.”

"He was sneering at Bull, you know. Making fun of him about that poisoning affair. I dare say you remember it."

"Bust it! Of course I remember it!"

"Well, he declared he could manage it without your tasting the stuff. Of course, I don't know what he was sprinkling over your supper to-night when you went down to draw your beer. It might have been quite harmless—then again it might not, and——"

"You varmint!" howled Potts. "And you've let me go and eat it! Woo-hoo! I'll have vengeance for this!"

"You can't, old boy, not if Droog has done his work properly. Ha, ha, ha! What an utter fool the man is," added Lamb. "I knew he was soft, but I did not expect him to swallow that little lot so quickly on the top of the cayenne you gave him."

"Haw, haw, haw! Where's he bolted to?"

"To Pete, of course," said Lamb, slopping Potts's ale into the fireplace. "Here, let's upset the table. He'll think he did it when he rushed out of the room."

Then the charming Lamb turned the table over, and all that was on it fell to the floor with a crash.

"Ha, ha, ha! He will like that little lot!"

"So will Pete," said Bull.

"Oh, bother Pete! Let's come and listen to what Potts is telling him."

Pete was in his study struggling with accounts when Potts rushed in.

"They have been and p'isoned me again!"

"I'm sorry. I say, Potts, what does seven and eight make?"

"Bust it! He don't care!"

"Yes, I do! I can't add up de figures widout——"

"Bust your figures! I tell you I'm a dying man!"

"Well, you hab made me lose my count, now. Let's see. Where's de complaint book? Oh, here it is! Now, we go under de head ob P. And we gib dat page free hundred. Bery well! Potts—poisoned for de second time. Make inquiries. Dere you are! What could be nicer dan dat? Buzz off!"

"I tell you I'm a dying man!" howled Potts, sinking to the floor, and groaning dismally.

"Poor old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, going on with his calculations, and the way he said it so tickled Lamb's fancy, that he burst into a roar of laughter and fled, followed by Bull.

"Did you ever see such an idiot in all your days!" exclaimed Lamb. "He's softer than hot butter. All the same, we have learnt that he is not going out to-night, and that will make it all right for us. Now, what we have got to do is to go to bed in our clothes, and when those stupid kids are all asleep I will show you how to leave the place without waking any one. I suppose you can climb?"

"Rather!"

"Well, we descend by a rope. I'll have it all fixed. There's no difficulty there, and we can get back the same way. We sha'n't be away very long."

"You think he will be up?"

"It doesn't much matter if he isn't. If he's in bed we will give him a jolly good scare. He's a harmless old idiot."

Lamb, on a previous occasion, had found him nothing like harmless; but he wanted to get Bull into trouble, and was not at all particular how he did so.

CHAPTER 12.

A Midnight Adventure.

THE night was very dark and rather stormy, but nothing could have suited Lamb's purpose better. He fixed his rope from one of the windows in the bath-room, because he knew that there was a fine holly-bush beneath it, and he fastened the end of the rope round the bath tap, so that the other end of it was at least ten feet above that holly-bush.

Then he smiled to himself, for, needless to say, Bull was not with him. Even if he had been he would not have been able to see that holly-bush.

Apparently those two boys were nearly asleep when the master came round to see if lights were out. It was Mr. Carton, and, as he was much more severe than Mr. Lindley, they were more cautious not to arouse his suspicions.

From their point of view all went well. Lamb's only fear now was that Bull should insist on his going first.

"I've fastened the rope from the bath-room," he whispered, as they crept along the passage. "We can easily slide down it, and it won't be difficult to get up again. Here we are. Mind how you go now, and don't you laugh, or Potts might hear us, and spoil the little joke. It's not very high. I've been down many a time."

Bull was by no means a cautious lad, otherwise, he would not have undertaken that reckless task that night. He climbed through the window, and commenced the descent; while Lamb shook with suppressed laughter.

Bull slid down the rope in fine style; then suddenly he came to the end of it, and the next moment there was a sound like the breaking of branches, followed by the most appalling yells.

Lamb stamped about the bath-room, and nearly choked himself with suppressed laughter; for those yells continued.

Bull found the holly remarkably sharp, as he tried to struggle from the bush, which was a very large one. His slightest movement caused him considerable pain.

Lamb tried to think of something sad, but was of no use. Every yell caused him to laugh the more.

At last Bull struggled from his painful position, and then Lamb put his head out of the window.

"What ever are you making that row for?" he inquired.

"I've been and tumbled into some prickly bush," growled Bull, in a hoarse whisper, although it was certain that if his yells had not been heard, his ordinary voice would not have been. "The rope is a lot too short."

"I say, that's serious. Some stupid villain must have cut a piece off."

"Why didn't you tell me there was a holly-bush there, you silly brute?"

"There isn't one."

"Well, some prickly bush."

"You must be dreaming. How could there be a prickly bush, when I have descended hundreds of times?"

"Well, just you come down."

"All right. The rope ought to be long enough."

"P'r'aps you will find it long enough; but I jolly well didn't. And p'r'aps you will find there's no prickly bush here, though I jolly well did!"

"If there is one that fool of a new gardener must have planted it this evening. I'll pay him out for it if he has! I believe it's Carton. He said he would stop me getting out of the window, the beast! I say, if he has done it he must have cut the rope as well. How are you going to get back again if it's too short? Can you reach it?"

"Rats! Not by a dozen feet or more."

"Then I tell you what we shall have to do. I'll draw the rope up, shut the window, and come out by the back door. You wait there a minute, and I'll be down. I'll bring the key of the back door, so that we can let ourselves in. That will be a jolly lot easier than climbing the rope, won't it?"

Bull muttered something that did not sound very promising. Lamb thought he caught the word "punch," as applied to heads, and he guessed whose head that would be. However, he was not satisfied yet, and trusted to his ingenuity to make matters right with Bull, who was certainly rather thick-headed, although Lamb had his doubts whether he would be able to convince him of Mr. Carton's "guilt."

Lamb let himself out of the back door, and locked it on the outside; then he went round to Bull, who was badly scratched and furious.

"I say, old chap," exclaimed Lamb, "I'm awfully sorry about this."

"There is a bush there, isn't there?" growled Bull, giving him a violent shove into it.

Lamb sat down, and yelled.

"You stupid lout!" he cried, springing from his uncomfortable seat. "What do you mean by playing that rotten trick?"

"What do you mean by dropping me into the holly-bush?"

"I did nothing of the sort. I believe it was Carton. He threatened to give me a lesson. The silly beast knows that I'm in the habit of breaking bounds, and he's had that holly, or whatever it is, planted there. He has also cut the rope too short."

"Sounds thundering likely, doesn't it?"

"Well, I can't help it. If it isn't Carton it must be Potts, or some other silly villain. I'm terribly scratched!"

"You ain't so bad scratched as I am, and chance it!"

"Well, what's the good of blaming me for another chap's fault? All the same, we're wasting time. Come on! We've had a bad start, but we'll have a good finish. I hope Pete hasn't heard us. You made an awful row."

"You weren't so jolly silent when you sat in that bush."

"That was entirely your fault; and the other wasn't my fault."

"I don't think! I believe you did it on purpose, jest to spite me for ramming that jelly-fish down your stupid throat. If I was certain about the matter, I'd punch your head till you couldn't see out of your eyes!"

"Look here, Bull. You have no right to talk to me like that. If you are hurt——"

"I am hurt. I'm jolly well hurt all over!"

"Well, it wasn't my fault. It was Carton, or Potts—unless it was Droog. He doesn't like me——"

"I don't see how any chap could."

"Droog may have done it out of revenge," continued Lamb, ignoring Bull's remark, although he looked very vicious. It was too dark, however, for Bull to see his face.

"We can scale the wall here," observed Lamb. "Shall I go first?"

"Yes. I don't want any more of your giddy jokes."

"I tell you I didn't do it."

"I know you do; but it doesn't follow that I've got to believe you. You know what an awful liar you are."

"Only with the masters. Of course, I deceive them sometimes; but I'm not going to deceive a chum."

"Chum be hanged!"

"Of course, if you are determined to quarrel, there's an end of the matter."

"I don't care whether we quarrel or not, but I know jolly well you are not going to fool me again. I believe you did it on purpose."

"Well, as I know I didn't I don't care for your false suspicions."

"False grandmother! You will care for them if I start punching your head. I tell you straight, if I was certain you did it on purpose I'd make you sorry for it!"

"It's a dirty thing to suspect an innocent fellow. But follow me. I can see it's no good trying to convince you when you have once made up your mind. If you like to wrongfully suspect me, I can't help it."

Pretending to be very indignant, Lamb climbed the wall; then Bull followed him.

"Now, we haven't so very far to go," exclaimed Lamb.

"Jolly good job, too, 'cos it has started raining!"

"Well, we don't care for that. Our clothes are bound to get dry by the morning. We ought to pay Hawke out for having robbed Pete of a hundred pounds."

"Rats!" growled Bull. Although not quick-witted, he was absolutely certain that Lamb was not taking all that trouble and risk for Pete's sake.

Bull was rather suspicious about the matter, and he kept a strict watch on his companion, for he felt pretty certain that Lamb would get him into difficulties if the opportunity arose.

Their conversation was not of a friendly nature. Lamb did his utmost to ingratiate his companion, but that worthy was still smarting from the effects of the holly-bush, and he was not at all inclined to be friendly; especially as he had not the slightest faith in Lamb's advances.

They struck the river, and kept along its banks until they reached the college.

It was all in darkness, but Lamb did not appear to be very disappointed. He had an idea that they would be able to have revenge without so much risk, and that was exactly what he desired.

"He's gone to bed," murmured Lamb, "but that won't matter at all. Let's climb on the veranda, and give him a scare."

"Well, you go first this time," growled Bull. "I'm not going to take all the risk."

"No, I notice that, but as there is not the slightest risk, I fail to see what you are frightened of. However, I will go first with pleasure."

There was not the slightest difficulty in climbing up the trellis on to the top of the veranda, though what they were going to do when they got there Bull had not the slightest idea.

He did not care much so long as there was to be a little fun, and he would have considered it an excellent joke if Lamb had slipped on the sloping roof of the veranda into a rose-bush or something prickly.

But Lamb was cautious. He crept along on his hands and knees, keeping near the wall of the house until he reached the bedroom window.

As far as he could see, no one was in the room. He could just make out the bedstead, and certainly no one was in it, while he knew it would be very unlikely that anyone should be in a dark room.

"Look here," he whispered, as Bull crept up to him. "There's no one in this room. I believe it is old Hawke's, and that he hasn't come up to bed yet. Suppose we get in and drench his bed with water. He will think it is one of his louts who has played him the trick, and punish the lot of them. The brutes thoroughly deserve it."

"The window is open," whispered Bull.

"Yes. I know, and we will get the bottom sash up directly. Be careful you don't fall, especially while I am in the room."

Now, it is quite true that Hawke was not in his bedroom, neither was he in his house. He had been spending the evening at the local club with his sporting friends, and was returning at that very moment.

He carried a walking-cane, and was humming a tune, being in a good he was in that happy state of mind, but it happened to be the birthday of one of the members, and it had been rather a convivial evening. humour with himself, and the rest of mankind. It was not very often that

Professor Hawke had no sooner come in sight of his college, than he also came in sight of those two boys scaling his veranda, and all his amiable feelings vanished.

At first he imagined they were his own boys, and he flourished his cane menacingly as he ran forward.

He had to cross the lawn to reach the veranda, and Lamb did not hear his footsteps; then Hawke hid behind the bushes, thinking that the surest way to catch the delinquents.

"It's all right," murmured Lamb, who had got the window open a couple of inches or so. "It is rather stiff. Can you get your fingers under it?"

It has been mentioned that Bull was not a quick-witted youth. On this occasion he proved the assertion, for surely no smart lad would have obeyed such an order, seeing that Lamb was holding the top of the window, and wanted vengeance.

Lamb, of course, was standing up now. Bull was kneeling.

He got his fingers underneath, then Lamb kindly jammed the window down.

"Yow-yow!" yelled Bull, banging his knee against Lamb's legs, and sending him flying. Losing his hold of the window, Lamb shot down the slippery and sloping veranda roof; then, as a spider pounces on a fly, Hawke pounced on him, and grabbed him by one arm.

Bull released his fingers, and sucked them while he groaned; but gradually a grim smile spread over his features, for he heard Lamb giving tongue. He also heard the switch of a walking-cane, and dimly saw a master moving round with a boy, while the noise that boy was making was really appalling.

Self-preservation being the first law of nature, Bull climbed carefully down, and, having reached the ground, watched proceedings from a safe distance.

His fingers were hurting him badly, but they were not giving him anything like the pain that came was giving Lamb.

Professor Hawke was a strong man, and had been used to using the cane all his life. Lamb's shrieks had no effect upon Hawke's nerves. He did

not know who the boy was, but felt quite sure he deserved a thrashing, and he got it.

"There, you young rascal!" panted the indignant master. "Let that be a lesson to you. Follow me into the college."

Lamb did nothing of the sort. He bolted directly Hawke released him, and Bull went after him full-speed. They went across Hawke's flower-beds, and that worthy realised for the first time that it was not one of his own boys.

It was not until they got clear of the grounds that they stopped for breath. Lamb was sobbing.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Bull. "He did whack at you, too! Reminded me of beating carpets, only he was quicker with the stroke. Did he hurt you?"

"You silly brute, of course he did!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Well, I'm glad he didn't hurt you very much, 'cos you really don't deserve it. It was all my fault, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was. You may have cause to regret it, too."

"Haw, haw, haw! You didn't make much row. You don't like pain, do you?"

"Do you think you are funny?"

"Well, I thought you were, when you were yelling like an old tom-cat with its tail in a trap. Haw, haw, haw! The way he whacked you was a caution; but I wouldn't cry about it if I was you. Smarting a bit, ain't you?"

"I wish I had broken your beastly fingers."

"Haw, haw, haw! P'r'aps you will get something for that little game. I ain't going to hit you now, 'cos I've got the idea I wouldn't be able to make you feel anything like the pain he did."

"It was you who made me fall."

"I'm glad of that. It's sort of consoling for my fingers. Feel rather stiffish about the back? I have heard rubbing it with mustard does it good, and if you like I don't mind having a try when we get back."

"I'm glad Potts whacked you."

"Yes, you would be, but that ain't hurting me now. Haw, haw, haw! Your little lot is, unless I am much mistaken."

"Well, we've had some fun!" exclaimed Lamb, suddenly changing his manner, for a bright idea had occurred to him.

"I don't know so much about that. All the fun I've had was seeing you whacked, and I don't believe you found that so thundering funny. Haw, haw, haw! You love Hawke, don't you?"

"Do you fondly imagine I won't punish him?"

"I don't know, but I'm jolly certain he punished you. Yell! Well, I never heard a chap yell like you did. I couldn't help thinking as he was a-hurting of you; but as you say it was fun, that's all right."

"It's not a very friendly thing for you to make fun of a chap who took all the row for your sake."

"Rats! Did you jam my fingers in the window out of pure love of me?"

"That was an accident."

"Oh, yes! You shoved the window down when you wanted to raise it. Sort of forgot which way it went; but I remembered, 'cos my fingers were underneath it."

"I think the sashes broke."

"Very likely. They would be sure to break just when you told me to shove my fingers underneath the blessed thing. Same as that rope being too short, and exactly over a holly-bush."

"I can't help accidents."

"I don't know so much about that. You seemed to help those two."

"It is a mean thing to blame me for accidents."

"See here, I don't care how many accidents there are like the last one, but I do care about the first one, and also the second."

"Yes, just because you suffered. Well, it's no good talking about it now. All we have to do is to have vengeance on that brute Hawke. He ought to be shot."

They were walking side by side now along the river, and Bull was nearest to it. Lamb was merely watching for an opportunity. He knew the water was only about a couple of feet deep, but he had an idea that if he could only succeed in sending Bull headfirst into it he would get wet.

What he was afraid of was that Bull would be on his guard, as he should have been. However, Lamb meant to make the attempt.

They had reached a spot where the bank was high, and Bull, still laughing at his companion's misfortunes, was quite close to the brink.

Suddenly Lamb turned on him and charged.

It was quite successful. Bull shot over the bank, and dived his head into the mud at the bottom of the river. His legs sprawled about in the air for an instant, then over they went, and his body disappeared beneath the surface.

When his head did come up it was so coated with mud that Lamb would not have known him had he been able to see him.

"I hope you haven't got wet, Bull," said Lamb sweetly. "It's rather a chilly night, and it would be a most stupid thing to get wet. You might take cold, you know, and that would be such a pity. It would worry me no end. Shall I lend you my hand to get out?"

"I'll lend you my fist when I do get out, you little viper! You ain't safe, that's what's the matter with you. You are like some blessed wasp, and a chap never knows when you are going to sting."

"I do hope you haven't got wet, my dear fellow. You are such a nice, gentlemanly lad, that I should be broken-hearted if you had got wet."

"All right. Just you wait till I come out."

"No thank you. I am in a hurry to get back. You see, I want to get in before you do, because I am going to let you sleep out of doors to-night, like any other wild beast. You will have time to get dry before the morning. I don't fancy you can run as fast and as far as I can. If you can, you must be an excellent runner. Ha, ha, ha! Who is the fool now?"

"You will be, when I catch you!" panted Bull, sprinting after him:

and for the first two or three hundred yards it really seemed as though he would catch him, but Lamb was not running his hardest. He allowed Bull to almost gain the lead he had taken, and then he quickened up his pace, just as Bull was compelled to slacken his.

"Come on, you blundering lout!" cried Lamb. "Can't you run better than that? Why, you silly old splay-footed yokel, you don't run as well as a cart-horse!"

"I shall catch you before long."

"When you get dry, eh? Ha, ha, ha! I should be ashamed of myself not to run faster than that, you lumbering idiot! I intend to give you a sound thrashing in the morning, but I'm going to leave you out to grass to-night."

Bull made no reply. He slackened down to a walk, and hoped to be able to catch his agile foe by stratagem.

Several times Lamb allowed him to get so close that he made a sudden rush; but Lamb was always on his guard, and each time he darted away at a pace that Bull had no chance of excelling.

It was only when they were nearing the college that Lamb darted away. Bull followed him at the greatest pace he could command, but he lost ground at every stride.

The way Lamb got over the wall was to climb a tree, and work his way along the branch until he got on the top of the wall, and he had already done so when Bull came panting up.

"You are just a few moments too late, you silly lout!" cried Lamb.

"It's all right! I can wait my time!" exclaimed Bull, climbing the tree. Lamb tried to upset him as he came along the branch, and, finding he could not do this, he dropped to the ground, and ran towards the back door.

He had not got many moments to spare. As he got the key in the lock, he heard Bull drop to the ground; then Lamb unlocked the door, and pushed against it.

It had been bolted on the inside!

CHAPTER 13.

Bull Has a Rough Time of It.

LAMB just had time to convince himself of this, and darted away, when Bull rushed up, and there could be no doubt that he was in a state of fury.

"Now, you little brute, I'll catch you; and won't I thrash you, too!"

There is not a doubt that he would have done all this, but for two reasons. One of them was that Lamb knew every part of the grounds, even in the darkness, and the other that he could run considerably faster than his foe.

But Bull was in a very dogged state of mind. He determined to run Lamb down. He believed that his own staying powers were better than his enemy's, and so he started off at a jog-trot, keeping the fugitive in sight as well as he could.

Lamb appeared to divine his intentions, and he did not exert himself too much.

"Do you really think you will catch me, you lumbering idiot!" sneered Lamb. "Well, I am going to show you that you are mistaken, and you will get into a jolly row running over Pete's flower-beds."

This is where Lamb led him, and that vindictive lad appeared to take a delight in doing damage to one who had only done him good.

"You are frightened of me, you miserable coward!"

"That is another little mistake on your part, old dunderhead, and I am going to prove it to you to-morrow morning! But you will find that out later on. Ha, ha, ha! Are you getting dry? You were silly to tumble into the water like that. Then again, it was not remarkably clever to jam your fingers in the window."

These taunts only infuriated Bull the more, but, strive as he would, he could not catch his agile foe.

He kept making spurts, and, just as he fondly imagined he had caught him, Lamb would dart away laughing. In this manner Bull was tiring himself out, and it was only by fierce determination that he kept up the chase through the night.

Lamb was using his brain more than the other, and he reserved his energies as much as he possibly could. All he did was to keep a few yards ahead of his opponent; and when Bull dropped into a walk, Lamb did the same.

Had Lamb chosen he could have fled from the grounds, but his object was to tire his opponent out, knowing that he would have to meet him sooner or later.

It was only when day was breaking that Lamb left the college grounds, and made his way towards a small copse close by.

"I am going to run away from you now, you hulking great lout!"

"Are you!" panted Bull. "I'll follow you up if you run all over the country; and when I catch you I'll give you a worse hiding than Hawke did!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Then come on!"

Lamb sprinted for a hundred yards or so, and, then stopping, he calmly waited for his foe.

Now, what Bull should have done would have been to have waited until he had regained his breath, but he was far too angry to do anything of the sort. He went in with a rush, and, stepping aside, Lamb struck him heavily on the side of his head; then, giving him no time to recover from the blow, which was a severe one, he cross-counter on the mark.

After that, Bull had a rough time of it. His strength was almost gone, and Lamb was not the sort of lad to lose such a fine opportunity.

Guarding his adversary's round-hand blows, he lashed out, generally

striking body-blows; then he suddenly brought his right up beneath Bull's jaw, and the next instant landed three on the mark that sent him to the ground.

"Now, do you think I'm afraid of you, you beast?" snarled Lamb, showing his teeth. "Get up and fight it out, and just you give me that thrashing you promised! Get up, you lout, I say!"

Bull was winded, but he obeyed, and they went at it again; but now Bull had neither strength nor science to aid him.

Lamb kept delivering body-blows, and he knew exactly where to place them, as his opponent discovered to his cost. The fact is, he was a skilful boxer, and before long he had Bull at his mercy, a thing he was the very last lad to show.

They had four rounds, and each one ended by Bull being knocked down.

"Do get up and fight," exclaimed Lamb. "How can you give me that thrashing you promised if you keep rolling on the ground? I'm rather fond of the game of ninepins. Ha, ha, ha! Your face is a bit swollen, and I'll bet you feel sore about the ribs."

Bull knew that he had only one chance, and that was to get to close quarters. It is true that he had not much strength left, but he hoped that his extra weight would tell.

He struggled to his feet, and Lamb laughed at him for panting.

"You are not shaping at all well, old Bully!" he cried. "You are like some old codfish. It's a case of bellows to mend, but you will be worse before you get better."

Bull rushed in. He was not in a fit state to talk, having no breath to waste.

Lamb met him with some stinging blows in the face; but for all that, he closed, and a struggle commenced for the fall.

Here again Lamb had science in his favour. Pete was a great believer in training his boys in all sorts of sports, and Lamb had been well trained in wrestling. Getting Bull across his hip, he gave him a cross-buttock that pitched him on his head, and that ended the fight.

"Get up, Bully! Do get up, you lout! Ha, ha, ha! What about the thrashing?"

"I believe I'm done this time."

"Do you really? Oh, don't say that, you faint-hearted booby! Don't let your courage, or want of it, rather, lose you the fight."

"It ain't a matter of courage; only I can't fight no more now."

"The great lout can't fight a boy smaller than himself. Ha, ha, ha! I should be ashamed of it, Bull. What will all the fellows say when I describe this fight to them? Come, you had really better finish it!"

"I can't fight no more."

"Then you acknowledge that I have beaten you?"

"You have this time, but I'll fight you again and again till I beat you."

"Well, you must be a silly idiot to think I will agree to an arrangement like that. It is my intention to give you such a thrashing that you will never fight me again. You see, you are bigger than me, and, therefore, I

am giving you no chances. Every time you get up I shall knock you down; and if you won't get up of your own accord, I intend to lash you till you do. See, I am going to cut a stick for the purpose."

After that Bull had a rough time of it. Lamb did not spare him. He tried his best, but had not the slightest chance, and at last he lay on the ground in a hopeless state.

"Now, I wouldn't believe you on your oath," said Lamb, "so I am not going to make you swear never to fight me again. But if you ever do, I'll pay you worse than I have to-day, and that's saying a good deal, as I dare say you know."

Then Lamb strode away, leaving the unfortunate Bull lying on the ground, moaning.

It was a lucky thing for Lamb that Pete never learnt the details of that fight.

At eight o'clock that morning the comrades commenced their breakfast. It was one of the meals that were invariably punctual, for Pete always routed Jack and Sam up, being a very early riser himself.

"Well, boys," exclaimed Pete, "I tink we might take a sort ob holiday to-day. Don't you see, dere are a lot ob responsibilities attached to a schoolmaster's life. I must say, I don't consider he has a bery happy life, poor brute. When I tink ob all my anxieties, I could start yowling. I dunno weder a head schoolmaster ought to cry sometimes, but I'm most certain he must do it in private."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Golly! Jack, it's nuffin' to guffaw at! You would find it a most serious matter if I was to start yowling. Still, as it's a nice fine day, and as we ain't got any trouble wid de boys, I tink—— Golly!"

Mr. Carton entered the room, and he looked very angry.

"I have a serious complaint to make, Pete, and——"

"Enter it in de book, old hoss. You will find it in my study."

"But this is a serious matter, and——"

"Den do it in red ink, and write de word serious under it. I always serve de serious ones dat way, and I must say most ob dem are in red ink. Blue ink means rader less serious, and green ink means—I forget what dat means, but you will find free or four coloured inks."

"I have seen most of them on the carpet," said Jack.

"Do you mean to say you are going to allow this matter to pass unnoticed?"

"Sattinly not! Enter it in de book, and it will be attended to in regular rotation."

"Look here, Pete! This is perfectly absurd. To my knowledge, you have hundreds of complaints entered in that book——"

"I should say dere would be more dan dat."

"And you have not taken the slightest notice of the first one."

"I'm making arrangements to hand half ober to Jack, and de oder half to Sammy."

"It is ridiculous! Two boys broke bounds last night."

"Hab dey come back?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, dat's satisfactory, so far. Did you eber break bounds when you were a schoolboy, Carton?"

"Two wrongs do not make a right."

"Nunno; and I'm not saying it's right to break bounds. Still, boys will do it."

"I really do not know anything these boys will not do."

"Dat shows dey are industrious. Still, I tink I would enter dat complaint in red, just to show me it's one ob de serious ones. Good-morning!" Mr. Carton took the hint, and shut the door hard.

"I was tinkin', boys, we might take a turn up de riber, and——"

"See here!" cried Potts, entering the room. "Two of those boys broke bounds last night, and I locked 'em out. They locked the back door on the outside."

"Do you know who dey were?" inquired Pete, helping himself to some more eggs and bacon.

"No, I don't; but——"

"Enter deir names in de complaint-book in blue, to show it's a serious one, and——"

"I thought red was the serious colour, Pete?" observed Jack.

"Eh?"

"I say I thought red——"

"Well, dere's no need to yowl, Jack; I can hear you. I believe it is red. Enter deir names in red."

"How the thunder can I enter their names in red, when I don't know 'em?"

"Well, go and ask all de boys till you come to de two who broke bounds."

"Well, of all the silly things I ever heard, that is about the silliest! Do you suppose those boys would tell me their names?"

"Should say it ain't at all likely."

"Then what's the good of asking them?"

"I dunno."

"More don't I."

"Eh?"

"It's too mighty stupid for words, the way this 'ere school is run. If you was to give me a free hand, I could run it a sight better, and on less money. I wouldn't give the young varmints the fat of the land, like you do; not much! They should have grool for their breakfasts, and the same for their dinners, if they didn't behave theirselves."

"Well, dey needn't worry 'bout dat, Potts, 'cos I ain't going to gib you anything like a free hand. You might save money on de food, and tings like dat, but I'm mighty certain it would cost me de same or more. How-eber, you had better make de entry, and say de names ob de boys are unknown."

"I believe it was Lamb and Bull, 'eos they are knocked about something frightful, especially Bull."

"Bery well, say Potts tink's it's dose two; and dat will be rader an interesting entry, 'cos it will show you do tink sometimes, and widout dat entry no one would eber believe it. Buzz off home!"

"But I want to point out——"

"Well, clear out instead!"

"It's this way——"

"Yes, frough de door, unless you prefer going frough de window."

"I call it downright shameful!" declared Potts, taking the hint to go.

"You are a disgrace to the school!"

"Funny ting, you can't please dat man," observed Pete, buttering a roll.

"He wouldn't please me if he spoke like that," said Jack. "You are too easy-going with him, Pete."

"Funny ting dat. He seems to tink dat I'm too hard wid him. Still, seeing dat I am satisfied, dere's an end ob de matter."

"I reckon you are too soft with him," said Sam. "You want to teach him his place."

"I don't see dat it's much good, Sammy, 'cos he ain't de slightest use in dat place. Now get on wid your breakfast, an den we will come to de study, and see if dere are any letters, 'cos it is no good wasting all de day."

It would have been a very remarkable thing if there had been no letters. The comrades generally got a pile of them, and most of them were of a begging nature. Pete always let his accumulate, and only read about one in a dozen. He used to send money at one time, but found that too expensive and ridiculous, because it invariably brought a dozen more letters from the same party. On this occasion there was the usual pile.

"Golly!" gasped Pete, picking it up, and flinging it into the fireplace. "I ain't going to wade frough dat little lot. If it is anyting important dey are bound to write again; and if it ain't—well, den it won't matter not reading it. Now——"

"Professor Hawke has called," said Potts.

"Tell him I'm engaged, and he must call again at free o'clock, 'cos I shall be out den."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," cried Hawke, entering the room.

"Two of your boys broke into my house last night, and robbed me of a large sum of money."

"Look at dat, now! Enter it in de complaint-book, old hoss, and put it in green ink, 'cos dat shows it is a serious matter."

"I shall not. That money must be refunded."

"But how do you know it was my boys?"

"Because I caught the young rascals."

"What were deir names?"

"How should I know?"

"You should have asked."

"And if I had, they would have given me wrong names. I have lost a large sum of money."

"Dat may be; but don't you see, you must prove to my satisfaction dat it was my boys. Could you identify de boys?"

"No! It was too dark."

"Den I'm afraid I can't help you. Good-morning!"

"If you think that I am going to allow the matter to drop like that, you are mistaken. The question is: Are you prepared to refund the money?"

"Nunno! Dat would be compounding a felony. I dunno who made dat law, but I must say it is a bery convenient one. Now, what do you tink 'bout de state ob de weather, Hawke? Is it going to rain? We want to know, 'cos we'm going up de riber in a boat. Jack and Sammy are going to row, and I'm going to steer."

"I don't know, and I don't care; but I do know that I am not going to allow your boys to rob me."

"But you say dey hab robbed you, and so you hab allowed it."

"I say you must refund the money."

"How much was it?"

"I do not know the exact amount, but——"

"Well, was it a thousand pounds?"

"Certainly not! Nearly ten pounds. I left it in my bed-room in a drawer. There was a five-pound note and five sovereigns, and some loose silver, the amount of which I do not know."

"You shouldn't leave money about like dat, old hoss, 'cos it only places temptation in de way ob boys."

"I have the number of the note here—O/E 94768."

"Well, dat's some sort ob consolation to you. I should keep dat number on a piece ob paper, and consider it a five-pound note. I must say you ain't proved to me dat my boys hab stolen de money, and I don't tink it at all likely dey hab done so, 'cos if dey wanted to steal dey would do it here. Just tell Lamb to come here, Potts. You question him, Hawke, and if he confesses, or if I come to de conclusion dat he's guilty, den I will make de ten pounds good."

"He's the worst thief in the school," declared Potts, "and that's saying a good deal for him."

"Here, you buzz off, and obey my orders!" cried Pete. "I don't want any ob your opinions on de subject, 'cos dey are always too stupid for words."

"Sit down, Hawke, my dear old hoss! I shall pass judgment on you after you hab giben your evidence, so dat you must be careful to speak de troof, de whole troof, and nuffin' but de troof, else I shall send you to penal servitude for de remainder ob your unnatural life."

"You must be mad to speak to me like that, fellow. You are a disgrace to this school——"

"Dat ain't de first time dat has been said. Potts said de same ting, which shows your intellect is about on a par wid Potts's."

"I say you are a disgrace to the school——"

"Yes! I heard you!"

"And the school is a disgrace to the neighbourhood."

"Look at dat, now! But here comes Lamb—looking lamb-like. Did you eber see a boy look more innocent? Now, just you get de whole troof out ob dat boy, old hoss, and I shall be surprised."

Lamb bowed to Professor Hawke in the most polite manner possible, but, although that worthy did not recognise Lamb as the boy he had thrashed the previous night, he had had an interview with him before, and had found him an uncommonly hard nut to crack.

"I am Professor Hawke, and——"

"Good morning, sir! I hope you are perfectly well."

"I believe, boy, you are aware of what occurred last night."

"There is not the slightest necessity for you to apologise, sir. I am perfectly aware that masters do get drunk sometimes, nor do I believe all that I heard concerning you. You may, of course, have been very drunk as——"

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"Excuse me, Pete," said Lamb, much as a head-master would have spoken to a boy; "but, to my mind, it is a shocking thing for a master to get drunk, especially as I hear Professor Hawke is in the habit of doing so. Not that I believe—but, oh, sir, I implore you to give it up! It will lead to your ruin."

Professor Hawke simply gasped. For some moments he really did not know what to say.

"You insolent young scoundrel!" he howled at last. "How dare you make such an abominable accusation against me?"

"I am only going by what I heard."

"It is an infamous lie. I was at my club——"

"Ah, that accounts for it! I am glad to hear that it is only an isolated case, and hope you will not get drunk again. If you should find the temptation too great for you, I would advise you to do it in your own house—after the boys have retired."

"This is more than I will submit to!" hooted Hawke. "I say you and another boy broke into my house last night, and robbed me of ten pounds."

"Are you sure there were two boys, sir?"

"Of course I am!"

"I thought perhaps there might have been only one, and, in your then unhappy condition, he looked like two to you."

"Yah, yah, yah! I know dat boy will make me laugh just directly!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for laughing at the insolent young rascal," snarled Hawke. "I say it is an infamous falsehood."

"I am sorry that you wanted the matter hushed up, sir," said Lamb. "Had I known that, of course, I would not have mentioned it to the boys—and my revered masters."

"I say you broke into my house, and robbed me."

"I don't wonder at it."

"No wonder? Then you admit it?"

"My dear kind sir, no one could help admitting that you were horribly drunk, and it stands to reason that you would imagine all sorts of things in that state. I would advise you to keep from intoxicants in future. It only needs a little determination. Pete does not get drunk—neither do I."

"Golly! I should hope you didn't!" growled Pete. "Don't you see, de man has lost ten pounds."

"Imagination. His brain being inflamed with drink, he would naturally imagine all sorts of things. I don't suppose he has ten pounds to lose. I have heard he is fearfully in debt in the place, and I don't wonder at it if he drinks like that. It is a shocking thing that a man should become so depraved, and I am rather astonished at your laughing at him, Pete."

Here Lamb took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

CHAPTER 14.

Lamb's Revenge.

FOR some moments Pete gazed at his daring pupil in mute surprise, but Lamb met his gaze unflinchingly.

"Did you rob him ob ten pounds, boy?" demanded Pete.

"I! Certainly not. Surely he does not suspect me of such an abominable crime. If he has really lost a ten-pound note, which I don't believe for a moment, he has probably lighted his cigar with it."

"Well, fire ahead, Hawke!" growled Pete. "I dunno weder dat boy is innocent or guilty, but if you can bowl him out I shall be surprised."

"At what time did you go to bed, boy?"

"At about nine—that would be before you left your club."

"Did you get up again?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, you did! When?"

"While you were still drinking at your club."

"Don't you answer me in that impertinent manner. I was doing nothing of the sort."

"The club waiter must have been wrong then."

"You have not seen the club waiter. What did you get up for?"

"My dear comrade, Bull, sleeps near the window, and I feared there might be a slight draught from it, so I rose to make sure it was properly closed."

"Well, if that ain't the latest!" gasped Potts. "You should jest see his dear comrade. Bust if you'd know him!"

"Send Bull dis way," ordered Pete. "Fire ahead, Hawke!"

"Do you deny that you came to my place last night?"

"I have not denied it, but I will if it will give you any satisfaction. If I were in your place, and you have spent the ten pounds getting intoxicated, I would ask Pete to lend it to me. It's much more honest than pretending boys from this school have stolen it."

"I have not come here to be insulted."

"Certainly not, sir! I esteem you greatly, and would esteem you far more if you kept sober."

"I never heard such an infamous accusation in——"

"Pardon me, sir, your accusation that I stole ten pounds is far more

infamous, and there is no truth in that, whereas it is true that you were drunk last night."

"I say it is not true, boy!"

"I don't wonder at your denying such a disgraceful thing, and it is to be greatly deplored that it is already known all over the place. I will try to find Bull for you, Pete. Potts is such a silly ass."

"Here, you come back!" bawled Pete.

But Lamb had fled, and, what is more, he left the college grounds. A brilliant idea had occurred to him, and he badly wanted vengeance on Hawke, by reason of that thrashing.

Pete formed his own conclusions. He knew that if there were the slightest truth in Lamb's accusations, and there certainly was, although it was exaggerated, it was certain that Lamb must have been there to notice Hawke's state, as he could not have heard of it so soon from outside.

"Now, look here, old hoss!" growled Pete. "I don't consider dat you'm convicted dat boy; at de same time, I'm going to return your ten pounds. I shall hab to pay you in a note, 'cos I shall want de gold I hab got for to-day, and— Have you got change for dis twenty-pound note?"

"I believe so," said Hawke, although he knew perfectly well he had not. He pulled out his purse, opened it, and then opened his jaws. Inside that purse was a little bundle. It was a five-pound note, with five sovereigns and some silver wrapped up in it.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Here, you stop a bit, old hoss! I mean to see de number ob dat note, to see if it agrees wid de paper in your pocket. Yah, yah, yah! Dere you are: O/E 94768. What hab you got to say now?"

"It—it is a mistake. I—I certainly remember leaving the money in my drawer, and—but—I don't recollect taking it out again."

"Nunno! You wouldn't do if dere's any troof in what Lamb has stated."

"I say it is an abominable falsehood. Oh, is that you, Potts——"

"I can't find Bull, and——"

"Well, go and tell Lamb dat Hawke has found de money in his purse. Buzz off! I wouldn't be in your shoes, Hawke. As likely as not, dat boy will bring an action for damages against you."

"He could not do so without your assistance."

"Couldn't he, dough. You don't know him. Dere are plenty ob lawyers who would take de case up, and Lamb would tink nuffin' ob going to one ob dem, if he tought he could get money out ob you. Yah, yah, yah! You'm in a tight corner, and, if I know anyting ob dat's boy's nature, he will make you sit up."

"It is unfortunate, but—well, I did not actually accuse him."

"Oh, yes you did!"

"I am prepared to make the lad a little present."

"Yah, yah, yah! I wouldn't advise you to offer it. If you do, you will find dat present has to be a mighty large one to stop his hand. He's a smart boy, and he ain't quite as straight as I hope to make him wid time; but what he doesn't know ain't worf learning."

"But you surely would not allow one of your pupils to bring an action _____"

"I wouldn't allow one ob my pupils to climb on your veranda, as you say dey hab done, all de same, you notice dey do it. When dey want to do anything like dat dey don't ask my permission, but I always seem to get de blame for what dey do."

"I don't blame you for this!"

"Yah, yah, yah! You could hardly do dat, seeing dat you are entirely to blame. But I don't mind any amount ob blame, my dear old hoss. It goes in one ear and comes out at de oder, and it pleases de blamer, while it don't unplease de blamed. What I'm tinkin' about is what dat boy will do."

"Of course, you would have sufficient control to prevent him doing anything."

"Eh?"

"I presume you have control over your boys?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are frightfully sanguine, Professor Hawke!" cried Jack. "The amount of control Pete has over them is not so very great."

"But he can surely prevent this boy taking any action?"

"I don't suppose he will try; and if he did try, I am absolutely certain he would not succeed."

"Well, look here!" exclaimed Pete. "We'm going down to de riber, so suppose you walk some ob de way wid us, and we will talk de matter ober, and see what can be done."

Hawke accepted this invitation. He was very anxious not to have any further trouble about the matter, and he believed that he would be able to talk Pete over.

"I have a serious complaint to make," cried Potts, as they passed his lodge.

"Enter it in de book in yellow ink."

"Young Lamb has gorn out without permission."

"Eh?"

"I say Lamb has gorn out without permission, and agin my direct orders."

"What sort ob—"

"Gorn hout!" howled Potts.

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"What! You laugh at him going out without orders, and ag'in orders?"

"I'm laughing at what he's gone out for. Did you tell him dat de money had been found?"

"I did so."

"What did he say then?"

"Started guffawin' fit to break his neck, and says, 'Then I'm going out on business.' And although I told the young varmint to come back, he bolted right before my eyes."

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm in for sometin' dis time, Hawke. You are, really, old hoss."

"But the young rascal dare do nothing," declared Hawke, following the comrades. "He was certainly on my veranda, whether he stole the money or not."

"You may be right dere; but, you see, he declared dat he was not near de place, and how you are going to prove dat he was, I dunno—I really don't know."

"You must see that the utter young villain does not take action. He could not do so unless you assisted him."

"Well, he could subpoena us free to gib evidence, and we should hab to tell dat you accused him ob burglary. You see, a lawyer would know how to work it. Well, de only ting is to wait and see; but it's my impression dat you are in an awkward position, and if you are, Lamb is de bery worst boy you could get to hab de whip-hand, 'cos he's so smart and he ain't exactly absolutely truthful. Yah, yah, yah! Golly! Look at dat little lot!"

On the whitewashed wall of a cottage beside the lane, done in charcoal, was Hawke's portrait. It was remarkably well done, too, and he appeared with a bottle in one hand and a jug of beer in the other. His legs were wide apart, and there was an inane smile on his face. Beneath the picture was printed:

"HAWKE RETURNING FROM HIS CLUB."

"Golly! I call dat mighty well drawn ,too. Yah, yah, yah! Dere's just one question I would like to ask, old hoss. You say you caught one ob de boys last night. What did you do to dat boy?"

"Flogged him severely."

"Den you can depend on it dat boy is going to hab his revenge."

"This is a gross libel!" hooted Hawke. "Why, how dare the boy do such a thing? I will put him in prison for it."

"I dunno much 'bout de law, old hoss, but I really don't tink you could go so far as dat."

"It is disgraceful that you should have opened this school in my neighbourhood!" declared Hawke, trying to rub off the offensive caricature.

"I fancy you may save yourself de trouble, old hoss," observed Pete. "Dere are sure to be some more knocking about, and a few more or less won't do much harm. I'm inclined to tink dat boy will make an artist. What do you tink ob de work, Jack?"

"Well, it's shameful! All the same, it is remarkably well done. He has the gift of drawing."

"I tink I shall bring it out. I wouldn't boder 'bout rubbing it off, old hoss. Let's see if dere are any more."

A little way along the lane was a fence which had been tarred. There were several drawings on that, done in chalk; and the worst of it was there was a distinct resemblance to Hawke in the form and features, except that in each case the nose had been elongated.

To make the identity quite certain, beneath each portrait was a libretto giving Hawke's name in bold letters.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Just look at dis one. 'Hawke and his Hobby.' Yah, yah, yah!"

The professor was lying on his back beneath the tap of a beer-cask, and the beer was streaming into his mouth, while there was a pleased look on his face, which was a good deal more than there was on the face of the original.

"It is positively scandalous!" hooted the indignant man.

"Well, I 'spect people will know dat dere's no troof in it," observed Pete.

"Are you making excuses for the infamous young scoundrel?"

"Nunno! But how are you going to prove dat he did it? You know, he will neber admit it, and unless you catch him in de act, why, you will find a difficulty in bringing it home to him. Look dere! Dere's de local bobby on ahead, and he's laughing at someting. I wonder what de man is laughing at? Let's come and see."

It was at one of Lamb's cartoons. There was the professor nearly life size. He had stolen a jug of beer from a little child, who was weeping. Hawke was draining the jug. Beneath it was written: "Professor Hawke on meum et tuum."

"Golly!" gasped Pete. "Ain't it mighty awful? Did you see de boy who drew dat picture, constable?"

"No fear; you can bet he wouldn't let me see him do it. He didn't come along this way, unless he hid behind the hedge when I passed."

Those drawings were all over the place. Lamb was not only a clever artist, but he was also a very quick one; and at last Hawke left the comrades, vowing all sorts of impossible things.

"It's mighty annoying," growled Pete. "All de same, people will know dat it's only a practical joke, and dat dere's nuffin' in it."

"The worst of it is, when you throw mud some of it is sure to stick," exclaimed Sam.

"Dat's true enough, Sammy," said Pete. "And I ain't at all sure, judging by de professor's personal appearance, weder dere was not a little mud dere before Lamb commenced frowning it. I'm sorry Hawke took de law into his own hands and flogged de boy, dough dere ain't a doubt he deserved it. But I dunno where dis is going to stop. I tell you what we had better do, and dat is to pay a visit to Mudleigh, de lawyer. Lamb is mighty vindictive, and he's got cheek enough for anyting."

Mudleigh was a local solicitor, and he had a name in the place for sharp practice. He was a great favourite with the criminal classes, and invariably defended them.

The comrades made their way to the village, and called at this worthy's office, to learn that he was engaged.

"In dat case we will wait till he's disengaged," said Pete. "But who's he engaged wid?"

"One of his clients," answered the clerk, who knew better than to give any information. Things in that office were always kept dark.

The comrades waited for about half an hour, and were then shown into a particularly dirty and badly furnished office, where a big man with sandy

hair and blear eyes sat at a table. He was Mr. Mudleigh, and he greeted the comrades with a smile and a request that they would be seated.

"Good-morning, gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"Has a lad named Lamb just called here, concerning——"

"My good young man," interposed the lawyer, looking very indignant, "I never discuss business with third parties."

"But don't you see, we want to know——"

"I can assure you that you are wasting your time and mine."

"Well, look here, old hoss, I shall assume dat de boy has been here. He's at my school, and I ain't allowing him to bring any actions against anyone. Now, I hab reason to believe dat he's just left you, and has tried to get you to bring an action for damages against Professor Hawke. Bery well, dere are plenty ob reasons why you will lose dat action and make yourself look ridiculous."

"I am greatly obliged to you for your advice, and would just point out that I shall have to charge you six-and-eightpence for this interview."

"You can take your fee out ob dat half-sovereign, old hoss. But you must not bring dis action. You would be bound to lose it, for reasons dat I know, and which de boy hasn't told you. Now, Lamb has had too much revenge on de man already, seeing dat he fully deserved de flogging he got, and——"

"My dear sir, all this has nothing to do with me. Business is business. You have paid my fee, and I am quite ready to give you a little advice for it. In dealing with a lawyer, never try to appeal to his feelings. He hasn't got any. It would be useless being a lawyer if he had. You might as well try to appeal to the feelings of a moneylender. If you want really to touch the feelings of either, you had better do it through their pockets. See? If you were to rob me of five shillings, you would hurt my feelings."

"Bery well, old hoss, you won't get rich out ob de action——"

"Or the compromise to the action. Go on."

"Nunno! Hawke won't pay you anyting. He would know you couldn't take de matter into court."

"Then he knows more than I do, and that is saying a good deal, considering the experience I have had."

"Well, I ain't allowing de boy to bring de action."

"Why not. You have a rival school, and all the harm you do Hawke will be beneficial to your school, I take it."

"Golly! You are a mighty, full-sized scamp, Mudleigh!"

"That language is actionable, and, as my clerk heard it, I shall be compelled to bring an action against you for defamation of character."

"Well, what you had better do is to bring an action for assault at de same time," said Pete, seizing him by the collar, and shaking him till his teeth rattled. "Now, if I hab any more ob your nonsense, I'll gib you de worst flogging you hab eber had in your life."

"I'll give you in custody! Now, stop! Let this cease. You cannot take the law into your own hands."

"Can't I, Mudleigh? You will find dat I can do a good deal dat you don't know ob. I came here to make terms wid you; but now you talk in dat manner, I ain't going to hab anything to do wid such a scamp."

"Do you fondly imagine——"

"Here, dat will do, old hoss! I can't stand a man like you. You ought to be ashamed ob yourself, trying to encourage an unruly boy to get money out ob a man he has injured. I tell you what it is. I'm going straight to Hawke, and I'm going to tell him to take no notice ob your threats ob action. After dat, I'm going to tell him dat I will be answerable for any action against him. You will hab me to fight wid, and as de magistrate has made me de boy's guardian, you will find dat I sha'n't allow him to go any furder wid de matter. Now den, bring your actions de best way you can; and I may tell you dis, if you had been anyting like an honest man I would hab giben you ten pounds to leabe de matter where it is."

"Don't you think that you can defy me! You have assaulted me."

"I only shook you, but of course I can do a little more if you wish."

Mudleigh rang his bell, and his clerk entered the room.

"This insolent scoundrel has assaulted me, and——"

"I only shook him like dis," said Pete. "You see, I told him he's a scamp, and he must hab known dat. Ob course, if he wants a case for real assault, I can slap his face like dat. Now den, what are you going to do?"

"Put you in prison! Go for the police! I'll make an example of you!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's quite a mild assault, old hoss. You may be able to get me fined, but I don't mind dat in de least. P'r'aps you will hear a few tings in court dat won't be pleasing to you. 'Nuff said! Send for de bobbies!"

"My character will——"

"We needn't boder 'bout your character, 'cos you ain't got one. If you are so fond ob law, go to it, and you will find me dere to meet it. Only remember dis, you won't get any money out ob Hawke, and it's mighty certain dat you won't get any out ob me. Come on, boys! De man makes me tired."

Then Pete left the office, and, having called on Hawke to tell him exactly what had happened, the comrades went down to the river, for Pete was still bent on a day's excursion up the river.

CHAPTER 15. The Comrades.

"NOW den, boys," exclaimed Pete, seating himself in the stern, "take your seats!"

"Here, you come out of that!" cried Sam. "I am going to steer. You and Jack can row together."

"But, you see, Sammy, I want you and Jack to row togeder. Dat's much de best arrangement."

"I am inclined to think that the better arrangement will be for you and Sam to row, Pete, while I steer," said Jack.

"Ain't it frightful how mighty lazy some people are?" observed Pete, to the grinning boatman. "Do take your seat, Sammy. We will all take turns. You and Jack can take de turns going dere, and I'll take a short turn coming back."

"When you have the tide with you," exclaimed Sam. "You take your turn now, and don't be so frightfully lazy. You will get fat if you are not careful."

Pete grumbled a little, but took the oar, and away they sped.

It was a beautiful day, and the row was most enjoyable; but Pete, having once inveigled Sam into taking his oar, had the best of the bargain.

"I want to see how far you two can row widout getting tired," he explained, when they had covered a good many miles.

"I'm tired already," declared Jack.

"Nunno, you ain't, Jack. I shall be able to judge when you are tired, and den I will take your place. You see, it stands to reason dat Sammy can't possibly get tired till you are; and den when I consider you are tired, you will be able to relieve him, and dat will make tings nice and comfortable. 'Nuff said!"

"Is it, you beauty?" exclaimed Sam. "I reckon we shall have a little more to say directly. All you have got to do now is to keep your eyes open for some waterside inn where we can get lunch."

It was not until about two o'clock in the afternoon that they came to an inn, and as they found they could get cold beef and pickles, they were perfectly satisfied.

"It's mighty pretty scenery 'bout dis part, boys," observed Pete. "I was just wondering weder a walk frough de woods wouldn't be rader pleasant. You see, we shall get back much faster dan we came, 'cos we shall hab de tide wid us all de way, and you two will be nicely rested. I feel just in form for steering, and dere ought to be a moon to-night."

"I reckon we will alter that arrangement," said Sam. "All the same, I'm quite ready for a walk."

They started off, and were soon in the woods, through which the landlord informed them that they would be allowed to go.

"Golly, boys! Dis reminds you ob de African forest," exclaimed Pete. "I wonder if dere are any lions and tigers here?"

"You won't find many lions in this country, Pete," said Sam. "You may find some rabbits, but those are the most dangerous animals. It's a pity you didn't bring Rory with us, and then we would have had some hunting."

"Nebber tought ob dat, Sammy. In fact, I didn't know we were going into de woods; but look here, dat seems to be some tumble-down old house. Suppose we call and leabe our cards?"

The place in question was a wooden building in the very heart of the woods. It was a lonely looking place of two storeys, and the roof was partially torn away by the storms.

It was obvious that no one lived there; in fact, the front door was torn from its hinges. But Pete entered the place to explore it.

"I dunno what dis place was built for, boys," he exclaimed, entering one of the rooms; "all de same, I wouldn't care to stay here for——"

"Hands up, or we fire!" cried a fierce voice, which sounded familiar to Pete. He believed it was Giles's voice.

"Where are you, old hoss?" inquired Pete, gazing round the room in wonder.

"Why, we are outside the door of that room; and if you don't surrender, we shall shoot you down!"

"Is dat you, Giles?"

"Yus, it is, and we are going to have vengeance on you. There's half a dozen of us, and we are all armed, so you ain't got a chance agin us."

"Look at dat, now! I 'spect we had better come to terms in dat case. What is it you want?"

"All the money as you've got in your possession. That 'ere is exactly what we want; and, what's more, it is what we are going to have, unless you want to go under."

"Nunno; we don't want anything like dat. Still, if you only want money, we would much rader you took dat dan our lives, so you had better come in and take it. Dat's right, ain't it, boys? Dey had better come in."

"I reckon so," said Sam, preparing to make an attack should the ruffians be so ill-advised as to enter the room.

"Well, we ain't coming in. You are coming out one by one; and if two of you come together, we shall fire on you."

"Dat's mighty kind and considerate ob you," exclaimed Pete. "Who do you want to come out first?"

"Why, you; and you are to hold your hands above your head. And, mind you this, I've got you covered!"

Now, Pete knew that this could not be the case, for the simple reason that he could not see the ruffian, and it was quite certain that Giles would have been unable to see him from where he stood.

The gang must have watched them into the place, and followed them up; but they did not care to show themselves, for fear the comrades might be armed.

Pete crept forward, keeping round the side of the door; but all the time, by means of his ventriloquism, he made his voice appear to come from the further end of the room.

"You tell me when to come out, old hoss," exclaimed Pete. "You see, we can't possibly tackle six armed men."

"Throw your weapons out first!"

"We ain't got any weapons. You don't suppose we go about de country armed wid weapons, when dere are only nice, peaceable creatures like you knocking about."

"I happen to know you have got weapons. Throw 'em out, I say!"

"Don't be so mighty obstinate, Giles. I tell you we ain't got any weapons. We can't frow out——"

"Hands up!" cried Giles, stepping into the doorway, and levelling a revolver into the room.

He was utterly deceived by Pete's voice, and fully believed he was at the other side of the room, which was a large one, whereas Pete was standing by the side of the doorway.

In an instant he gripped Giles by the wrist, and jerked him into the room, while the wrench he gave the miscreant's wrist caused him to drop the weapon, and Sam immediately picked it up.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I'm inclined to tink dat makes us about level. You do make me laugh wid your stupidity, Giles. Why don't you try to hit me? You can see Sammy has got you covered; but he won't fire, so you had better hit me while you have got de chance. It's all right, you outside dere. Hold your row, else we will start firing at you, 'cos, don't you see, we'm got possession ob Giles's revolver."

"Here, you point that in another direction," growled Giles. "That trigger goes off very light."

"Don't de man take dainty care ob himself?" exclaimed Pete. "It's a pity dat dere's no lock to de door; but after all, it don't matter much, 'cos I hab de idea de rest ob de gang won't care to come in wid a revolver levelled at deir heads."

"We are willing to let you off this time," growled Giles, not caring for the turn of events. "We wasn't going to do you any harm."

"Nunno. We would look after a little ting like dat. But don't you worry yourself 'bout letting us off. We don't want to be let off, and we are certainly not going to let you off. You'm in rader an awkward position, old hoss, 'cos if your confederates were to try to burst dat door open, it stands to reason dat we should hab to shoot you down."

"Don't I tell you we ain't going to do you any harm?"

"Yah, yah, yah! I ain't making de same promise to you, old hoss."

"Well, be reasonable."

"You'm such a mighty reasonable man, ain't you?"

"You know what you did to us on the island; and there's more of us here, so you ain't got the slightest chance if we was to turn nasty."

"My impression is dat you wouldn't hab de slightest difficulty in doing dat," observed Pete. "Where de difficulty would come in would be if you were to try to turn nice, and I'm mighty certain dat you would neber be able to succeed in doing dat."

"Well, we was only trying to frighten you. We thought we would have a bit of fun, and now that you have got the best of us we are willing to go away."

"But, don't you see, it is our time to hab a little fun, and I should say you'm about de best man to hab it wid. Dere ain't a doubt dat you are de leader ob de gang; so dat if we were to put you in anoder place, why, de oders won't do so much harm."

At that moment two bullets crashed through the already broken window, smashing the glass still more. Those bullets whizzed past Sam's head, and, turning swiftly, he fired back.

There was a cry of pain, and one of the ruffians who had gone outside fell to the ground, writhing with pain.

"It's all right, boys," exclaimed Sam quietly. "I've only hit him in the leg."

"Well, dat's all right, Sammy, only I tink he will find dat enough to go on wid. De oders are carrying him out ob fire. Stand clear ob de window, 'cos dey are bound to hab a few more shots at you."

"They run a good chance of hitting that ruffian."

"M'yes! But I tink dey are going to risk dat. You see, creatures like dese only care for deir own skins. If dey lose one ob deir gang, dey can easy get anoder. My impression is dat dey would rader see Giles shot dan in prison, 'cos he might gib some information against dem; if he went to prison dat would be rader uncomfortable. However, we ain't got to interest ourselves wid deir affairs; what we hab to do is to look after our own."

"If you let me go I will take them all away," said Giles, not liking the turn of affairs.

"Ah, but den we ain't going to let you go, old hoss! You'm coming wid us, and after dat you'm going to prison. I don't like sending a man to prison; but de only alternative wid a man like you would be to hang you, and I believe dat ain't lawful. Nunno; you will hab to go to prison. And as regards dose oders—well, we don't care a bit weder dey go or stay; only if dey do de latter dey are likely to wish dey had done de former. 'Scuse me, but I'm going to bind your hands behind your back."

"Not if I know it!" cried Giles, struggling furiously.

"Well, I don't see how I can do it widout your knowing it," observed Pete, getting hold of one of his wrists and making grabs at the other. He received one or two blows on the top of his head; but they did not hurt him at all, and at last he got Giles's other wrist, and as he had gripped them from behind, Giles was perfectly helpless.

"It ain't fair, three to one," he growled, ceasing to struggle, because he had come to the conclusion that it was quite useless.

"We ain't going to use free to one, old hoss. I'm going to look after you, and Jack and Sammy will look after de rest ob de gang. Dat ain't anyting like free to one on our side. You will hab to lie down on de floor on your face for a moment or so, while I kneel on your back. Nunno; I will show you de way."

Pete flung him forward, then placed his knee on his back.

"Now den, old hoss," he exclaimed, holding him in that position without an effort, "I am going to bind your arms behind your back. I hab got some string in my pocket somewhere, and dat will answer de purpose."

Pete dived into his pockets, and brought out a pipe; then he had another try, and brought out some tobacco; and as this gave him an idea, he commenced to fill his pipe.

"I won't keep you waiting many minutes, Giles; only I knew dere was someting I wanted to do, and dat was to hab a pipe on de job. I can always work better when I am smoking."

"I reckon you must work very badly when you are not smoking," observed Sam. "However, that is not often the case."

"You shut up, Sammy, and keep an eye on de rest ob de gang! We don't want to be shot down like a lot ob blackbirds."

"I won't let 'em shoot you if you release me," said Giles, ceasing to struggle, because he found that Pete's knee only pressed harder on him when he did so, and that there was not the slightest chance of getting up.

"Well, dat's bery kind ob you, old hoss," observed Pete, carefully filling his pipe; "but, don't you see, Sammy is a most remarkable shot, and if dey start shooting, why he's got four more shots left, and after dem we could easily tackle de one remaining robber, 'specially as he's got a bullet frough his leg. Yah, yah, yah! It ain't for you to try to get us to make terms wid you. It's for you to make terms wid us."

"Well, I'm ready to do what you want."

"Well, dat's sensible, now!" exclaimed Pete, lighting his pipe. "What I want you to do is to allow me to bind your arms behind your back—here's de string. I'll show you exactly how I want you to allow me to do it, if you will kindly keep still for a moment. Like so—you see, I want it done so dat you won't be able to undo it. Tank you. We'm getting on nicely, and it's far more pleasant to be able to do it widout a struggle. Dere you are, my poor old hoss. I will forgib you if you get dat undone—and do it up again for you. Now, I shall want you to come along wid me as far as de riber. Den I shall want you to get into a boat, and row back. I may use you for rowing purposes, but dat all depends on weder I find Jack and Sammy are attacked wid laziness. After we get back, I shall want you to come as far as de prison, and dere be locked up, until you are hanged, until you are dead, and your body is buried widin de precincts ob de gaol. 'Nuff said on dat point."

Pete rose, and Giles, with some little difficulty, struggled into a sitting posture.

"Now, see here," he cried; "you can't possibly escape without my aid, 'cos my men are watching outside, and directly you was to leave this place they would shoot you down. I'm ready to make terms with you; and if you agree to them, why, no harm will come to you."

"You'm heard our terms, old hoss. Dere's going to be no alteration to dem."

"That's for these two young fellows to say," growled Giles. "You ain't everyone."

"No!" laughed Jack. "He's only Pete. All the same, we think his arrangements excellent, and they are exactly what we are going to do."

"Then you will meet your deaths."

"You see, Giles, on your own showing it is our duty to arrest you," said Jack. "You coolly admit that, unless we agree to your terms, which we are certainly not going to do, you will murder us—or that your confederates will. Very well, we should be rascals if we allowed such a scoundrel as you are to escape justice. You might murder half a dozen other people."

"You are talking silly."

"I don't know so much about that. My impression of you is that you would take the life of any man to gain your own ends. You are a dangerous

miscreant—far too dangerous to be allowed at large. The only question for us to decide is, what will be the best way for us to leave this place?"

"I should say we had better walk, Jack," answered Pete. "Ob course, it would be more comfortable to go in a carriage-and-pair, but den we ain't got a carriage-and-pair waiting outside."

"But what about the remainder of the gang?"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dey don't count. Dey are only miserable cowards, and would run away directly we show fight."

"I believe that is so. At the same time they are armed, and we do not want to run any needless risks."

"I reckon the best thing for us to do is to remain where we are for the present," said Sam. "It is certain that they will not dare to attack us here, and even if they do, we can defend ourselves better than in the woods. You see, we shall have that prisoner, and he will be in our way."

"Bery well, Sammy," exclaimed Pete. "I ain't in de slightest hurry. To-morrow morning would suit my purpose as well as to-night."

"I ain't stopping here all night," declared Giles.

"Well, you may be right, old hoss; but if you are, it will be because we are going to stop here. You can't possibly leabe dis place till we do. Now, be quiet, and don't tink so much ob yourself, 'cos you ain't worf tinkin' about."

The comrades chatted and smoked until it got dark, but they spoke no more concerning their plans, and they took the affair so coolly that Giles became very alarmed.

He tried again and again to induce them to release him, but they did not even trouble to reply to him.

"Now, look here, boys," whispered Pete, drawing his comrades aside; "we ain't going to allow dat gang to frighten us into staying in dis hole all night, especially as we would be rader worse off to-morrow morning. My impression is dat de sooner we start de better it will be. De chances are dose ruffians hab got tired ob waiting, and, if dey habn't, well, dey won't care to expose demselves to Sammy's fire. If dey shoot at us, dey ain't at all likely to hit us."

"I reckon we will chance it," said Sam. "Bring your prisoner along. The moon has not yet risen."

Jack knew that it would be frightfully risky, but he saw no help for it, and so the start was made.

CHAPTER 16.

The Comrades' Prisoner.

SAM led the way from the building, and peered cautiously around in the gloom, but he saw nothing of the gang.

Instead of keeping along the pathway which led from the ruinous old building, he struck into the woods, for he came to the conclusion that, as the gang were not keeping watch outside, they would be waiting in ambush along that pathway, guessing that the comrades would return that way.

"Now, listen to me, Giles," murmured Pete, following, and keeping hold of his prisoner's collar; "if you utter a sound—eben so much as a sneeze or cough—or speak, I shall gib you a clump ober de ear for ebery sound you utter."

"See here——"

"Dere's de first clump. De second will be harder."

"Fury!"

"Dere goes de harder clump."

"Don't you dare——"

"Still increasing de hardness. Wants anoder to stop de yell. Well dere you are. You can make anoder sound if you like, 'cos I don't mind how many clumps I gib you."

Giles, however, found it far too painful, and although he was very desirous of attracting his confederates' attention, he deemed it prudent to trust to chance. He felt confident that the gang would be in waiting somewhere, and he thought it very unlikely that they would allow the comrades to pass unnoticed.

Sam, being well accustomed to travelling through dense forests, had not the slightest difficulty in finding his way through those woods. He kept far away from the path, so far, in fact, that he hoped the rustling they made in the bushes would not be detected by the gang.

In this, however, he was doomed to disappointment, for as they were nearing the river a shot rang out, and the bullet passed perilously close to his head.

He could only see a man's arm round one of the trees, but he took a quick aim, and a cry of pain told that his shot was true to its mark.

"I reckon they won't care to show themselves after that," said Sam. "If they do, I have got three more shots for them, and I sha'n't fire without wounding my man. Keep straight on, Pete. I'll keep you covered."

Sam now brought up the rear, and several times when he stopped to listen he heard a rustling in the bushes that told him the foe were following; but they stood in too great dread of his aim to expose themselves to view, and the river was reached without another shot being fired.

"Dere's de inn," exclaimed Pete; "and dere's our boat. Now den, you come dis way, 'cos I tink we'm all right now. You might go on, Jack, and explain to de landlord what has happened. I wouldn't tell de man too much, 'cos it's ten to one dat de gang are customers ob his. I 'spect dey get some ob their libing by poaching, and de rest by robbery in oder forms."

"In that case I won't tell him anything," said Jack. "You wait here, and I will bring the boat down. Least said, soonest mended."

Within five minutes Jack brought the boat down, and Pete made his prisoner enter it.

"I reckon we will keep along the opposite side of the river," said Sam. "Those rascals can't aim very straight, but if they feel like aiming at us again, we will give them a long shot. The moon has risen now, so we shall be an easy mark. You had better pull as hard as you possibly can, Pete."

"Eh?"

"I say, you had better row quickly."

"I know you do, Sammy, and I ain't ob de same opinion. I'm much better at steering, 'cos den I can keep de boat in de proper position, besides——"

"Oh, get on with your work. You are all talk," exclaimed Sam, sitting beside the prisoner. "I'll steer. It will be a pleasant change for you to do a little work."

"I don't see why we shouldn't make de prisoner row," growled Pete, taking an oar. "What's de use ob a prisoner if you don't make him work. He will hab to work hard for de next five or ten years ob his life, so he may as well start at once. Now den, Jack, let her go."

Away they sped in the moonlight, and as they had the tide with them, they made very rapid progress.

"Are you tired, Pete?" inquired Sam, when they were nearing their destination.

"Frightfully!" exclaimed Pete, stopping so suddenly that Jack banged him in the back. Pete was rowing stroke. "Hi, Golly! Dat's my spinal column, Jack. Here you are, Sammy."

"I don't want it. I only wanted to know if you were tired."

"And I hab told you dat I am."

"Well, keep on rowing, and you will be more tired by the time you get home. You see, I want you to be nice and tired, so that you may be able to sleep well to-night."

"Golly! I would rader keep awake, and we'm got all de way to walk to de village to land de prisoner in de lock-up."

"You surely ain't going to play me such a dirty trick as that," growled Giles.

"Yah, yah, yah! Hark at de man talking. Does he tink we'm going to take him to de college as an example to de unruly boys? Or perhaps he tinks we'm going to shove him on de mantelpiece as an ornament. Nunno, old hoss. We ain't got de slightest use for you, and we'm going to lock you up, and allow de police to take what proceedings dey tink proper. If you take my advice, you will get Mudleigh to defend you, 'cos I would say dat he's about suited to de work."

Giles protested, but as they did not take the slightest notice of his remarks, they had no effect.

Having landed, they marched him off to the police-station, where he was wanted for several other little matters, and then they made their way back to the college, and arrived there in time for supper.

The following day was Saturday, and Lamb received a letter over which he held a consultation with the bigger boys.

Bull still showed signs of the rough treatment he had received, and he was inclined to try conclusions again, but Droog had chummed in with him, and strongly advised him not to tackle Lamb again until he had learnt to box.

Knowing such advice was wise, Bull had promised to follow it, and his new friend agreed to give him some lessons.

"You see, he whacked me when I first came here, and I'm as big as you. Pete taught me boxing, and after that I gave Lamb a thrashing as I don't

think he's forgotten yet. At any rate, he hasn't tried to fight me again. It will be just the same with you, only you will have to give him a thrashing first."

"What's this letter he's got that he wants to talk to us about?"

"Haven't the slightest idea. Still, as there is likely to be some fun in the matter, I expect we had better go to hear it. There will be time after breakfast."

Thus it was that the important meeting took place in the gymnasium, as arranged by Lamb.

"Now, look here, you fellows," he exclaimed. "We may have rows amongst ourselves occasionally, because it would be too deadly dull without them; but, when it comes to a fight against another school, why I take it we are going to stick together. What do you say, Droog?"

"That's of course. I'm with you. When are we going to fight?"

"Are you of the same way of thinking, Bull?"

"Of course I am, though I don't know as I want to fight at present."

"Of course, none of us want to fight. We are good, peaceable fellows, and don't like getting into trouble, although we would far rather get into trouble ourselves than bring trouble on others. Now, listen to this letter, and then tell me if you think our fellows are going to allow such a gross piece of impertinence to pass off in silence. Mind, I am going to read you every word, just as it is written here, although, of course, it is a lot of rot, and it isn't even spelt correctly; nor is it grammatical."

"Who cares about grammar?" growled Droog, knowing that it was one of his weak points.

"Not you, at any rate," answered Lamb. "However, just listen to this":

"To the unruly scoundrels in Pete's School, from the gentlemen of Professor Hawke's College. Greeting.—"

"What the thunder's that?" growled Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind, Bull. Don't you worry yourself over a word or so," exclaimed Lamb, continuing.

"Whereas two young thieves—one of them a sleepy-eyed little brute named Lamb—committed a burglary at this college last night, and robbed our revered master—"

"Haw, haw, haw! Their revered master," cried Droog. "That's the latest. Go on."

"Revered master of a large sum of money, it is the intention of the aforesaid gentlemen to thrash the dirty little bounders within an inch of their lives. In order to do so, the gentlemen aforesaid will be on their football field to-morrow afternoon at three precisely. (Saturday next.) There will be a dozen of the aforesaid gentlemen, and if the dirty little cads do not dare to turn up, the gentlemen will come to their miserable school, and give them the thrashing there. The aforesaid gentlemen would prefer the meeting taking place as hereinbefore named, because they do not want to catch jail-fever at the school."

"Now, what do you think of that, you chaps?" exclaimed Lamb.

"Why, it's too jolly rotten for words," declared Droog. "They will find me there at three sharp."

"We will go at a quarter to three," declared Lamb. "Now, they are bigger fellows than us, so we really ought to take more than a dozen. Besides, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they bring more."

"The best thing for us to do is to take the whole lot," said Droog. "You can choose twelve of the best of us, and, if they want more, why we will choose 'em there. Look here, you can fool most people, Lamb. Suppose you go and get Pete's permission to go, and then we shall be all right."

"Yes! I will do that at once. You be choosing the best chaps. Bull must be one. His general appearance will show that he is a good fighter, because a chap must be pretty plucky to take all the gruelling I gave him. I sha'n't be long."

Lamb found Pete in his study, and bowed meekly.

"More complaints?—enter dem——"

"No, Pete," interposed Lamb. "It's a beautiful day for cricket. I believe the afternoon will be fine. Would you have any objection to our having a match with Hawke's fellows. They have challenged us to meet them on their ground."

"Not de slightest, my lad!" exclaimed Pete, delighted at this sign of friendliness. "What time does de match begin?"

"Well, I would say it would be in full swing at about half past three."

"Right you are! Tink you would like a good feed after it?"

"We would!"

"Bery well! I'll come on de field, and den take you all to de hotel, and stand you a slap-up dinner. I'll go dere and make arrangements. And look here, how many will dere be?"

"Twelve of us, and twelve of them."

"How many does dat make?"

"Twenty-five."

"Eh?"

"Twenty-five."

"I tought it made twenty-four."

"Well, you are coming, are you not?"

"M'yes! I neber reckoned dat one."

"Should advise you to reckon about five for him. He eats."

"Yah, yah, yah! And he ain't de only one! Yes, I'll make special arrangements for dat one."

"We may as well meet you at the hotel."

"Nunno! I'll come on de field."

"But you see——"

"Oh, buzz off! I ain't got time to alter my arrangements; and look here, Lamb, I ain't allowing you to take proceedings against Hawke, 'cos he found you climbed on his veranda."

"It is in the lawyer's hands."

"I know it is, my lad, and I hab giben Mudleigh a clump ober de head for his impertinence. I don't want to hab to gib you one for yours. 'Nuff

said; but remember you will get yourself into trouble if I hab any more ob your fooling wid law. You'm quite costly enough wid de damage you do from time to time, widout going to law. Buzz off!"

"It's all arranged!" cried Lamb, entering the gymnasium. "Pete thinks we are going to play cricket. He's so wooden-headed that he can't grasp a thing quickly, and——"

"He's worth a thousand of you, you worm!" growled Droog, who never would hear a word against Pete. "I believe he's the best chap as ever lived."

"He may be in the part you come from; but that doesn't matter. We have nothing to do with Pete's virtues, and I don't care a hang about them. He's going to stand us a slap-up feed after the fight."

"My eyes! Did you tell him we were going to fight?" inquired Droog.

"Really, Droog, you have no right to judge me by yourself," said Lamb. "It is a shocking insult to do so."

"I don't know what you are driving at."

"Why, I mean to say I was not such an unutterable idiot as to tell Pete that we were going to fight. Don't I keep saying the poor creature thought we were going to play cricket?"

"Poor creature be hanged! You wouldn't be living on his charity if he wasn't thundering rich! Neither would I! If any one said a word agin Pete, I'd tell him to his face that he was a liar—however big he was, and he would be a liar!"

"I didn't know that Pete was perfect!"

"Who said he was? I only say he's the kindest-hearted man as ever lived, and I'll never forget what he's done for me. The chap who could forget his kindness, and sneer at it, ain't fit to live. You must have told him it was cricket."

"I did nothing of the sort. I said the fellows had challenged us, and he said we could go to meet them, and that he would stand a feed at the end of it. He took it for granted that it was cricket, and hurried me out of the place. He can't say anything when he gives me time to explain that it is a fight; besides he will see that when he comes on the field; for you can bet those bounders will show some marks."

"Haw, haw, haw! They will so!" exclaimed Droog. "All the same, they can't blame us, seeing as we challenged them. Now you come this way, Bull. I want a talk to you in private."

"What's up, mate?" inquired Bull.

"I'm going to ask Pete to give us two a holiday this morning, and to give you a lesson in boxing."

"He never will."

"He will do the two. You don't know what a good-hearted fellow he is. You leave me to ask him. We will go straight to his study."

"Golly! Who hab you been fighting, Bull?" inquired Pete, when the pair entered the study.

"Lamb, and he's whacked him, the same as he whacked me before you taught me how to box," said Droog. "Look here, Pete, I want you to give

us both a holiday this morning, and to give Bull some lessons in boxing. If Lamb knows he can box he won't fight him again."

"Well, dere's someting in dat," observed Pete. "De request is granted, and you can enter it in de complain't book. Wait here till de bell goes, and den we will go into the gymnasium."

And Pete spent the whole morning at the task. Bull really wanted to learn, and he did remarkably well, for Pete was a very good teacher. He not only told him what to do, but told him how to do it. Then, seating himself on a chair, he ordered his pupil to deliver the three blows he had taught, and Pete showed how they should be guarded.

"Now, next fight you hab, if you must hab one, you stick to dose free blows, Bull, and don't forget to duck your head. Droog can box bery nicely, and he will be able to gib you a lot ob lessons. I'll take you in hand anoder day, and show you a few more tings, but mind, if you use de knowledge I hab taught you dis morning properly, you will come off all right. Always keep your right elbow down when you guard your face, and den de oder man can't possibly get at de mark, and stand just outside his range, so dat you can spring in or out as de case may be, and stand wid your feet as I hab explained. Dat is most important."

"Let's have a turn, Droog!" exclaimed Bull, when Pete left them.

"Won't it hurt your face?"

"Not it. I don't care if it does. I mean to learn somehow. Come on!"

This extra tuition did Bull a lot of good, and Droog was quite satisfied with the result.

"You'll do fine!" he exclaimed. "You could knock Lamb out easily. When you have a fight with him look out for his upper-cut, and mind he doesn't catch you on the mark. He can't if you keep your elbow down, and then keep your chin pretty low. You've got to remember all that when we are having our fight this afternoon. Now we will get some dinner, 'cos it's about time."

CHAPTER 17.

Jack Asserts His Authority.

LAMB took the lead. It was his custom. At a quarter to three he made his way to the grounds, followed by his allies, and, although he was the sparest built of the chosen twelve, he was decidedly the best boxer.

They were not kept long waiting. A dozen of the biggest boys in Professor Hawke's school arrived on the scene, and one of them stepped forward.

"Who is your leader?" he demanded.

"I am," answered Lamb calmly.

"Oh, Lamb, eh? Well, we must expect some sauce with Lamb. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the others laughed in chorus.

"I am Mr. Midhurst," observed the big boy, when he had finished laughing at his own joke. He had made it up that morning, but kept it

to himself until the last moment. "I was the writer of the letter you received—and the composer of it."

"My poor lad," exclaimed Lamb, "I am sorry for you!"

"What do you mean, you cheeky kid? Do you think we can't lick your lot?"

"I was not thinking about that. I was thinking about the letter. The spelling was atrocious, and the grammar very faulty. Don't your masters teach you grammar?"

"I'll teach you manners, before I have done with you."

"I don't know about that, Midhurst; but you can't spell. You spell the word 'greeting' greeting. Now, greet is to greet any one. Great means large, and it is quite a different word. For instance, were I so degraded as to shake your hand, I should greet you. If I mentioned the fact that you are a great lout, I should spell it with an 'a.' Then again, you spell precisely with an 's' instead of a 'c,' and, altogether, the spelling and composition were not at all what I should expect from a boy of your age. I have not got time to point out all the errors in that letter, but there were many. Besides, the letter was vulgar, and not such as a gentleman could have written. I'm afraid you are rather low-bred, Midhurst, and, if I were you, I would get one of the little boys to tell you how to spell the next time you want to try to write a letter."

Midhurst turned crimson. Lamb spoke much as a master would have done, and Midhurst was thinking of something cutting to say.

"I am not a gaol-bird!" he blurted out.

"No! I am delighted to see that you have not followed in your father's footsteps so far as that is concerned."

"You are a cad!"

"Now, look here, Midhurst, it is no good pretending that I am as low-down as you, and so ought not to mind associating with you. I am not really proud, but I do draw the line at keeping company with boys of your description."

"I suppose you think you are clever?"

"I certainly do not think you are. No boy who was anything like clever or educated could possibly spell every other word wrong in a short letter."

"It's a lie!"

"Indeed? Well, if you are a sample of the cleverness in this school, I don't think very much of the bulk of it. But perhaps you can fight better than you can spell, although you look too loutish to be much of a fighter."

"Will you fight me?"

"Certainly! Nothing would give me greater pleasure!"

"Oh, it would, would it? Well, look here, you chaps, don't start the general fight till I have polished off this cheeky kid! Come on, you little cad!"

The two lads pulled off their coats, then went at it in quite professional style. Midhurst undoubtedly had the weight, but he was not nearly so quick, and Lamb took particular care that he did not get in a serious blow:

while he himself landed several on the mark, and finished up by giving him an upper-cut that must have dazed him.

"Now, go ahead!" cried Midhurst, rushing at Droog, for he preferred someone else to taking Lamb on.

In a few moments they were going at it in fine style.

Hawkes's lads had imagined that they would have a very easy victory, for they had no idea that Pete taught his boys boxing. They soon found out their mistake, for Lamb's party fought both well and bravely, and they could stand a wonderful amount of knocking about.

There is not a doubt that they would have proved the victors, for Midhurst's men were giving ground, and some of them were shirking the fighting, when there was a prompt cessation to the hostilities, for Jack, Sam, and Pete appeared on the scene.

"Golly!" gasped Pete, gazing blankly at the combatants. "I don't call dat cricket!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps they are settling who shall go in first!" laughed Jack.

"I reckon none of them will be fit to go in if they continue that fight much longer," said Sam.

"Dere are a lot ob troubles in a schoolmaster's life," sighed Pete. "Just go and separate dem, Jack."

"Not I! That is the work of the master!"

"But—eh? You go, Sammy! You can't let boys fight like dat!"

"I reckon you will have to separate them," said Sam. "I am having nothing to do with unruly boys."

"But some ob dem are ruly boys, Sammy."

"I reckon the beauties look like it. Use your authority."

"Seems to me I shall hab to use someting more substantial dan dat. Now den, you boys! What's de meaning ob dis?"

They stopped at once. Midhurst and his followers were quite eager to do so. Lamb succeeded in landing Midhurst with one on the mark that caused him to sit down, then he also stopped.

"Do you call dis playing cricket, Lamb?" demanded Pete.

"No! Fighting!"

"I tought you said you were going to play cricket?"

"Oh, no!"

"Eh?"

"I can't understand why you should think we were going to play cricket with these bounders."

"I 'spect it was 'cos you told me so."

"But I never told you so, Pete. I merely remarked that it would be a fine day for cricket. So it is. You see, I am right."

"But you certainly led me to believe dere was to be a match."

"That was only in your imagination. I wanted to tell you that we were going to fight these howlers, only you told me to buzz off. If you had only given me time, I would have told you that there was going to be a fight."

"I'm rader inclined to tink dat you would hab required a mighty long time before you had told me dat. Still, as de fight has been begun——"

"It ought to be finished," added Lamb. "Come on, you miserable cowards, and we will polish you off! Don't sit there gasping at me like some old grampus out of water, Midhurst."

"We ain't habing any more fighting," declared Pete. "Look here, boys, I was led to believe dat dere was to be a cricket match, and I promised to stand a mighty fine feed at de hotel after it. Now, de feed has all been ordered for six o'clock. Tink you and your boys can come to it, Midhurst?"

"Certainly!" answered the fallen warrior, rising, though at the moment he did not feel much like eating. "We shall be delighted."

"Tink Hawke will mind your coming?"

"Not a bit. He's gone out, and won't be back till ten. We are allowed out till eight, seeing that it's Saturday, and there's no obligation to get in to tea. He never minds boys missing their meals, because it saves money."

"Yah, yah, yah! Well, let's come for a walk, and make a round so dat we can reach de hotel at six o'clock sharp."

"Had we better go and dress?" inquired Midhurst, who liked the idea exceedingly.

"Nunno! We shall be alone, and it would be a pity to waste time. We will start right away. But, mind you dis, dere musn't be any more fighting, 'cos I ain't going to control twenty-four fighting boys, and de proprietor ob de hotel wouldn't like it at all. We hab arranged a mighty fine feed for you all at de hotel, and I hope after it all de unfriendliness will cease."

"It's jolly decent of you," exclaimed Midhurst. "I believe it was our fault this time."

"And your misfortune," said Lamb. "We were giving you an awful thrashing."

"I'm not going to admit that."

"You would if you were truthful."

"Now, you shut up, Lamb!" growled Pete. "If you don't behave yourself, you won't come to dat dinner."

"I don't like insolent cads to brag," snarled Lamb.

"Den don't do it, my lad. You hab got to remember dat dese young gentlemen are my guests, and——"

"If they are your idea of gentlemen, all I can say is that you haven't got a very good one."

Now, Lamb was not at all annoyed with Pete. He merely wanted to show off a little, and convince Midhurst and the others that he was not afraid of Pete, and so he commenced to cheek him, knowing perfectly well that he could go pretty far in that direction with perfect impunity.

"Well, dat doesn't matter, Lamb," growled Pete. "What we want now is to enjoy ourselves, and you can't do dat if you keep saying nasty tings to people."

"I don't see why I should be blamed because Midhurst is a bumptious cad and a funk!"

"Do you suppose dat dat is a gentlemanly manner to speak to your guest?"

"He's not my guest. He's your guest, and I don't admire your taste a little bit."

"Den, seeing dat you are also my guest, I tink you might manage to behave yourself. I know boys will fight, and dere ain't any special harm in it so long as dey know when to stop; but dere is harm in being vindictive."

"Oh, I'm not vindictive! I've thrashed him, and there's——"

"If such were de case, de manner in which you are behaving now is all de worse."

"I can assure you that I do not require you to teach me manners, Pete. If it were Jack, now, or——"

"You would like it all the less if I had the task of teaching you manners, my lad," said Jack. "I should not be nearly so lenient with you as Pete is. My mode would be to start the lesson with a good caning. Kindness may be all right with some lads, possessed of decent feelings; but when a lad is absolutely devoid of them, why, my system would be to flog a little commonsense into him, and that is exactly how I would treat you."

"It wouldn't be well for the man who laid his hand on me!" cried Lamb fiercely.

"Ah, now you are talking like a naughty child!" said Jack. "You certainly ought to be whipped; but I make excuses for you, because you are evidently only trying to show off before these lads. No doubt you appear extremely ridiculous in their eyes, but that cannot be helped."

"That's a lie!" yelled Lamb, losing his temper.

"Ah, you have gone a little too far!" said Jack, smiling. "I cannot permit even an unruly boy to speak to me like that. Unless you apologise for that exceedingly rude remark, I shall be compelled to cane you before these lads."

Jack caught him by the arm, and there was an amount of determination in his eyes that convinced Lamb he would have to climb down.

"Of course, I did not mean that you were telling a lie."

"Then it was very unwise of you to say so," retorted Jack, "for you will either have to publicly apologise or to be publicly caned."

"Pete does not allow any boy to be struck except by himself, and——"

"Golly! Jack can do what he tinks best widout asking me. I'm rader inclined to tink he's going to do best now; and don't you rely on me to interfere, 'cos it won't come off; and if I did interfere, it would be all de same to you. When Jack gets insulted, he deals wid de matter himself, and doesn't ask dis child's leave."

Lamb saw there was no help for it.

"What I meant to say was that you were quite mistaken in thinking I wanted to show off, as you call it, before these miserable brutes, whom I have just severely thrashed. I don't care twopence for their opinion."

"It is you who are speaking falsely now," said Jack. "I repeat what I said. You were impertinent to Pete because you wanted to show off, and I reprimanded you for it. You then became insolent, and unless you apologise for the very rude remark, especially from a little boy, I shall severely cane you."

"I did not mean it."

"That is another falsehood. You did mean it. You were cross, and wanted to insult me."

"What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to try to learn to speak the truth. Unfortunately, you are a most untruthful lad. Come, it is not my intention to argue the matter with a lad like you. Are you going to express contrition for your impertinence?"

"Yes. I am sorry for what I said."

"I hope you are sorry. It must not occur again, otherwise I shall not give you the chance of apologising. You must learn to control your temper, my lad. You are only a little boy, but you ought to be able to appreciate Pete's kindness to you. In other cases that kindness has done much good. I trust it may do good eventually in your case; if not, I shall try more drastic measures. I shall ask Pete to hand you over to me for a while, and I will see if I can bring you to your senses. You have had more advantages than any lad in Pete's school, and yet you are decidedly the worst behaved. That, perhaps, you cannot help; but you can help being impertinent, and you must not let it occur again."

Lamb did not take the lecture at all in good part, especially as he noticed Hawke's boys were grinning at him. He walked on by himself for some distance; then Bull caught him up.

"I say, mate," exclaimed Bull, "he did dress you down a treat, didn't he?"

"He will be made to answer for his impertinence," declared Lamb.

"Haw, haw, haw! That's the latest. Why, you must know that it was you who were impertinent to Pete. If I'd have been Pete, I would have flogged you."

"Are you not satisfied with the thrashing I have already given you?"

"I wasn't at all satisfied with it. It hurt me."

"Well, I'll hurt you worse if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head."

"When?"

"Now!"

"Well, you can't do it now, Lamb. You know that jolly well, because Pete is looking. All the same, I suppose you know your way to the hotel? 'Cos if you don't, I can easy show you. Now, I am going to fight you again, and I don't care how soon it comes off. The sooner the better, as far as I am concerned. Suppose we have it out now? It's got to come, so the sooner the better."

"You want another thrashing?"

"No, I don't. I want to thrash you this time. We can drop behind,

with Droog and one of the others to see fair play. I've told Droog I'm going to challenge you, and he's quite ready to act as referee."

"I'm not going to fight you now," said Lamb. "You don't seem to have sense enough to understand that if I did that fellow Pete would cheat me out of the dinner."

"How's he going to know?"

"He would know sharp enough after I have finished with you, because I am not going to let you down as lightly as I did the first time."

This was rather disheartening for Bull, because he had suffered so severely on the previous occasion, but he was not going to back out of it.

"Well, when will you fight me?"

"To-morrow morning, if you like. Or to-night in the dormitory after the masters have gone to sleep. I'll fight you any time you like to name, only I won't make it now, for the reasons I have stated."

"All right; keep your hair on! It's got to be to-night in the dormitory. You deserve a whacking at my hands, and I'm going to do my best to give it to you. You are a miserable sneak, and ought to be thrashed!"

The comrades were laughing and joking with the boys, who seemed to be none the worse friends for their little feud; in fact, they were more friendly than they had ever been before, though no doubt the promised dinner had something to do with this.

At a little before six o'clock they arrived at the hotel, and they found the cloths already laid, while William, the fat waiter, was moving about in a most energetic manner for him. As a rule, he was not a man to hurry himself; but on this occasion he wanted to make an impression, knowing that the comrades were very liberal with their tips.

CHAPTER 18.

How Lamb Upset the Harmony.

"NOW den, boys," exclaimed Pete, "take your seats! Dat's right, William, old hoss. I'm glad to see you'm hurrying."

"I always hurry," declared William, who had worked himself into such a heated state that he had lost the little temper he ever had. He was never very amiable to anyone, but had hurried for Pete, because that worthy intimated that if dinner were not up to time there would be no tip. Pete had once to wait half an hour at that hotel for the meal he required, and he did not want a recurrence.

"De boys are hungry, and can't wait, you know."

William hated the sight of boys.

"I suppose boys can wait as well as their betters?"

"I dunno, Billy," answered Pete cheerfully. "I should say an ordinary boy would be able to wait better dan you can. But hum about, old hoss! You'll neber wear out carpets at dat rate."

"I don't want to wear the carpets out," grumbled William. "And I don't care to be called by familiar names by parties coming to this hotel."

Having delivered himself of this little speech, William gazed at Pete in a dignified manner for nearly half a minute, and then he went on with his work. He was polite to Jack and Sam, with a view to getting a good tip, but Pete he treated with contempt.

Lamb took a seat close to the door. William had once offended him, and he was not a lad to forget or forgive a slight. He intended to remember it that night, and to have a little fun in the bargain.

The dinner was of a substantial nature. There was neither soup nor fish, but there were plenty of other good things, and Pete and his comrades were kept busy carving a turkey, some ducks, and roast fowls, while there was also a fine joint of roast beef. All was placed on the tables at once, and William was nearly worried out of his life attending to the boys.

"You are as slow as an old tortoise, William," observed Lamb. "I have ordered you to bring me some more turkey half a dozen times."

"Hold your row, you greedy little brute," muttered William. "You will have it when your turn comes, and not before."

"You are two fat for a waiter. You ought to be a cook. If I were your master, I'd take some of that fat off you."

"I'll slap your face if you talk to me like that, you young thief. Prison is the right place for you, and the rest of the boys at your school. Reformatory boys don't deserve to be fed."

"Now den, William," bawled Pete from the top of the room. "Hurry up, old hoss. You'm as slow as a tortoise."

This maddened William all the more, because the words happened to be exactly those Lamb had uttered. However, he was compelled to obey, for Jack and Sam also needed his services, and he imagined that his tip would come out of their pockets.

At last the meat was finished with, and William made a few remarks concerning the disgusting appetites of boys. Then he piled up a huge tray with the remains of the joint of beef, and while he was doing so, Lamb was busy tying a fork on the end of a walking-stick.

Now William came down the room, and Lamb appeared to be in earnest conversation with his next neighbour, but just as William was going through the doorway, Lamb gave him an awful prod in the calf with that fork.

Uttering a wild howl, William pranced into the air, then he went sprawling forwards, and he and the tray fell to the floor with a frightful crash, while Lamb slipped the walking-stick behind the seat.

"Woorooh!" howled William, struggling from the wreckage, and dancing about, for Lamb had prodded him severely.

"What's the matter, waiter?" inquired Lamb. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"Bust it! Oh, my leg!"

"I believe the poor fellow has broken his leg," exclaimed Lamb, looking very concerned. "He can't put it to the ground, and he has got a slab of cabbage in his eye."

"What is the matter, my poor old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Bust it! Oh, my leg. Some silly idiot has been and run six inches ob steel into it."

"Well, it's lucky he ain't run more dan dat," observed Pete. "Seems to me you'm made a mighty mess on de floor, and you ain't improved de personal appearance ob de dishes."

"Which young varmint did it?" howled William, looking positively vicious. "Do you know, you worm?"

"I don't see how it could have been one of the boys," said Lamb. "I never saw one move from his seat. We were right away from you. Besides, I don't suppose there is a boy in this room who would play such a remarkably silly trick."

"Did you do it?" howled William.

"Of course I did not. You know perfectly well that I did not. How could I have done it when I was sitting here the whole time. The fact of the matter is, I don't believe anyone did it."

"P'raps it was a kink ob rheumatism," suggested Pete. He knew that Lamb was quite capable of the action, but as he had not risen when William went out, Pete did not see how he could have done it. "I should shove a mustard plaster on it to-night, and knock off de beer."

"I believe one of these boys here did it. Was it you?"

"I have told you already that it was not," said Lamb. "Just as though I would be guilty of such a trick. I never moved off my chair."

"I believe you did it."

"I don't believe anyone touched you," declared Lamb. "My impression is that you clumsily fell on the top of the tray, and want to blame innocent boys for your own stupidity."

"Bust me! Innocent boys!" gasped William. "If that ain't the latest. There's not much innocence amongst the lot of you. Oh, dear! oh dear! How I suffer, to be sure!"

"Well, I'm sorry for you, old hoss; but all de yowling in de world won't alter de fact dat you'm got to bear de pain," said Pete. "Men must suffer now and den, dey wouldn't be happy o'wise when dey don't suffer. We want de puddings up, 'cos we'm hungry."

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped William. "He's hungry after the little lot he's gorged. I'd rather keep a boa-constrictor for a fortnight than him for a week. Oh, my leg!"

Pete roared with laughter when he saw the cautious manner in which William went out of the room this time.

Having picked up the breakage, he made his way downstairs, and was a considerable time before he brought up the pastry, and several plum puddings.

He had to go in and out of the room several times, and on each occasion he was remarkably cautious, especially when going out.

Lamb would have been wise to have rested on his laurels, but, like most very smart lads, he thought he could do more than most people, and when William came out with the remains of the puddings on a large tray, Lamb glanced

up to make sure that Pete was not keeping watch. Then, holding his precious stick in readiness, he gave William another back-handed prod.

It was a more pronounced prod than the first one, and, catching the unfortunate waiter in the back, it caused him to leap high into the air, and come down tray and all with a crash that eclipsed the first one; while he sat on the floor howling at the top of his voice.

But as he sat there he caught a glimpse of that stick as Lamb was quickly concealing it, and in a second he whipped it out of Lamb's hand, while Lamb leapt on his seat, and the next instant he received a prod that caused him to leap on the table.

William was on his feet now. He was on his feet, and furious.

He got in three prods in quick succession, and Lamb gave three shrieks in quick succession, while he jumped about on that table in a manner that was ruinous to the crockery and glasses.

"Wow-yow! I didn't do it. Wohoo! Stop him."

"Nice, ain't it?" inquired William, following him up, and getting in another prod. "I hope you like it."

Lamb did not. He sprang on the adjoining table, and smashed a few more things, while William got in a few more prods.

It was more than Lamb could bear. He turned, and leapt full at William, who was bowled over on his back by the impact.

Lamb was weeping with pain, but he was also in a state of fury. Springing to his feet, he jumped about three feet in the air, and landed on William's waistcoat. Then he bolted.

They say if you jump on the lifeless body of a lion it will make it roar.

This may be so, but no dead lion could have roared like William did when Lamb landed on his stomach. It is doubtful if a live lion could have roared much louder.

"Golly! Ain't dere some troubles in a schoolmaster's life," groaned Pete. "I dunno weder ruly boys are much trouble, but I'm mighty certain unruly ones are. Oh, don't yowl like dat, William. You must learn to bear a little pain. Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, but you look mighty funny, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if you feel mighty funny. Neber mind, old hoss. Dere are brighter days in store for you. Boys will be boys, you know. Specially unruly ones. Yah, yah, yah!"

"Don't you dare to laugh at me!" howled William, rising to his feet, but remaining doubled up. That playful little leap had taken away his wind. "Oh, my stummick!"

"I hope I've hurt you," sobbed Lamb. "You are a cruel scoundrel, and I'll bring an action against you for assault."

This caused howls of laughter. It seemed to the boys that the original cruelty was on Lamb's side.

"You viper!" hooted William. "Only let me get at you!"

Lamb was not such an utter idiot as to let him do anything of the sort, and William was not in a fit condition to run after him.

"What do you mean by prodding me?" howled William.

"I never touched you."

"What! Why, I saw you do it—and I felt you do it, too, bust you!"

"I jolly nearly busted you, and I wish I had quite. You ought to be horsewhipped for hurting an innocent boy like this. You have stuck that fork all over me. I'm in terrible pain."

"Serve you right, you young demon. I'll give you pain before I have done with you."

"Why don't you accuse the right party?"

"Right party be hanged! I took the stick out of your hand."

"It's impossible to believe a single word you say," declared Lamb. "I don't believe anyone prodded you. I believe you tied that fork on the stick yourself, to make your master believe you had been prodded, and that you brought it into the room, and pretended you took it out of my hand. Just as though I would do such a thing! Pete knows perfectly well that I never did."

"Eh?"

"Of course you know the rascal is telling abominable falsehoods, and that I am perfectly innocent."

"Golly!"

"You ought to punch the brute's head for what he has done to me. It is a most dangerous thing to stick a fork into a boy like that. He might have blinded me for life."

"Yah, yah, yah! I don't see how he could hab done dat, seeing dat you were running away from him. You ain't a spider, dat has got eyes all ober you."

"It went quite close to my eyes when I jumped on him."

"Should say dat would come under de head ob contributory negligence."

"What are you going to do to that boy?" demanded William.

"You see, he says he didn't do it."

"I say he did."

"Well, dat sort ob balances de matter. You ain't got any witnesses, I suppose?"

"Every boy in the room knows as he did it, and so do you."

"Eh?"

"I say you know he did it."

"Well, you see, William, I may hab my suspicions dat he did it."

"Then you wrong me cruelly."

"Not so cruelly as William did, if you'm innocent."

"It's a wicked thing to suspect an innocent boy."

"Den I shall neber be wicked in dat respect frough suspecting you, 'cos you ain't what I would call an innocent boy by long chalks. Do you tink he did it, Sammy?"

"I reckon so."

"Do you, Jack?"

"Candidly, I do. Otherwise I don't see what he would want to have the stick in his hand for."

"I didn't have it in my hand."

"Well, I certainly saw William take it out of your hand."

"You are mistaken."

"So were you when you prodded William. No doubt he was mistaken, also, when he prodded you, but I must say I think it served you right."

"I have been treated shamefully," declared Lamb.

"I don't think you have treated William too well."

"I'd like to take him outside for half an hour," groaned William. "I believê he's done me some internal injury."

"Serve you jolly well right. I hope you will have to go about like some old camel for the remainder of your life," said Lamb.

"Well, it ain't any good arguing 'bout de matter," said Pete. "Suppose you bring up de dessert, William."

"Suppose I don't. I'm hanged if I'm going out of that room again while that young varmint is behind me. I've suffered enough already, without being made to suffer more. I ought to be compensated. I ought straight."

"Well, you got two prods, didn't you?"

"Yes, but they was deep ones, especially the last one."

"It must hab been pretty deep, if you say it was deeper dan de first, 'cos you told us dat one was six inches deep."

"I don't look on it as a joke."

"Nunno! You wouldn't do anyting like dat. You can't prod a man deeply wid a fork and make him look on it as a joke. It may sœem funny for de spectators, but I don't see how de man himself could possibly consider it in de light ob a joke—least, not while de pain lasted. I do wish you would stop laughing, Jack. Now, de question is, do you tink half a sovereign a prod would sort ob meet de case?"

"It would be sort of comforting," admitted William.

"Bery well, we will make it a guinea, 'cos I tink de second prod is worf anoder shilling, and dere's an extra half-sovereign for your attendance. Now den, old hoss, let's hab de fruit up."

"Then you keep that young varmint where he is."

"I want five pounds for my prods," declared Lamb. "I'm certain he gave me ten of them."

"Should say you ought to take off a discount for a quantity like dat, Lamb; but considering dat you started de prodding operations——"

"I don't admit that."

"Nunno! I hab often noticed dat it is mighty difficult to make you admit what you do, when it happens to be someting you ought not to hab done. All de same, you ain't going to get any compensation at all."

"Then it's not fair."

"May be. At de same time, if you tink I'm going to pay you five pounds for prodding a waiter you'm mistaken."

"I want you to pay it for his having prodded me."

"Well, I ain't going to do anyting ob de sort. You shouldn't hab started it. I'm not going to believe dat a waiter would take all de trouble ob tying a fork to a stick and prodding his guests, if dey didn't start prodding him. If you will play dese tricks, you ain't going to get compensated by me for de pain dey cause you. 'Nuff said! Here, you stop where you are!"

"I am suffering so much that I shall have to go home."

"You ain't going to do anything ob de sort till I go. You may as well suffer de pain here as at home, if you'm got to suffer it."

"I'll have my revenge on that beast!" declared Lamb.

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm a most amusing lad. Here you go and play silly tricks, and den you complain 'cos dey hurt you."

"It's a beastly shame that I should be treated in this manner."

"Yah, yah, yah! Dat's right; start blaming me."

"You ought to see that the boys of your school don't get injured."

"If a boy at my school filled his mouf wid gunpowder, and lighted it, I don't see how I could see dat he wasn't hurt. If you choose to play tricks, you must take de consequences of dem."

"I'm going home."

"I tell you dat you ain't. Don't be so mighty obstinate. You are going to stay where you are till we go home. I don't trust you out ob my sight to-night, if I know it. De revenge you take would be a lot too costly for my liking. Look at de little lot ob crockery you hab smashed. Well, I shall hab to pay for all dat, and dat will come to quite as much as I want to spend in one night. Here comes de fruit."

"Who wants the fruit?"

"You are an ungrateful chap," exclaimed Midhurst. "Here Pete has given us a splendid spread, and we've had a most jolly evening, and——"

"I call it a rotten evening!" snarled Lamb. "I haven't enjoyed myself."

"Who cares for you?"

"You seemed to care for me when I was punching your stupid head. Call yourself a gentleman, when you can't spell half a dozen words correctly?"

"I don't see that spelling has got anything to do with the matter. I say—and I know all our chaps think the same—that Pete is a jolly good fellow."

"You are a stupid fool, and if you are not careful I will punch your head again!"

"All right, Lamb," exclaimed Pete. "I shall be gibing anoder little entertainment in de course ob a few days, and, considering de manner in which you hab behaved at dis one, you won't be one ob de guests at de next. More dan dat, you won't come to any fresh entertainments until you hab learnt to behave yourself."

"That's all your doing, Midhurst," declared Lamb; "but I will make you sorry for it. If you think you are going to set Pete against me, you are mistaken. I never do get treated fairly."

"If you got what you deserved, I should say you ought to be flogged every day of your life," retorted Midhurst. "I pity Pete if he has got many such vindictive rascals as you to deal with."

Pete paid the bill, in which was included the damage to the crockery, and then they all made their way back to the school, and Lamb seemed to have convinced himself that he had been unfairly treated; but as he did not convince anyone else, it did not matter at all.

CHAPTER 19.
The Great Fight.

BULL and Droog were the first into the dormitory that night. They were expecting that Lamb would want to fight, seeing what a bad temper he was in, nor were they mistaken.

When he came up, he walked straight up to Bull, and got in three blows before that worthy had got up his guard, and the last of those blows sent Bull to the floor.

He was up again in a moment, and then Potts, who happened to be passing when the disturbance commenced, entered the dormitory.

"Haw, haw, haw! Ain't you enjoying yourselves!" he exclaimed. "Go it, Bull! Land him one on the nose! He ought to be killed—so ought you! Give him socks, Lamb! Hit him on the jaw! I wish you would half murder each other, you young varmints. You are a lot too good for this 'ere world, and the sooner you are in the next one the better it will be for all parties concerned."

Lamb had fondly imagined that he would have matters all his own way, and he went in with a rush in the hope of finishing off the fight straight away.

But in this he soon found out his mistake. Bull was fighting in a very different style from that he had shown when they had their previous fight. It was obvious that he had learnt a lot, and he was putting his knowledge to a very useful effect.

"Hit him on the nose!" bawled the amiable Potts. "Haw, haw, haw! Kick him while he's down, you silly kid!"

Lamb had succeeded in flooring his bigger opponent for the second time; but Bull had shaped much better, and Droog was quite satisfied with his man.

"Go in and win, mate!" he cried. "Don't forget your legs."

"So you have been teaching him, you beast!" snarled Lamb. He would have liked to have stopped now, for although he had scored points, he had received some nasty ones in the face, and Lamb always fought a winning battle best.

Bull was just the reverse. He could stand a tremendous lot of punishment, and he came up smiling.

Potts cheered him; not that he cared a bit who won—he wanted them both to lose—only sincerely hoped that they would hurt each other before they did give in.

Bull was steady now. He kept his mind on what he had to do, and when Lamb led off with his left, he countered with his left, ducked to the blow, and cross-countered with his right full on the mark.

Lamb went down, and lay on the floor, groaning; while Potts stamped about with delight, and made a vain attempt to induce Lamb to renew the combat; but he had had more than enough, and pretended to have received far more than was really the case.

"Get up and fight it out, you coward!" cried Potts. "You surely ain't going to let him whack you like that?"

"I'm not going to fight any more now," gasped Lamb. That one on the mark had taken his wind away.

"Haw, haw, haw! Call yourself a fighter? Go in and punch his nose! Why, you can't fight for— Here, I report these two boys for fighting, sir. They have been fighting shameful."

Mr. Carton had suddenly entered the dormitory. He glanced from the combatants to Potts, and that worthy looked rather alarmed.

"If I hadn't come up and separated them—"

"How dare you tell me those abominable falsehoods, man?" cried Mr. Carton. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you sinful man. You are a disgrace to this school. Don't you know better than to lie in that manner?"

"They have been a-fighting. I'm speaking the truth. They was fighting fierce."

"I know that."

"Then I ain't going to be called a liar when I speak the truth."

"You do not appear to know what the truth is, you mendacious man."

"Don't you swear at me like that."

"A man of your time of life should know better than to tell me such abominable falsehoods. You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself. I abominate falsehood, as every honourable man must."

"I said they was fighting, and they was."

"Your silly subterfuge will not avail you. I say your conduct is abominable. You have turned your fault into a crime."

"You don't know how to deal with jail-birds."

"If I had to deal with you, I should dismiss you. Your conduct is dishonourable. You have deliberately lied to me, nor is it the first time. Droog there has, perhaps given me more trouble than any other boy in this school, but he would scorn to tell me the abominable lie that you have. You call him, with the rest, a gaol-bird. I tell you this, Potts. I have singled out Droog because no one could say that I have favoured him; nor do I intend to praise him now, but I would trust that lad where I would not trust you."

"I ain't standing this," cried Potts. "I'm not going to be classed with a thief!"

"If you are referring to Droog as a thief, I say that is another falsehood. He is a tiresome boy; but he is an honest one, and whatever he had done he would face it out bravely, and not come cringing to me with a lie on his lips, as you have done. Nor is it the first time."

"Well, ask him if they wasn't fighting."

"Don't dare to talk that nonsense to me, and don't imagine that you can turn me from my point. If you do, I assure you that you are mistaken. These boys know what I mean when I say that you have lied to me in an abominable manner, and so do you."

"No, I don't."

"That is another falsehood."

"I reported 'em for fighting."

"And you said, 'If I had not come up and separated them.'"

"Well, they stopped when I told 'em to."

"It is beyond all forbearance. You will come with me to your master."

"Will I?"

"I shall then report the whole matter to him."

"You are only a servant, like myself, and I ain't going to obey the orders of a man as says I don't speak the truth."

"I say that you will come with me now. Pete is striving to bring up his boys so that they may become honourable men; and although we differ as to the——"

"Cistern!" murmured Lamb.

"As to the system," added Carton, glancing contemptuously at his interrupter, "I firmly believe that he will succeed. I have seen a vast improvement in all the boys, with, perhaps, a sad and solitary exception. There is not a lad here who does not know, in his own heart, that Pete has made him happier in life. I know that Pete will surely look after every boy's future welfare. Well, how can Pete and his masters bring up boys properly when you set them such a vile example, Potts? There is nothing more contemptible to my mind than lying, and that you have been guilty of. To shield yourself from blame, which you well deserve, you have pretended to me that you separated these boys when they were fighting, whereas you were doing all in your power to urge them on. Now, you will come with me to Pete's study. Bull, Lamb, and Droog will also come. Are you going to obey my command, Potts?"

"No; I ain't!"

"Very well, then I shall take the law into my own hands, and make you."

And to the astonishment of the boys, Mr. Carton seized Potts by the collar and arm, and walked him from the room.

Now, Mr. Carton was not a favourite with the boys. He was far too strict for their liking; all the same, he was a just man, and he really tried to do his best, according to his own lights.

That drastic action of his raised him immensely in their estimation.

Potts was only forced to the top of the stairs, and then he said he would go alone, which he did.

Mr. Carton stopped for a moment at Pete's study door. A mighty burst of snoring greeted him. He opened the door. Seated in an easy-chair, with his feet on the table, and one foot had knocked over a large inkpot, reclined Pete. His lighted pipe had fallen on his breast, and his hands were hanging down at his sides.

He looked about as much unlike the head-master of a large school as it is possible to imagine.

He woke with a start, when Carton gave him a shake.

"Oh, is dat you, old hoss? Enter it in de complaint book in green."

"I want to speak seriously to you, Pete."

"Eh?"

"I've been insulted, and called a liar!" cried Potts.

"Den enter it in de complaint book. You needn't put de part about being a liar, 'cos we all know dat!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Droog.

"I won't be called a liar!"

"Den learn to speak de troof, old hoss! No one eber calls Mr. Carton a liar—nor Droog, and I don't tink dey will hab cause to call Bull one. I ain't saying anyting 'bout Lamb."

"I know that I am not a favourite pupil," observed Lamb.

"Nunno, my lad! You don't aim at anyting like dat."

"The boys were fighting in the dormitory," said Carton. "Potts was urging them on, and trying to get Lamb to fight, after he was beaten by Bull——"

"He did not beat me!" declared Lamb. "I will fight him any day! I will fight him now!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete.

"I say I will fight him now!"

"You fought him once before, I tink?"

"I did, and will fight him again!"

"You are quite determined to fight him?"

"I am!"

"Bery well! Fight him now!"

"What!" gasped Lamb, who had not expected anything like this.

"Fight him now in dis room! I will see fair play!"

"I—I injured myself—and——"

"But you said you would fight him now!"

"I shall fight him some other time!"

"Yah, yah, yah! You will neber fight him again! You promise me not to bully him, Bull?"

"Yes! I've licked him, and I'm quite satisfied. I ain't hurt him like he hurt me, but that doesn't matter. I beat him, and that's all I care for."

"Bery well! Dat's de first part ob de object lesson. I knew you wouldn't fight, Lamb, and dat's why I told you to fight now. You will find it much more pleasant to go frough life widout fighting. I hope Mr. Carton will oberlook de fight on dis occasion."

"Certainly!" said Carton. "I have not brought them here about that. Potts told me a deliberate lie in the presence of the boys, then he refused to obey my orders, and was most impertinent."

"But I told him he wasn't to be impertinent to you on a previous occasion."

"On several previous occasions, I fancy."

"M'yes! Dat is so! Why don't you obey, Potts?"

"'Cos I ain't going to obey him! I have been grossly insulted and called a liar, and I want compensation for it."

"Bery well! I am quite ready to compensate you; but don't you understand, Potts, you are bound to obey orders. You'm been told dat before. If you don't speak de troof, you must expect to be told ob it. Den again, if Mr. Carton gibs you an order you hab got to obey it."

"I ain't going to be at the beck and call of every servant in this place. You will be expecting me to obey James next."

"Nunno! Mr. Carton ain't a servant. He's a master in dis school, and if a master requires anyting done, de porter must do it. If you don't obey your superiors, how do you suppose de boys are going to do it?"

"I don't obey you, let alone him!"

"Dat's a different matter altogeder. It doesn't matter a bit if you don't obey me, 'cos I hab got de power ob making you obey me. Wid Mr. Carton it is different. In a sense he holds a much higher position here dan I do, 'cos he's a gentleman ob education. He knows it is his duty to teach dese boys, and he does dat duty well; he also teaches dem by de good example ob his life, 'cos Mr. Carton would not do a wrong action, and telling lies is a bery wrong one. I can't allow de porter ob dis establishment to set de boys such a bad example as all dat. And it stands to reason dat I can't hab a porter to insult de masters. It wouldn't be at all fair to dem. Now, look here, Carton, my dear old hoss, I find dat my lenient treatment wid de boys is habing a good effect!"

"Yes! That is so, and I am ready to admit dat you were right, but there is a medium."

"M'yes! I rader tink dere is. Take Lamb's case, for example. I'm most inclined to tink dat dere's only one way to touch his feelings. Still, we ain't dealing wid de fight now, 'cos dat's all pardoned. You tink in isolated cases dat a stern example should be made?"

"I do."

"Well, I ain't sure dat you ain't right. I'm most inclined to gib Lamb an example. A sort ob object lesson. You see, de more lenient I am wid Potts, de worse de man becomes, and it almost looks as dough you must be stern wid men, and lenient wid boys."

"Potts's conduct on the present occasion is certainly most reprehensible, and I think, at the very least, you should severely reprimand, and warn him that it must not occur again."

"Well, you see, I hab tried dat so often, and it ain't had de slightest effect."

"I do not wish to get the man dismissed."

"Nunno! What we'm got to do is to improve him."

"Well, I never did hear the like of this!" gasped Potts. "Here I've been insulted, and am determined to gain compensation for it——"

"You needn't boder 'bout dat, 'cos I'm going to compensate you for dat."

This made Mr. Carton gasp, but he thought it better not to interfere with Pete's extraordinary system. He knew that worthy would have his own way, however ridiculous it might be.

"Then that's all I care about," declared Potts.

"I am going to hand you a sum ob money by way ob compensation; at de same time, I am going to gib Lamb an object lesson. I want to show him dat telling falsehoods will be punished, 'cos a boy what can't speak de troof ain't much good when he becomes a man; and I also want to convince you, Potts, dat a man must speak de troof."

"Well, never mind all this jaw. Jest you compensate me for the insults I've had heaped on me, and then I'll go. I shall expect very liberal compensation."

Mr. Carton sighed as Pete pulled out a handful of gold, silver, and coppers, all mixed up. He took out a halfpenny, and gravely handed it to Potts."

"Dat's for being told de troof by being called a liar, Potts. Now, we hab to deal wid de oder part ob de business. I am going on your cistern, Carton, to see if 'it does any good, seeing dat mine has failed in Potts's case. If your cistern succeeds in Potts's case, I shall try it wid Lamb—unless dere is a great improvement in his ferocity——"

"Veracity!" sneered Lamb.

"Quite correct, my lad! I'm glad to see dat you know what is de matter wid yourself."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Droog. "He's got you there, Lamb!"

"What would you do to a boy who neber told you de troof unless it suited his purpose, and who was insolent to you, Carton?"

"I should cane him."

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, grabbing Potts by the arm. "I will try your cistern on Potts, and if it succeeds, I will try it on Lamb afterwards—provided I don't see an improvement. Lend me my cane, Droog."

"But my dear fellow!" gasped Mr. Carton. "Just consider. Potts is a grown man—and—why really—you cannot possibly cane him!"

"Eh?"

"It would be quite illegal, and—and you would lay yourself open to an action for damages."

"Still, I don't mind dat, so long as I improve him, and gib Lamb an object lesson."

"Really, Pete, you must not cane the man."

"But if he acts as a little child——"

"Still, corporal punishment is quite out of the question."

"Eh?"

"You really could not do such a thing!"

"Don't you tink it would do him good?"

"I really don't know, but it is quite impossible."

"Eh?"

"I would strike a man lifeless if he laid a hand on me," declared Potts, striving in vain to free himself from Pete's grip on his arm.

"You see, I want to kill two birds wid one stone," observed Pete, taking the cane.

"I'd kill the man with my fist as touched me!" roared Potts.

"I want to show Lamb what to expect if he tells any more falsehoods," observed Pete. "I know dat Potts deserves a caning for a lot ob tings he has done, and a lot dat he hasn't done."

"I think the caution you have given him will——"

"Nunno! I hab giben de man a hundred cautions, and he don't take de slightest notice ob dem."

"You have the power of dismissing him, but you certainly have not the power to cane him."

"I don't agree wid you on dat point. You may be right, old hoss! I dunno, but you'm got to consider dis as an experiment, and if it does Potts and Lamb good, you see, I shall hab de satisfaction of knowing dat I was right and you were wrong. Be pleased to lie across dat table, Potts, 'cos I'm going to canè you."

If Potts had had his own way, he certainly would not have obeyed that order; but Pete put forth his strength, and Potts was across the table in no time, while Pete held him in position, and commenced to flog him severely.

His howls were something terrific, but Pete did what he considered to be his duty. Jack and Sam rushed into the room.

"What ever are you doing?" gasped Sam.

"I'm caning dis man for telling lies and insulting de masters," observed Pete, flogging away.

"Ha, ha, ha! You must not do that, you owl!" roared Jack.

"But I hab done it, Jack," said Pete releasing his victim. "I hab caned him severely, ain't I, Potts?"

"Woo-hoo!" yelled Potts, wiping his eyes on the cuff of his coat. "I'll not submit to this."

"You'm spoken too late, old hoss," said Pete, replacing his cane, much to Lamb's relief, for he did not feel at all certain that his turn would not come next. "You hab submitted to it. You can buzz off now, and get rid ob de smart, and den I shall be pleased to listen to any observations you may like to make. 'Nuff said."

"Very well!" cried Potts. "Very well!"

And Jack and Sam burst into a roar of laughter as Potts left the room, followed by the lads.

But Lamb was not laughing.

CHAPTER 20.

The Threatened Proceeding.

"WELL, you are a silly owl, Pete!" exclaimed Sam. "The fellow will put you into court over this."

"I don't mind dat, Sammy, so long as it does him good, and acts as a sort ob object lesson to Lamb."

"Ha, ha, ha! To flog the school-porter is such an extraordinary way to correct a boy!" cried Jack. "Don't you think so, Mr. Carton?"

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed that gentleman, sitting down, and gazing blankly at Pete.

"But don't you see, de man needed punishment."

"Ha, ha, ha! It is quite unusual to flog a porter," laughed Jack.

"Eh?"

"I say it is out of the common."

"So is de manner in which dat man behaves. I want to try an experiment wid him."

"Are you going to try the same experiment on the other servants?"

"Golly! No; I wouldn't flog de cook for a pension; besides, she doesn't need it. I consider Potts did."

"Granted, but——"

"Well, he's got it. What more do you want, Jack? It is according to Carton's cistern, and——"

"Look here, Pete, I am not going to admit that," exclaimed Carton. "I certainly believe in using the cane to a boy, when the necessity arises; but with a man—well, it is such an extraordinary mode of procedure."

"I rader fancy it will do him good; but we shall find dat out later on, and I'm inclined to tink dat it can't possibly do him any harm. You see, a man must be corrected. If I was to send him away, he would get anoder place, and behave just as badly dere. Now, if I can improve him here, dat will be all right, while Lamb will also know dat he will hab to alter his conduct. Oderwise, dere will be trouble in dis world. De rule ob dis school is dat de boys ain't to be hit; but dere are exceptions to ebery rule, and if a boy won't do what he ought to do by kindness, he must be prepared to take de oder ting. Lamb will, p'r'aps, take what he has seen to heart. You can report how he goes on. If dere is an improvement under de kind cistern, all well and good. If dere ain't—well, we shall see. I'm inclined to tink dere will be."

Potts lay in bed all the following day, which was Sunday. On Monday morning he got up at ten o'clock, and went out, and at eleven o'clock Mudleigh, the lawyer, sent his card up to Pete by Bridget, the housemaid.

"Den don't you leabe any valuables about, my dear," exclaimed Pete.

"Hush! He's outside."

"Well, tell him to come in. Good-morning, old hoss! I say, Bridget, just see if de umbrellas are all safe. Oh, it's nuffin to laugh at, Jack. I don't want my best umbrella stolen. It's a nice day, ain't it, Mudheap?"

"My name is Mr. Mudleigh, and I have not come here to discuss the weather."

"Are dose umbrellas all safe, Bridget? De man says he ain't come here to talk 'bout de weather, so he may hab come for anoder purpose, and I would like to make sure dat dere's nuffin missing."

"Go on with your nonsense, Pete. Sure, sir, he can't help his fun." Then Bridget vanished, and they heard her giggling as she went.

"I am instructed by my client, Mr. Potts——"

"You need to be instructed by some one, old hoss, and I am glad dat Potts has taken you in hand. I should say he would make a mighty fine instructor for a lawyer, for he's de worst liar I eber came across."

"I don't want any more of your impertinence, fellow!"

"Oh, I tought p'r'aps you had come for a little more ob it. Well, what do you want? Just move dat silver pen off de table, Jack. I gabe twopence for it when it was new, and I don't want to lose it."

"I am advised that you have grossly assaulted Mr. Potts."

"Nunno!"

"Do you deny striking him?"

"I gabe him a good caning."

"You admit that you struck him?"

"Suttinly I did; but he would hab been able to tell you dat, widout your troubling me wid de anxiety ob your visit."

"He intends to take action against you."

"Bery well. But why couldn't he hab done it widout sending you here?"

"I have called to see if the matter can be settled out of court."

"Yah, yah, yah! Just what I tought. You'm come to see how much you can get out ob me by way ob damages. Well, what will you take?"

"I am speaking without prejudice. The man has been grossly assaulted, and——"

"Nunno! I only caned him."

"It is the same thing."

"Golly! You wouldn't say so if I caned you, and den grossly assaulted you. I ain't sure dat de man doesn't deserve a caning, boys. You see, if I try de experiment on him as well as Potts, we shall hab a double chance ob finding out weder a caning does a man any good."

"You will carry your impertinence too far," cried Mudleigh.

"Well, I will consider de matter, old hoss. Now fire ahead."

"Under all the circumstances of the case, and speaking without prejudice, I believe my client would be willing to accept the sum of fifty pounds by way of compensation."

"And how much ob dat would you take for your fees?"

"You do not appear to know that all legal fees are fixed according to scale."

"Should say it was a sliding scale, judging by a few ob de bills I hab received from lawyers, and it always seems to slide in deir favour. Still, will you gib me an undertaking dat your fees won't come to more dan a guinea?"

"Certainly not!"

"Yah, yah, yah! I tought not. Poor old Potts doesn't know de hole he has got himself into. Well, I ain't paying de man any damages, and you can tell him from me dat de next time he misbehaves himself I shall cane him again."

"Of course, he will leave your service, and——"

"Here, that ain't according to your instructions," cried Potts, who, as usual, had been listening outside the door.

"How could you stop in the service of a man who had thrashed you?"

"You claim damages, and leave all the rest to me. I ain't allowing a lawyer to take the bread out of my mouth. I want compensation, that's what I want, and it is exactly what I am going to have, else I'll know the reason why."

"I can't tell you dat straight away, Potts," said Pete. "De reasons why you won't get compensation is because I ain't going to pay any. De sum ob money I had already giben you was de compensation. I told you so at de time."

"What!" gasped Mudleigh. "You mean to tell me that you have already taken compensation?"

"Why, he gave me a halfpenny."

"And you took it?"

"Of course I took it. I wasn't——"

"Then you have settled the matter. My fee will be two pounds."

"What!" howled Potts. "You mean to say——"

"That is my fee, and I will trouble you to hand it to me now. You told me you wished me to call here and endeavour to get compensation."

"I expected you to get it."

"You said no expense was to be spared."

"Yah, yah, yah! You ain't sparing it, old hoss."

"Why, I only saw you once."

"Perfectly correct. I gave you an interview to receive your instructions. Well, that is thirteen-and-fourpence. I have had a second one with this man, and another one with you, and you will find those three interviews at thirteen-and-fourpence each come to two pounds. I ought to charge you more; but as I assume you are a poor man, I will let you off with that. If you don't pay me I shall take out a summons, and obtain a judgment against you. If you don't pay them, I shall send you to prison."

"I don't mind paying two quid if you get fifty out of Pete, but I ain't paying you a penny-piece otherwise."

"Then I shall make you. It doesn't matter to me. If you choose to allow the matter to go into court, there will be about five times as much to pay, as there will be all the fees and my expenses."

"Why, you are nothink but a swindler!" yelled Potts.

"Very well. That is libel, and I shall bring an action for damages against you. I shall claim a hundred pounds damages."

"Bust me!" gasped Potts. He was taking it for granted that because Mudleigh knew the law he was telling him exactly what he could do.

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm frightening de old hoss out ob his life, Mudbank. Now, look here, Potts, dat caning I gabe you was to teach you de stupidity ob telling lies. De two pounds dat you will hab to pay Mudbank——"

"Mudleigh!" corrected that individual.

"De two pounds dat you will hab to pay Slopleigh will teach you dat it is neber safe to go to a solicitor ob his standing. You might as well go to a moneylender, 'cos you'm sure to hab to pay frough de nose."

"I ain't going to pay him two pounds. You owe thirteen-and-fourpence out of it, 'cos one of the interviews was with you."

"Yah, yah, yah! I can plainly see you don't understand de ways ob lawyers. I didn't want de man to come here. I neber ordered him, and would much rader he didn't come prowling about, 'cos I'm frightened ob de loose property. You see, I'm going to watch him on his way out, to see dat he doesn't nick anything."

"This is infamous!" roared Mudleigh.

"You may be an honest man, Mireleigh."

"Insolent hound, my name is Mr. Mudleigh!"

"Well, it doesn't matter, old hoss. I ain't dealing wid your name, but wid your nature, and dat don't seem to be anyting like honest. All de same, I suppose I hab got de right to see dat you don't steal any ob my property? Now, Potts, I tell you plainly dat I ain't going to pay you a penny compensation. If you like to remain here, you can."

"Of course I'm going to stop. I never intended leaving; at the same time, I ought to be compensated."

"Den you can get Muddy to do it, 'cos I ain't going to."

"You will pay the two pounds damages—I mean, fees—or whatever they are?"

"Well, I don't want you to hab to pay two pounds; at de same time, I'm determined dat Miry ain't going to get dat amount so mighty easy. You can set your mind at rest on dat point, Potts. I shall let him summon you for de amount. Well, first ob all he will hab to serve de summons, den I shall employ a good solicitor to defend de case, and I shall pay de two pounds into court. Well, we shall fight de case for a few weeks; and after dat, if de court decide dat de two pounds hab to be paid, he will get dem, but he will find dat dey hab cost him a mighty lot more dan dey are worf. 'Nuff said! Buzz off, Mudcart, and I'm going to see you out ob de place, 'cos you ain't at all safe when dere's valuable property about, and I know I gabe sixpence for one ob my walking-sticks."

"You think you are very smart, I suppose?" sneered Mudleigh.

"Nunno, old hoss; only I don't tink I'm quite so stupid as you are, if you take dat case into court."

"I suppose my time is of value?"

"It ain't worf two pounds an hour for telling a servant to bring an action against his master."

"You struck him——"

"Oh, we ain't going into all dat again! Buzz off!"

"I shall bring——"

"Oh, buzz off home! I don't care what you bring. It won't matter to me if de case costs a hundred pounds or so. I mean to defend it, 'cos I ain't allowing you to rob a poor man out ob a couple ob sovereigns."

"Insolent rascal! I——"

"Good-morning!"

"I shall go when I choose."

"Den I would like you to choose to go now."

"I am willing to accept a guinea——"

"Good-morning. I'll gib you six-and-eightpence, seeing dat you had an interview wid Potts; but I won't gib a penny more, and I'm only gibing dat, 'cos I tink you deserve someting for your loss ob time. Now, you can take dat or leave it, just as you please, but you won't get a penny more."

"Under all the circumstances of the case I will accept thirteen-and-fourpence, and——"

"You won't get it. Show him out, Potts and be sure you keep your eye on him."

"This way," growled Potts, seizing the astonished lawyer by the arm. "Out you go."

"I will take the six-and-eightpence, but——"

"Dere you are, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, handing him the money. Now den, off you go, and I don't want to see your face again."

"Perhaps you will," snarled Mudleigh, as Potts showed him out.

"Well, this is a pretty state of things, I don't think," growled Potts, when he reached his lodge, and seated himself in his chair. "I've been treated shameful. Still, I'm glad I didn't have to pay them two quid. I hope I've heard the last of the matter now; but——"

"Oh, good-morning, Potts," exclaimed Lamb, entering the lodge.

"Here, you clear out of it, you young varmint."

"I wanted to speak about that shameful thrashing you received. Did it hurt? Ha, ha, ha! Did it hurt much? That's the first time you had been caned since you have been grown-up, isn't it. My eyes, you did yell. I couldn't help laughing, although I felt sorry for you, seeing you writhing about like some old slug. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, don't get excited."

Lamb was dodging round the table with Potts in hot pursuit, but Potts had not the slightest chance of catching his agile enemy.

"If you don't get out of this place, I'll brain you," panted Potts, sitting down, because he had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to catch his tormentor.

"I have only come to ask you a civil question."

"Then ask it and go."

"Did it hurt?"

"Bust you! Will you go?"

"He laid it on pretty thick, still it will do you some good, and you ought to love him all your life. Ha, ha, ha! Fancy you getting a caning at your time of life. Rather degrading, but beneficial."

"Are you going to clear out of this?"

"But, my dear old Potts, you really ought to have something done to your back. Suppose I rub it with a brick. That might relieve the smart. Ha, ha, ha! You did howl."

"Se will you howl, you young scoundrel, if you don't clear out. Have you been thieving lately? I don't know why they don't send you to prison the same as other thieves."

"I must say Pete gave you a very thorough caning. My only hope is that it didn't hurt. You are such a dear, good, kind-hearted creature that it would be a pity to hurt you. Ha, ha, ha! You had to lie in bed all day yesterday, poor, dear man. Does it smart now?"

"I won't stand this 'ere treatment. I'll report you to Pete. He's going to cane you next time you do anything wrong."

"Do you think he will cane you next time you do anything wrong. It is to be hoped so, because then he will have to cane you two or three times a day, and you can't imagine how funny you look being flogged. Ha, ha, ha! I really must tell the fellows, because I feel sure they will enjoy the joke."

"Now, see here, Lamb. You must know that I could make it hot for you.

Well, there's no sense in our quarrelling. You can jest keep your mouth shut, I suppose."

"Certainly I can. I sha'n't tell anyone who doesn't know, but, as Droog and Bull have told everyone they met about it, why, it is likely to get known. Good-bye. I'm off."

This was bad enough, but matters became much worse that evening. Potts got leave to go down town, and he called at the inn on his way.

He knew the company in the bar-parlour.

"Haw, haw, haw! You've been caned, ain't you, mate? What did Pete flog you for?"

"Let's hear all about it," said the landlord.

"Who's told you such a wicked falsehood?" demanded Potts fiercely.

"Lamb. He came in here on purpose. He said he was going down into the village, and was going to mention the matter there.

"Bust him!" howled Potts, striding from the place, while shouts of laughter followed him.

He was so angry, that he made a mental vow never to enter that inn again. But it was just the same at the next one he came to—and entered.

"Is there any truth in the statement that Pete caned you?" inquired the landlord.

Potts denied it, but it was of no use. It was the same everywhere he went, and even some people in the street asked him all about it.

Then when the unfortunate Potts got back he found on the college gates a large placard bearing the inscription :

"DID IT HURT YOU?"

This was bad enough, but all round the walls of his room pieces of paper had been stuck with the same question on it.

"I'll not stand this," roared Potts, taking off his coat, and putting on the one he wore indoors. He failed to detect the same question on the back of that coat, but the boys who were waiting for him could not fail to notice it, and they howled with delight.

"I'll go straight to Pete," fumed Potts—and so he did.

That worthy was in company of Jack and Sam, and he listened to Potts' tale of woe.

"I wouldn't take any notice ob de matter, old hoss, if I was you," said Pete.

"It's shameful. It's all Lamb's doing. Shall I bring him here?"

"Yes," sighed Pete. "Look here, Jack, I tink you might flog de boy when he lies to me. I don't want to do it."

"I consider Carton would be the proper party."

"I dunno. He might hit him rader hard."

"I don't think he will hit him harder than he deserves," laughed Jack; "but you had better question Lamb first."

Potts soon brought him in, and Lamb looked his meekest, while he bowed to Pete in a most polite manner.

"Potts says you'm been sticking labels up about him!" growled Pete.
 "Is dat true?"

"Perfectly true."

"Golly!" gasped Pete, astounded that Lamb should admit the truth straight away. It was a thing he had never done before.

"I certainly put them up for a little fun."

"Eh?"

"It makes the boys laugh."

"M'yes! It would do all dat. I'm glad to see dat you tell de troof straight away. Dere's half a crown for speaking de troof, and I hope you will always do so in de future."

"I promise to do so, Pete."

"Bery well. You might just enter Potts's complaint in de book, and den you can go."

And Lamb entered in large letters: "Did it hurt you? This question refers to a caning Pete gave Potts for speaking falsely, and Potts objects to it being asked. Very serious."

"Good evening, gentlemen!" exclaimed Lamb, bowing himself out; and when Potts followed him, Pete burst into a roar of laughter, for he saw that question on his back.

"I am perfectly satisfied wid de new cistern, boys," observed Pete. "Dat boy spoke de troof at once. I wonder if he means to do so always."

"I have not the slightest doubt he will," laughed Jack, "provided you give him half a crown, and do not reprimand him for his faults."

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete.

"If it is all the same to you, I would rather not say all that over again."

"But don't you see, Jack, it is a great ting to hab cured de boy ob telling falsehoods."

"All right. Have your own way; but I don't believe flogging a porter will cure a boy of a fault."

CHAPTER 21

The Great Race.

THE holidays were drawing near, and Pete became anxious to fulfil his promise to give Professor Hawke's boys a treat. It seemed to him that if his boys were friendly with them it would save a lot of trouble, and, with this object in view, he decided to call on the great man.

He was shown into his study, and it made him gasp to see the amount of work the professor was getting through.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, looking up, and then going on with his writing.

"Why, you see, my dear old hoss—"

"I am Professor Hawke."

"M'yes! I know dat, old hoss. I was tinkin' it would be a great ting for de boys ob our respective schools to be on friendly terms, and—"

"Preposterous! I certainly should not allow my young gentlemen to become friendly with young thieves."

"Not if dey are reformed ones?"

"Certainly not. I am surprised that you should have the temerity to suggest such a thing! Good-morning!"

"Good-morning, old hoss! But, you see, it is dis road——"

"I don't wish to discuss the matter. I wish you good-day."

"It's bery kind ob you, old hoss, and I wish you de same; but about dese boys?"

The professor rang his bell, and a porter answered it.

"Show this person out, Jenkins."

"Well, I 'spect dere's no help for it, den," said Pete, stepping towards the door. Then a bright idea occurred to him. "Look here, Hawke, I'm anxious for de boys to be on friendly terms, and I promised dem a day's entertainment——"

"I will not listen to it for one moment."

"I'm willing to make you a little present ob ten pounds if you will let dem come."

"I shall certainly agree to no such thing," said Hawke. "Of course, if your object is that the boys should cease quarrelling, that is another matter. Shut the door, Jenkins."

Jenkins left the room, and Hawke brightened up a little.

"I find that considerable damage was done to my verandah," he observed. "Ten pounds would not cover the cost. However, if you are willing to compensate me to that extent, I think it the only honourable thing to do, under the circumstances."

"Right you are, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, pulling out some gold. "Do you tink your boys can come, say, de day after to-morrow?"

"I see no reason why they should not do so, provided they do not get led into mischief. How many do you wish to come?"

"De whole school."

"Very well. You have my permission," exclaimed Hawke; and Pete placed the ten pounds on the table. "Of course, I can have nothing mentioned about—you understand me?"

"Nunno! I sha'n't say a word. Good-morning, old hoss!"

"Good morning, my man!"

Then Pete left the room, perfectly satisfied with his errand; and he told the boys that the entertainment was to take place on the following Wednesday, a thing that greatly delighted them, for they never had even a break-up party at Hawke's College.

"He's a downright good fellow!" declared Midhurst. "I tell you he gives a feed worth the going to. He doesn't put the saucepan on short. If it's anything like the last feed, we shall enjoy ourselves."

Pete decided on having the entertainment in his own grounds, and he hired the town band for musical purposes; then he gave orders for a sumptuous feast.

Jack and Sam were kept busy with the preparations, and when the eventful day arrived nothing that could conduce to the pleasure of the lads had been omitted.

"Glad to see you, my lads!" cried Pete, as his guests arrived. "I tought you might like some sports in de morning, so we'm going to hab running, jumping, and oder tings like dat, and——"

"Boxing?" suggested Lamb.

"Nunno, dere ain't going to be boxing. Still, dere's going to be plenty ob oder tings, and prizes will be giben to de winners. I'm the umpire and de distributor ob de prizes. De first trial will be run ob about a mile. We'm got de course marked off, and it will be five times round it. You choose de men you tink likely, Midhurst, and Lamb can select his. I am only gibing one prize for de long-distance race."

"May I take part in it?" inquired Midhurst.

"Suttingly; and Lamb will, ob course."

"Is it to be a handicap?" inquired Lamb.

"Nunno! It's impossible to hab any ob dem handicaps, 'cos I dunno what our guests can do, but I hab arranged races for de juniors. De first race is for such seniors as like to go in for it, and dat's why dere is no second or third prize."

"You haven't told us what the first prize is," observed Lamb.

"Nunno! I ain't telling you what any prize is. I 'spect you to do your best for de sake ob sport. Now, den, get ready to start."

Lamb did not care who started from his school, because he knew perfectly well that he could beat them all. He thought he could beat Midhurst, but that was only a matter of conjecture, for he had never run against him. They got five entries for the race, and Pete hoped to see good time.

"Don't forget, five times round!" cried Pete, as they all toed the line. "I fire dis pistol to start you. Be ready!"

The pistol cracked, and away they sped. Two of the boys shot ahead, but Lamb and Midhurst kept almost level. The latter was the opponent Lamb most dreaded, and he tried to get him to make the pace, but Midhurst, although he went at a good speed, had no intention of fagging himself at the start.

As they came round in the first lap Lamb was leading, and he was keeping close to the ropes. Midhurst was close behind him, while the other three were several yards in the rear.

"It's between dose two, Sammy!" exclaimed Pete. "Dey are fine runners!"

"I reckon so. I doubt if Lamb will let Midhurst get past him."

"Well, ob course, I want our school to win; at de same time, as long as dere's fair play, dat's all right. Golly! Lamb is setting a mighty fast pace. I dunno weder he's going to keep dat up for de mile."

"He's a grand runner if he does," said Sam.

"Well run!" cried Pete, as they came round again; but two of them

dropped out, while the third had not a chance. It was between Lamb and Midhurst, both of whom were going splendidly.

In the third lap Lamb spurted, and drew a good ten yards ahead of his opponent, but Pete looked rather doubtful.

Midhurst did not quicken his pace, and Lamb soon slackened down. When they came round again, only a few feet separated them, but Lamb still led.

"Well run indeed!" cried Jack; and all the boys cheered.

"Last lap!" roared Pete; and he ran across with the tape.

Now Midhurst spurted, and the two lads drew level. Their breaths hissed through their teeth, and their eyes were dazed; but each lad was determined to be the winner.

Breast and breast they ran, Lamb still close to the ropes. Deafening cheers rang out. Each lad strained every muscle, but neither gained an inch on the other. It was a magnificent race.

In a haze they saw the tape stretched across, and each quickened his speed. Ten yards more, and the race would be run; then, with a magnificent effort, Midhurst made his last spurt.

He shot ahead, and, breasting the tape, swept it from Pete's hand, while the cheers that rang out came from both schools. It is a question whether he was not a more popular winner than Lamb would have been. The two lads stood side by side, breathing heavily, and Pete watched them for some moments in silence. He knew that they were not in a condition to speak just then.

"My lads," he exclaimed, "you have bof run splendidly! I'm mighty pleased to see such running, 'cos de pace was bery fast from start to finish. You'm bof done great credit to your respective schools. In all dese sports I am going to gib de prize at de end ob each event, 'cos dat saves trouble at de end. Just go and get your tings on, den we will make de presentation."

And the two lads walked away to the dressing-room, while Sam thought it just as well to go with them. He had an idea that Lamb would be furious at having lost the principal event of the day, and he wanted to stop any quarrelling.

Nearly ten minutes elapsed before the lads made their appearance, by which time they had regained their breath.

"Midhurst, my lad," exclaimed Pete, "I hab to congratulate you on habing won a splendidly contested race. Although Lamb just lost, I must say he ran magnificently. Dere was very little in it."

"I would run him again!" cried Lamb.

"Well, de race is ober for de day, but dere are oder sports, and some running for de smaller boys. De prize for dis principal event is dis gold watch and chain, and I congratulate you on habing won it, Midhurst."

"Why, you don't really mean to give me this!" gasped Midhurst. He had expected just an ordinary prize. Pete had spared no expense.

"You like it, den?"

"Like it! I should think I did. It's magnificent! It's awfully good of you. It's beautiful!"

"So long as you like it, dat's all right. Now for de next race."

Lamb's face turned white, and a very vindictive expression came into his eyes. He knew at a glance that the prize was a very valuable one, although even he did not realise its full value, for Pete had been really lavish with that prize.

The remainder of the sports went off excellently, but Midhurst refused to take part in any more.

"You see, Pete," he explained, "I'm about the best of our chaps at most sports, and I don't want to take any more prizes after the magnificent one you have given to me. I shall always keep that watch, and I shall never forget your kindness."

"Oh, you won it fairly, my lad. It was bery close, but you well deserved it, for dat last spurt was splendid. I made sure you wouldn't be able to put it in. It was mighty plucky, considering de pace you had been making."

Then the lads had their dinner, which, though cold, was very sumptuous, and after that Pete gave them some performances, while the day proved a very enjoyable one.

THE END.

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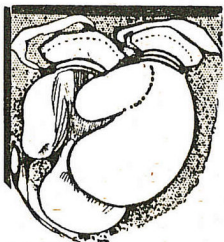
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