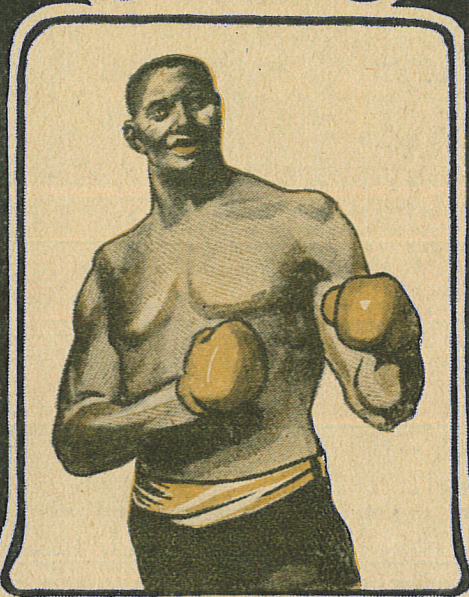


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PETE'S BOXING TOUR



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Pete's Boxing Tour.

A NEW, Long, Complete Tale of JACK, SAM, and PETE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

CHAPTER 1.

A Bad Smash Up.

JACK, Sam, and Pete were comfortably seated in a first-class compartment of the Liverpool express, and Rory, Pete's dog, was on the floor. They had just left London, and Pete was reading hard.

"Your book appears interesting," observed Jack, as Pete kept turning over the pages at a rate that proved he was not reading them.

"Den you must be looking at de cover, Jack," growled Pete. "Dere don't seem to be anything interesting in de inside. I tought by de picture dat it was 'bout African forests—and tings like dat."

"Why, it is on vegetarianism!"

"Eh? Den what do dey draw dis forest on de cover for?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That isn't a forest, you owl! Those are carrots, turnips, and cabbages."

"Golly! So dey are. I mistook dem for forest trees. But look here, boys, dey say here dat vegetables are de proper tings to eat, and dat you save a mighty lot ob money eating dem. Dat it is unkind to eat animals—dough I don't see how you are going to eat cabbages widout you—"

"Don't be nasty, Pete," exclaimed Jack.

"But I was tinkin'—"

"Lunch, gentlemen," inquired the waiter.

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete, looking up from his book.

"Will you take lunch?"

"Do you gib it in wid de tickets?"

"Certainly not. It—"

"Oh, I tought p'r'aps you gabe dem free. Can we hab a vegetarian lunch—"

"A what?"

"Only vegetables. All sorts ob vegetables, and plenty ob dem. 'Bout two-free pailfuls."

"Well, you can, but—"

"Den we will try de experiment. Free vegetarian lunches. I dunno dat Rory will like it, but—"

"I don't know that Jack will," said Sam; "and I'm quite certain that I sha'n't."

"It's good for your health, Sammy. Can we hab de lunches in dis carriage?"

"Yes. I'll fix up a table."

"Here, stop a bit. Dere's half a crown for you for de commencing tip. Dere will be anoder one at de end ob de meal, and mind you are sure dat dere is plenty to eat. 'Nuff said. Buzz off!"

"I reckon some of your ideas want correcting," grumbled Sam.

"You'm getting too fat, Sammy. So's Jack. I shall hab to take you in hand and train you a bit. De fact ob de matter is you eat too much meat."

"We don't eat half as much as you."

"Two wrongs don't make a right, Sammy. Dey say vegetables are good for de complexion."

"Well, why not start on improving your own? Jack and I don't want our complexions improved. Besides, I'm not going to believe that cabbages will improve them."

"You be quiet, Sammy, and let me see what dis book says."

"I would like to be behind the artist who drew carrots in such a manner that you mistook them for forest trees," observed Sam. "However, it is quite certain that you will soon get tired of a vegetarian diet; and we shall be able to get dinner at the hotel."

"Tink how handy it will be when we happen to be in de forest, boys," observed Pete. "If we feel hungry, all we shall hab to do will be to cook some leaves and grass, and tings like dat, and dere you are; and if it is better for your health—and it must be so, 'cos dis book says it is—why, you get de double benefit."

Pete continued his studies until the waiter came to fix the table, and then he waited rather impatiently.

"Seem to be a good lot ob instruments for eating de vegetables," he observed. "I dunno dat I shall want all dese forks and knives. I hope bread is a vegetable, 'cos I must start on dat."

Pete commenced on the basket of rolls; then he groaned a little as a small plate of cabbages was placed before him. He glanced at Jack and Sam out of the corners of his eyes.

"Bring up about free hundred more portions, old hoss!" ordered Pete.

"You won't get your second tip if you don't bring up enough, and if you bring up more dan we can eat I shall tip you half a sovereign."

This was good enough for the waiter. He did not care how much the comrades consumed. What he wanted was his promised tip, and he worked hard for it. He served up quantities of asparagus, and all the other sorts of vegetables they had on the train; while the amount of potatoes Pete consumed was simply extraordinary.

He tried Rory with all sorts, but if there is one thing more than another that a dog hates, it is vegetables. He scattered them on the floor with his paw, then jumped up beside his master to ask for more, while Pete fondly imagined that Rory was eating all that he gave.

As a matter of fact, Rory was doing nothing of the sort. He was merely making a frightful mess on the carriage floor, but Pete could not see it because of the table.

At last the waiter, having no more vegetables, brought up some tarts, and having consumed all the tarts there was, Pete finished off with bread and cheese.

"Well, how do you like it, Pete?" inquired Jack, winking at Sam.

"It may be good for de complexion, Jack, but I dunno dat it is much good for de hunger. But tink ob de money we hab saved."

"Ah, I was forgetting that!"

"Dat's just where it is, Jack. You always forget de main point. It says in de book dat de saving is enormous. But here comes de waiter. Let's watch what he writes down."

And this is what the waiter wrote down:

30 plates of cabbages	0	5	0
17 plates of potatoes	0	2	10
16 plates of tart	0	3	9
20 breads	0	1	8
40 butters	0	3	4
50 cheeses	0	8	4
13 ginger beers	0	3	3
20 bundles asparagus	5	0	0
	£6	8	2

"I reckon it's rather silly of you not to have remembered what an enormous saving we shall effect with our meals," said Sam, as the waiter skipped away with his half-sovereign, which Pete had handed him when he was making out his bill. He took good care that Pete did not see what he was putting down until that promised half-sovereign was safely in his possession, and then he fled, with a view to letting the collector bear the brunt of it.

"Eh?" gasped Pete, gazing at the precious bill.

"Of course, there is the saving," observed Jack. "That is the only pleasant part of it."

"Golly!"

"I reckon our money will accumulate too fast," said Sam. "What shall we do with all the money we save on our food, Pete?"

"Why, you see, Sammy, dere ain't so mighty much saving about de matter. I should hab thought I could hab eaten a field ob cabbages for what dis little lot is costing. I didn't know cows were such mighty expensive animals to feed. We'm eaten 'bout two pounds ob butter, too, and about twelve pounds ob cheese. Den we'm eaten enough sparrowgrass to feed all de sparrows in de United Kingdom. De vegetarian diet may be mighty good for de complexion, but it ain't much good to de pocket, and all I can say 'bout de man who wrote dis book is dat he's de worst liar I eber came across."

"Ha, ha, ha! It has only cost us six pounds odd for luncheon. I don't know what it will cost for dinner. If we had had the ordinary lunch it would have cost us about fifteen shillings."

"De man who writes dis book says it is sinful to kill animals, but all I can say is dat it's a mighty lot more sinful to say dat a vegetarian diet is much cheaper. If a man was to start eating prize Persian kittens it wouldn't come as expensive as— Yah, yah, yah! Oh, golly!"

The collector had rushed into the carriage, and he placed his heel on the heap of cabbage that Rory had left at the end of the table. The unfortunate man appeared to be in a hurry, but he did not save much time.

His feet shot under the table, and he sat down in the patch of vegetables, while as he clutched at the slab to save himself from falling, he wrenched it on the top of himself, and all the crockery, and the remains of the feast, shot on his head and chest.

As the plates and glasses rattled about his ears, the crockery was smashed to atoms.

"Yah, yah, yah! Golly, golly! He must be a vegetarian, and is yaffing up de remains ob our lunch. Yah, yah, yah! I tink he's eating de plates as well. I don't wonder at de poor man feeling hungry if he only libes on potatoes. Dey may be all right for mealy-bugs, but dere ain't enough staying power in dem for dis child."

"You stupid rascal!" yelled the official, extricating himself from the wreckage.

"Yah, yah, yah! Seems to me dat you'm de stupid one on dis special occasion."

"How dare you do this?"

"Why, I ain't done anything, 'cept laugh at you, and I don't see how could help doing dat when you start yaffing up all de crockery. Oh, don't laugh at de man, Jack. You can see dat he doesn't like it."

"You will have to pay for this."

"Should say you are de proper party to do de paying, my dear old hoss."

"It will be seven shillings."

"Golly! I wish you charged your vegetables on de same lines. Take your seven shillings out ob dat ten-pound note, and you can take de lunch as well. I dunno dat I shall boder any more 'bout my complexion. Look here, old hoss, clear dat slop away, and bring us up a proper dinner."

"You can't have any more lunch. It's too late."

"Golly! What am I to eat," groaned Pete.

"You can't want any more," snarled the official. He was very irate at his undignified fall. "You have eaten about a sack of potatoes, and a small field of cabbages."

"I feel as dough I had been eating a full-sized lot ob well-inflated pneumatic tyres. Oh, it's nuffin' to laugh at. If I could only find de author ob dis book, he would notice de same ting. Talk 'bout pernicious literature after dat little lot."

And Pete hurled the book out of the window in extreme contempt.

Suddenly there was a clanging sound, followed by some terrible jerks. The carriage appeared to be leaping through the air, and taking the ground at frequent intervals, while the comrades were flung about in a way that was terrifying.

"We've broke a coupling!" gasped the official, diving into Pete's chest.

"Golly! Should say we'd broken two ob dem. Hi, murder! De sea is too rough."

Then his voice was drowned by a terrible crash. The carriage toppled over, and after that the comrades scarcely knew what happened. It seemed to them that the end of the world had come.

Pete was the first to speak. He sat up, and, gazing upwards, saw the sky. Splinters of wood and glass were all around him, while his comrades were gazing blankly at him, and Rory was walking from one to the other to make sure that they were not hurt.

"Is anyone hurt?" demanded Pete.

"I reckon I am, for one," observed Sam. "And Jack looks as though he was a bit."

"I'm also hurt," said the official.

"Den you can reckon we'm all right, 'cos if a man can tell you he's hurt, it shows dere ain't much de matter wid him."

Pete was glancing anxiously towards his comrades, but he came to the conclusion that there was nothing very serious the matter with them.

"I'm mighty glad ob dis," exclaimed Pete, standing up amongst the wreckage.

"Then I reckon you are easily satisfied," said Sam.

"Nunno! I mean, ours is de only carriage dat has come a cropper wid de guard's van; and de guard ain't hurt, 'cos here he comes."

"Anyone injured?" exclaimed that worthy, hurrying to the spot.

"We've left the rails, and there's been an unavoidable accident."

"I quite believe dat accident was unavoidable," observed Pete. "I'm not going to believe dat a well-conducted guard's going to allow his

carriage and de next end one to roll down a twenty-foot embankment for de fun ob de ting. Golly! Wasn't it a mighty funny sensation? And it ain't done a bit ob good to dese carriages. Should say you had better use dem for lighting de engine fires."

"It's no joking matter!" exclaimed the guard severely.

"Dat's what I noticed when we were rolling down de embankment, old hoss!"

"It ain't to your credit!"

"I don't see dat it's much to de railway company's credit!" growled Pete. "But you ain't got de right to bully me 'cos your company smashes us up. If dis is de way you take us to Liverpool, I shall go to Germany, or some ob dose oder towns, next time."

"Accidents will happen."

"So it seems, on dis line; only I wish dey wouldn't happen when I'm in de carriage. It has giben me palpitation ob de heart. De vegetarian diet gabe me de feeling ob hab'ing swallowed pneumatic tyres, and de accident gabe me de impression dat dose tyres were bursting."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "It is no use trying to be serious when Pete is on the job. Still, we have a lot to be thankful for."

"Den start tanking de guard for habing smashed us up!" said Pete. "You had better kiss him while you are about it, Jack, only mind his whiskers."

"Well, the line is all clear!" exclaimed the guard, after a short examination. "The train has stopped. You had better come on by it."

"Eh?"

"We shall go on, and send men back."

"I don't seem to hab any yearnings to go on by dat train," said Pete, pulling out his pipe and commencing to fill it.

"You must go on."

"Eh?"

"I say you must go on!"

"Well, you may be right, but I hab de impression dat you are wrong. We want to get to Liverpool."

"Well, come into the train."

"I don't care for your cistern ob travelling, old hoss. Dere are too many stops. I ain't going any furdur."

"You must!"

"Eh?"

"You can't stop here."

"Nunno! We ain't going to stop here; we'm going to find a place where dey sell unvegetarian dinners. 'Nuff said!"

CHAPTER 2. Making the Match.

JACK and Sam, who knew Pete so well, also knew that he would go no further. The railway officials did not know him, and fondly imagined that their arguments would prevail.

They all had a turn, and Pete listened like some old owl.

"Well, what you say may be perfectly true, old hosses," he observed; "but, don't you see, I hab had a personal experience ob your cistern, and I don't seem to care for anoder one."

"There is not the slightest danger."

"Dat may be; but I don't seem to care to run de risk ob de safety."

"You can't stay here."

"I don't see any difficulty in de way ob dat."

"Well, we shall have to leave you; and you are about a hundred miles from anywhere, and you won't find anything there when you reach it."

"I ain't got time to work dat out, old hoss."

"Are you coming, or are you not?"

"I'm going to 'not'!"

"Then come along, gentlemen. We shall leave him."

"I reckon you can't leave an injured passenger like that," said Sam winking at Pete.

"He's not injured."

"Ah, that remains to be seen. At any rate, we shall not leave him alone."

"Certainly not!" said Jack.

"And mind you dis, old hoss," said Pete, "if I die ob my injuries, shall summon you for assault!"

The guard stormed, but it was all to no purpose. Pete sat on the embankment and smoked his pipe. He was in an awkward mood, and did not want to go further. At last they gave it up as a bad job, and took the train on.

"Now, boys," exclaimed Pete, "let's come and find an hotel where we can get someting to eat! What wid railway accidents and vegetarian diet, I'm sort ob what ladies call sinking."

For many a mile they traversed the country, which at that part was wild in the extreme, and it was not until six o'clock that they came to a village.

They little thought as they entered the inn what a vast difference the railway accident was going to cause to their plans.

It was a most comfortable inn, and when they entered the coffee-room they found a well-dressed man, of middle age, striding up and down the room, in an evident state of perturbation.

He was a well-built man, with a fair, jovial face, which was clean-shaven. His eyes were grey, and very brilliant, and he fixed them on the comrades.

"Glad you've come at last, dear boys! So this is the proxy—eh? It looks likely, too. What's your name, lad?"

"Pete, old hoss."

"Well, I'm Jinks. I dare say you have guessed that. Ha, ha! It's no often you take Jinks in, but I'll admit they nearly did it this time. Well we won't grumble at this."

He grabbed Pete's biceps, then felt his legs, and prodded him a little in the chest.

"Look here, old hoss, I ain't a cow for sale, dough I must say I hab been libbing on cows' fodder. But——"

"Hi, landlord, serve that dinner up!" bawled Jinks. "Four hungry men, mind. But the little lot I've ordered will go round. What's your names, boys?"

"I am Jack, and my friend is Sam. But I really——"

"My dear fellows, I'm delighted to make your friendship! You see, a Ponder will have explained to you, I'm in a beastly hole. So's he, for that matter. But he tells me this is not the first time you have helped him out of a difficulty. It will, of course, be good for you as well as me, and I Pete only pulls it off—mind, such chances have come off—why, we shall make a pot of money! There would have been a regular riot, and I should have been disgraced."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Ain't de man going ahead? Who's going to pay for de dinner?"

"I am, of course!" said the obliging Jinks.

"All right, my dear old hoss," observed Pete. "If you are so mighty

charitable as to supply train-wrecked passengers wid free food, I ain't got anything to say against it, 'specially as I happen to be one ob de passengers aforesaid. But I must say I don't quite understand de matter. And as for Ponder, I neber heard ob him in my life."

"What! Didn't he send you here?"

"Suttinly not! We had a smash-up on de line, and we walked here ob our own accord. We were on our way to Liverpool, only de train stopped rader suddenly."

"Thunder!"

"It did sound rader like it as we rolled down de embankment."

"Then you don't know me?"

"Neber heard ob you in our little lives."

"Well, if this isn't too disgusting! I took it for granted that you were the man Ponder was sending. Well, I'm not going to wait dinner any longer for them, and as I have invited you—why, there's an end of the matter. Come on, boys, we'll have a good feed, even if I am going to be smashed and disgraced!"

"Well, look here, Jinks, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You seem to be a decent sort ob chap—"

"I am, my dear fellow. I don't know another man I like so well."

"Yah, yah, yah! I'm glad you can gib Jinks a good character!" exclaimed Pete. "But, seeing dat we'm free to one, and dat it wouldn't be at all fair for you to pay for all—why, we will stand the dinner. 'Nuff said on dat point. Now for de oder. Why need you be disgraced and smashed? We'm nearly been smashed, so hab a fellow feeling for you in dat respect."

"You are a decent sort. Here comes the dinner. Smells jolly good, too! You see, you can get a fine feed here. A lot of motor chaps put up here. That's how it comes about you can get such good accommodation in the place. Well, it's this way—goose jolly good! I am a trainer—boxing trainer. Made a big match. Backed my man heavily. Said he was a dark horse, and got odds, because the other chap is a scorcher. My man is a good one, but the silly brute has cried off. I believe he's been squared by the other side. (Apple-sauce jolly good!) Well, Ponder—a friend of mine—said he knew of a couple of young fellows who would be certain to find a man. I sent him off post-haste, and took it for granted he had sent you, and that Pete was the boxer."

"Now, ain't dis mighty strange?" exclaimed Pete. "One would almost tink dat de accident was done on purpose!"

"Don't you see what a beastly hole I am in? Here I have been selling tickets broadcast to all the swells. I get the gate-money. And although I knew my man would get a licking, I could afford to lose a bit on bets, seeing what a lot I have made on the tickets. See? Well, I've spent the best part of the money. I'm a fine chap for spending money. See? Now, think what a howling row there will be when my man doesn't turn up! My lords will swear I've robbed them, and will naturally demand their money back. They can't possibly have it, 'cos I've spent most of it. See?"

"Yah, yah, yah! It's rader awkward—'specially for my lords."

"They would mob me. However, it's no good worrying about it. Only, I don't like it to be thought that I'm a welsher, and that's what it will mean."

"Suppose I box for you?" said Pete.

"Not really!"

"I dunno dat dere's any objection."

"Can you box?"

"M'yes!"

"Pete, my boy," cried Jinks, leaping to his feet and banging him on the back, "you are a black diamond! Hang it, you are a grand chap. Now, how much will you take? Let me down as lightly as you convenient can. Will you box for a purse of a hundred pounds?"

"Nunno! I ain't taking a penny. I will box for de fun ob de ting."

"But you won't be in training."

"Dat will be all de better for de oder man. I will box him any time he likes, and according to any rules."

"I say, this is awfully good of you, old chap!" cried Jinks excitedly. "It is only fair to tell you he is a terror; besides, he isn't the fairest fighter that I have met. He will punish you. I won't let you take it under false pretences."

"Dat man can punish me as much as he likes."

"It's twelve rounds."

"Don't mind if it is forty, or two-free hundred. It won't be as long dat, I tink."

"He's heavier than you."

"I shall take some ob his weight down."

"Is Pete a good boxer, Jack?"

"Splendid!"

"Why, I'll back him! Hang me if I don't! I can get odds——"

"You won't need to bother about odds," laughed Jack.

"But you chaps must make something out of it."

"If I wanted to do that I should back Pete for a few thousand pounds. But we are merely travelling about for amusement, so that it does not matter whether we stop here for a day or so or not."

"You think he will win?"

"He will win all right. You see, Pete's head is remarkably thick, as he has got no brains inside it—why, you can't hurt the beastly thing."

"Here, steady, Jack," growled Pete. "Don't you gib my superior nod a character like dat. It's a sensitive little noddle, and you can bery easly hurt de poor ting. Just pass me de apple-sauce, and don't talk at random."

"It's a wonderful piece of luck," declared Jinks. "Downright marvellous!"

"You have to thank the railway accident for it," laughed Jack.

"Then if no one was hurt I'm downright thankful for that accident," declared Jinks. "But there's a lot more to follow the goose. I'm not going to allow this piece of luck to spoil my appetite."

They had just finished the meal when a stout, grumpy-looking man entered the room, and Jinks addressed him as Ponder.

"What did you want to begin dinner without me for?" he grumbled.

"Because we were hungry, dear boy," answered Jinks cheerfully.

"So am I."

"You don't look it, old hoss," observed Pete.

"Who is talking to you? Mind your own business! I can't get a man like you here. I've tried all over the place. We are done."

"Pete is going to box."

"Who's he?"

"There he is."

"What's the good of him? We want a boxer! He can't box!"

"How do you know that?" inquired Jinks, ringing the bell, and ordering up a fresh dinner. He also ordered a pint of beer, knowing that the waiter Ponder would be happier after he had consumed that, although he never appeared to be really happy.

"Of course he can't box! Why don't you bring that ale, waiter?"

"Beg pardon, sir! Didn't know you wanted it before dinner, sir."

"Of course I want it before dinner!"

"I thought——"

"Then you've no right to think!"

"Beg pardon, sir! I didn't think that——"

"Then you ought to think!"

"Yah, yah, yah! De man ain't got de right to tink! Den he must tink!

You start doing de two togeder, waiter, and you'm bound to be correct!"

"Don't you laugh at me, fellow!" roared Ponder. "I won't be laughed at!"

"Well, dat's right, old hoss! If I was such a funny-looking little rotundity as you, I wouldn't let people laugh at me—least, not if I could stop dem. Go and fetch his ale, waiter! De man needs some soothing syrup! I tink he wants some blue beans for bibulous bounders!"

"If you insult me, fellow, I'll knock you down!"

"Oh, shut up, dear boy!" exclaimed Jinks. "You couldn't possibly do it. Pete is a boxer, and he would use you like a punch-ball. There's your gargle. Drink it, and be happy."

Ponder took the pint tankard, and smelt its contents, then frowned, then took a drink.

"How dare you bring me that stuff, fellow! What do you call it?"

"Bitter, sir."

"Then bring me a pint of Burton."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "De man has sipped half ob it, and now he wants a fresh pint."

"Look here, Ponder," exclaimed Jinks, glancing into the half-empty tankard, "behave yourself like a human being, and not like a wild bear. Bring him up his dinner, waiter!"

Ponder climbed down a little, but he was very discontented until he had finished his meal, then he was very indignant because Pete absolutely refused to shift out of the easy-chair he had taken possession of.

"Where am I to sit?" he demanded.

"You can sit on de floor for all I care, old hoss!" answered Pete cheerfully. "You ain't going to sit on dis chair."

"I don't believe the silly brute can box!" growled Ponder. "He doesn't look like a boxer. Slogan will about murder him."

"I'll bet you a level sovereign Pete wins!" said Jinks.

"Done!" cried Ponder.

"When's de match to take place?" inquired Pete.

"To-morrow night, dear boy," answered Jinks. "In a large barn not very far from here."

"We ain't likely to hab many spectators, are we?"

"Rather! They are coming down from London, and from all over the place. There will be crowds. Must be, if all those I've sold tickets to come. All you have got to do is to keep yourself fit, and I would advise you not to smoke."

"Golly! I'm mighty fond ob boxing," exclaimed Pete, "but I ain't so fond ob it as all dat. If I can't beat Slogan wid a pipe, it's mighty certain dat I sha'n't beat him widout it."

"You won't beat Slogan, anyhow!" declared Ponder, taking another chair.

"Well, dat will please you all right, old hoss, 'cos you'm backing him. You don't want me to win."

"It doesn't matter whether I want you to win or not, you won't do it, and for the best of all reasons, 'cos you can't! He's one of the best boxers I have ever seen, and he's strong and quick. You are neither!"

"I don't see how you can tell dat, my dear old hoss. All de same, I 'spect

Slogan will find me quite quick and strong enough for his liking. However, we shall find dat out to-morrow night, and if you fancy Slogan so much, all you'm got to do is to put all your money on him, den you will be able to retire on a small fortune—provided hé wins!"

"Bosh! Of course he will win! I know that before you start, and if you don't know it before you start you will when you have finished!"

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Don't you worry yourself 'bout de matter. You might go and engage rooms, Jack, 'cos I'm too busy!"

CHAPTER 3.

Pete's Boxing Bout.

THE following evening the comrades made their way to the barn where the fight was to take place, and, although it was an hour before the time, they found the place already well packed.

A platform had been raised in the centre of the barn, and the space beneath this served for the dressing-room.

When they entered it, they could hear the opponents in the next compartment.

"Seems as dough we ain't de first on de field," observed Pete. "Still, dere's plenty ob time. Are you feeling nervous 'bout your sobereign, Fonder?"

"No, I'm not! You haven't got the slightest chance of winning; but you will understand that directly you see your man."

"Don't you get disheartened, Pete!" exclaimed Jinks. "Ponder is always like that. It's his nature. He can't help it. He's never quite satisfied. If you gave him a thousand pounds he would feel a grudge against you because you had not given him a couple of thousand. I'm going to back you, and you can be dressing while I'm doing it. I've got a good many bets already, but I'm going to shove some more on you."

Slogan was the first to step into the ring, and he was certainly a very fine-looking young man; not only that, but he looked like a fighter.

He stood over six feet, and his muscles were abnormally well developed. He was probably two stone heavier than Pete, and he looked in perfect training.

When Pete stepped into the ring, he appeared to be far too light for his opponent, but the knowing ones looked doubtfully at him.

At first sight he did not appear to be so muscular as his colossal opponent, and he was decidedly smaller about the hips; but he was perfectly proportioned, and, although his muscles were not so lumpy as those of his opponent, they were better distributed, being far more undulating.

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Slogan. "Is that the thing you've brought to box me? I should have thought you knew better, Jinks!"

"All right, dear boy!" exclaimed Jack airily. "You ought to be the last to grumble at my having brought a weak opponent."

"Well, I don't want to box a novice."

"You were a novice once. Besides, Pete is not a novice."

"Yes, he is, else I would have heard of him! I will lay a level hundred with you, Pete?"

"Nunno, old hoss!" answered Pete cheerfully. "I'm boxing for de fun ob de ting. I don't want to take your money."

"Thundering kind, too! You haven't got the slightest chance of doing that; but I suppose you mean that you haven't got a hundred pounds to lose. Well, I'm ready for you at the call!"

Now the referee stepped forward, and explained that the contest was for

twelve rounds of three minutes each, with one minute interval; the last round four minutes. And the spectators cheered.

"Seconds out of the ring!" cried the referee. "Time!"

The combatants bowed to the audience, and then shook hands, and commenced to spar.

Pete always fought on the defensive until he had got the gauge of his opponent. On the present occasion he kept well away, for there could be little doubt that Slogan had an abnormally long reach; but then so had Pete.

The first part of the round was exceedingly tame, but towards the close Slogan led off with his left. Pete guarded the blow, scarcely ducking his head to the right at all, and he received a cross-counter, intended for the mark, on his elbow.

He made no attempt to counter, a thing that rather surprised Jinks, for it seemed to him that there was a good opportunity to do so.

Before the round was finished, Slogan made two or three rushes; but he failed to get in a single blow.

"You are a pretty boxer, dear boy!" exclaimed Jinks, when Pete went to his corner. "I can see you don't need my attentions yet, but you have got to remember that Slogan has not commenced yet."

"Nunno! But den, again, I ain't commenced! You see, Jinks, I always like to find out what my man is made ob. Slogan is quick, and I hab de idea dat he's a mighty hard hitter. Dey don't go togeder, as a rule."

"Seconds out of the ring! Time!"

Again the combatants faced each other, but this was a very different sort of round. Slogan appeared to have come to the conclusion that a hustling fight would suit the circumstances best. He went in with a rush, and there was some heavy give-and-take fighting.

The spectators cheered again and again, for this was the sort of thing they had come to see.

It must have puzzled the judges to have scored the points during that round, for the blows were like lightning. There was one thing in Slogan's favour, and that was that he was the aggressor, and therefore would have the advantage of a scoring point in view; but, seeing what an easy victory he had expected to gain, the manner in which Pete stood up to him must have been a very disagreeable surprise.

Several more rounds were fought in a similar manner, then when Slogan came up to scratch Jinks's experienced eye detected signs of distress.

Although Slogan made a great effort to appear fresh, his broad breast was heaving, and there was a vicious expression on his face.

He made several vigorous attempts to force Pete on the ropes, but that worthy was remarkably cautious, and, despite the furious rushes, he would not give ground.

The result of this was that there was a good deal of in-fighting, and as the round came to a close the referee was compelled to separate them, while he gave Slogan a caution.

"Shall start attacking now," observed Pete to his second, who gave him very little advice, because he saw that he did not need it.

"You have done splendidly, Pete!" exclaimed Jinks.

"Why, I ain't done anyting at all yet!" exclaimed Pete. "But I shall start now. You see, dat man has been scoring more points dan me."

"I'm not so sure."

"Well, it would be too mighty close to be pleasant. Besides, de spectators will expect to see some hitting. Dey are going to see it dis round. I shall catch him in de chest, where it won't hurt. Dere goes time!"

It seemed almost as though Slogan guessed what Pete intended doing. It

was either that, or he required breathing time, for he opened the round with sparring, and twice he feinted at Pete's face, but he got no opening. The round promised to be a tame one, but towards its close Pete's left shot out.

The blow landed in Slogan's chest, and down he went, while there was silence in the place. Jinks was about the only one who looked at all happy.

In an instant Slogan was on his feet, and he made a rush at Pete, but he failed to get in a blow before the call of "Time!"

"No doubt about who leads now, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Jinks. "That blow was magnificent!"

"I put a good lot ob force in dat blow," observed Pete. "You see, I want to hab a distinct lead, and when I get dat I shall be perfectly satisfied. I ain't going to try to hurt de man. Time once more!"

Again the combatants faced each other, and, strange to say, Slogan looked far fresher than when he came up for the previous round.

Pete was glad to see this. All he wanted was to score all the points he conveniently could; but Slogan was such an excellent boxer, and so remarkably quick, that Pete found it absolutely necessary to avail himself of his enormous strength, and towards the close of that round he got in two blows that sent his opponent to the floor again, while "Time!" was called as he rose to his feet, and Pete walked to his corner without striking a further blow.

"Dear boy, you are going to win!" murmured Jinks delightedly. "Be shot if you are not the better man, although he's a scorcher, mind. If he only fights fairly, I really believe you are a winner!"

"Well, he's fought all right up to now," observed Pete. "I ain't got any cause for complaint."

"You will get it before you have finished with him, if you give him half a chance. There goes 'Time!'"

Slogan was breathing heavily. Those terrific body blows were telling on him.

Pete, on the other hand, looked as fresh as when he started.

Feeling quite confident that he had got a good lead, he once more acted on the defensive, and this was exactly what Slogan required. It gave him time to get his wind.

Probably if Pete had hustled him that round he would soon have finished the contest, and Jinks became disappointed because he did not do so.

There was some grand boxing during that round, but it did not please the spectators as much as a rushing fight would have done. Slogan was an easy favourite, and they wanted to see him go in and win. They fondly imagined, because Pete did not follow up his initial success, that he was tiring; but Slogan knew better.

The round was about half-way through when Slogan suddenly darted in, and what followed was hard to see.

Pete uttered a yell, and bent forward, then Slogan's fist shot upwards, and Pete's teeth came together with a snap, and down he went, while the time-keeper commenced to count off the seconds.

He had arrived at eight before Pete struggled to his feet.

Slogan dashed in, and drove him to the ropes, and got in three more blows before Pete dropped to the floor.

Once more the counting commenced, but Pete was up again before the ten seconds had expired, and for the third time during that round Slogan knocked him down.

Now there was no need for counting, for time was called.

Jinks slopped a quantity of water into Pete's face, and used the sponge at the back of his neck.

"Shall—do—better dis time, old hoss!" murmured Pete.

"Was it a foul? I didn't see."

"Let de matter go. I'm going to do better dis time. Slogan will notice dat."

"Shall I stop the fight?"

"Golly! What are you tinkin' about? I hab got to win dis fight; and dere's one ting, Jinks, I sha'n't spare Slogan now. Time—eh? Bery well."

As Pete stepped up to scratch, the spectators cheered him. They did not want him to win, all the same they admired his pluck in coming up after the punishment he had received in the last round.

The spectators quite expected that the fight was finished now, and they were astonished to see that Pete showed such few signs of the rough handling he had received in the previous round.

His face was quite calm, and his breathing normal, but there was a dazed feeling in his head, and he fought cautiously for that reason.

Slogan led off with his left, but Pete ducked to it, and guarded the cross-counter intended for his jaw; then he countered with his left, and Slogan staggered backwards.

In an instant Pete was upon him, and, cross-countering with his right on the mark, sent the big man heavily to the floor, while eight seconds were counted off before he rose.

For the remainder of the round Pete sparred. He was determined to take no advantage of his adversary.

"You are going up for the tenth round," said Jinks. "Look out for a foul. That is what you have most to dread. If he gets you on the ropes again, you may not get off so lightly."

"Ah, but dat man ain't going to get me on de ropes again, Jinks," said Pete. "Dere was a reason why he got me on dose ropes, and dat reason ain't going to be repeated."

Slogan showed signs of distress now, but Pete looked as fresh as when he started. A rushing fight would have suited him best, but he left it to his adversary to take the initiative, and Slogan wisely elected to spar.

Several times he lashed out, but, though he got on one or two body blows, he never once touched Pete's face. Body blows had no apparent effect on him, for he never allowed them to land on the mark.

Towards the close of the round Slogan sprang in, and struck at Pete's face with all his strength. Again Pete ducked, and countered with his left in Slogan's face.

The thud of the blow was audible all over the building, and a murmur ran round as Slogan went down heavily. Nine seconds were counted off, then time was called. The round was over.

"Barring accidents, you are a winner," murmured Jinks. "There's nothing for me to do, my boy. You look as fresh as a daisy."

"Dat's all right, Jinks; but I ain't so sure 'bout de leading part ob de business. You see, I'm inclined to tink dat de oder man is de favourite, and dat being de case I prefer to lead beyond all possibility ob dispute. We'm got two more rounds, and dey are going to be hot ones."

"They are dosing him with brandy."

"Well, dat's a medicine I don't believe in. It may put a little life into him for de time being, but it ain't going to last. Time again."

It was the last round but one, and now Pete made the attack. Five times he landed in Slogan's face, and the blows were such as would have floored most men.

They caused Slogan to lose his temper, and he commenced to fight wildly, with the result that Pete landed again full in his face, and down he went just before the call of time.

"I'm proud of you, Pete," exclaimed Jinks, who was in a state of great excitement. "You have not only saved me from disgrace, but you have actually conquered a really first-class man."

"Well, I ain't conquered him yet, old hoss," answered Pete. "Dere's one more round, you know."

"There's only one piece of advice that I need give you. Look out for foul play. He will try to knock you out of time this round, and will try it by fair means or by foul."

"Seconds out of the ring. Last round, four minutes."

"Well, what could be nicer dan dat," exclaimed Pete, stepping up to scratch.

"Time!"

Slogan fainted with his left, and struck with his right at the point, but he missed, and received Pete's left hand full in the face.

That blow was delivered with all Pete's strength, and it sent Slogan down.

Even before the counting had commenced he was on his feet, and now he dashed in in a most furious manner, but he soon received a second blow in the face that sent him down again.

Pete would have let him off lightly now, had he had the choice; but there was no choice for him. Slogan kept up the rushing fight. His one aim appeared to be to get to close quarters, and this was exactly the thing that Pete was determined to prevent.

With heavy face blows he drove his adversary backwards, then Pete sprang forward, and delivered a blow with his right on the mark that lifted Slogan from his feet, and drove him over the ropes.

As he fell the rope snapped, and when he dropped to the floor, Pete stepped forward to make sure that his opponent was not seriously hurt.

The seconds did their utmost, but ten seconds were counted off, and the judges stepped up to the referee.

"He will be all right in a few minutes," exclaimed Pete. "He's only winded."

"We don't need your advice," snarled one of the seconds.

"All right, old hoss," answered Pete cheerfully. "Don't get vexed. Your man has done his best to win—and his worst to win—only he ain't quite succeeded dis time. 'Nuff said."

Slogan recovered sufficiently to hear the verdict given to his opponent; then, scowling fiercely at Pete, he was helped from the platform, and the only cheers that Pete received were from his comrades, his seconds, and the referee and judges; for they knew that the best man had won, and from the start to finish there was nothing in Pete's boxing that could have been taken exception to.

"Dear boy," exclaimed Jinks, when they were in the dressing-room. "You are a scorcher! Candidly, and without wishing to flatter you, I have never seen a prettier boxer, nor a harder hitter!"

"Dat man didn't fight fairly, Jinks," said Pete. "In dat round when he got in de upper-cut dat nearly knocked me out ob time, he hacked my shins; and while I was yowling at de pain ob it, he got in de upper-cut. Now, dat ain't boxing, and I shall hab someting to say 'bout dat matter later on."

"All the same, you have won, Pete."

"Well, dat ain't de question from my point ob view. If I meet a better man dan myself, I would rader he won, dan dat I should conquer him by foul play. It ain't at all sportsmanlike, and I shall take de liberty ob referring to de matter later on."

"Well, a dinner is arranged at the hotel after the event—or a supper, if you like to call it so. It will be a big affair, and the principals will, of

course, be there. Slogan is a good man, but as I warned you, he can't be relied on to go straight. His one idea is to win the fight, especially as he always backs himself for a big amount. You see, Pete, all the big pots will be at the dinner, and—"

"Can't help dat, Jinks. I 'spect dey are only men, and if dey take Slogan's side ob de question, dey will come in for some ob my observations. Nuff said."

Jinks did not mind a row at all, and he had an idea that there would be one if Pete commenced to speak his mind at the dinner, for although some of the guests would be most select, there would be others anything but it; and all of them had lost heavily. Jinks knew that. He was Pete's only backer.

"It's a funny thing, dear boy," he exclaimed. "But Jack gave me a lot of confidence in you. There's a sort of truthfulness about Jack. I knew he thought what he said to me."

"Jack neber says anything dat he doesn't tink, 'cept in fun. Now I'm 'bout ready. Suppose we come back to de hotel, 'cos I'm mighty hungry."

"I must just warn you, Pete, that Slogan and his backers won't be pleasant company."

"Can't help dat, Jinks. I shall hab a few remarks to make after de meal. Nuff said."

Jinks would have preferred that Pete said no more. He was perfectly satisfied with the result of the fight, and when Ponder came up demanded a sovereign from him.

"You see, you were wrong, old boy," laughed Jinks. "What an old idiot you were not to back Pete. I told you he would win."

"I wanted him to win, only he ought to have won better."

"What, injured his man?"

"Of course not. Can't you ever talk sense?"

"You wouldn't understand me if I did, dear boy. Never mind. Cheer up! I wish you would look a little lively at times. I believe you have got fatty degeneration of the liver."

"If it wasn't for the fact that I know you haven't got any brain, I'd say you had got fatty degeneration of that. But you can't help it. Come along, Pete. You haven't done badly for a youngster, but, as I say, you ought to have done better. You might have made that last round more exciting."

"Don't take any notice of the growler," laughed Jinks. "Ponder is never happy unless he's finding fault with something. Now, I happen to know we are going to have a slap-up feed, but he will grumble at it. You see if he doesn't. He will eat like a hungry wolf, and grumble all the time."

They now joined Jack and Sam, and the party made their way to the hotel.

CHAPTER 4.

How Slogan Sought Revenge.

THE long table was laid for about forty guests, and it was done in a manner that showed the proprietor was accustomed to such work, and that he knew some of his guests would expect a good deal. There were plenty of flowers upon the table.

"It's not evening-dress, you know," said Jinks.

"Well, dat's fortunate," observed Pete. "'Cos we ain't got any here, and we would hab looked rader out ob place, while we would hab felt rader out ob place if we had been in de next room, and had known you were yaffing up all de good tings."

"You've got to be here, dear boy. That was all arranged," said Jinks. "The only thing I fear is that some of the gang may say things to hurt your feelings—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack. "They will never do that!"

"Then I don't care," exclaimed Jinks. "And if there's a row, why, we can take our own parts."

"M'yes! We will stand Ponder in de front, and let him bear de brunt ob it."

"No you won't!" growled Ponder. "Why don't the idiots come. I'm hungry."

"Well, here they come!" exclaimed Jinks.

The company was certainly very mixed. They consisted of Slogan and his backers, and Slogan looked the worse for wear, while his backers looked very down in the mouth.

"I didn't expect to have to sit down with that animal!" snarled Slogan, glaring at Pete.

"You can stand up, if you like, my dear old hoss!" retorted Pete. "Don't you see, it ain't ob much consequence what you like, and what you don't like."

"Are you going to dine with the fellow, Lord Loman?" demanded Slogan, turning to a young fellow, who was dressed in a very horsy manner.

"Oh, certainly! Most pleased! He's an excellent boxer! I don't believe I ever saw a fellow handier with his fists!"

"Well, all I can say is that he will have to behave himself!" growled Slogan, who knew that it would be useless to appeal to the remainder of the company after his lordship had given his decision.

As a matter of fact, Pete's behaviour was far more correct than Slogan's, who handled his knife and fork as though they had been two spoons, and drank a good deal more wine than his trainer would have approved.

All went well till fruit and wine were placed on the table, then Lord Loman rose.

"Gentlemen," he cried. "It has been our pleasure to witness an excellent bout, and I think credit is due to the boxers for the plucky way in which they fought. I now propose the healths of the combatants, and trust we may have the pleasure of witnessing a further bout on some subsequent occasion."

Then the healths were drunk, and Slogan rose.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I think it only fair to myself to say—after thanking you for the kind manner in which my health has been drunk—that on this occasion I should like to say that the fight was not as fair as you seem to imagine. In the first place, I wasn't in form, because I had been ill; but, apart from that, I maintain that I scored more points, and that I could lick that awkward brute any day of his life, and that if he don't stop grinning at me, I'll put my fist in his eye. Having made these remarks, I leave the matter in your hands to say who's in the right, and if any fellow dares to say that I'm in the wrong he will have to answer to me for it!"

Then Slogan sat down. He had been nervous when he commenced his speech, but when he warmed to his subject he became insolent.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Pete, rising, "I tank you for de kind manner in which you hab proposed my health. I may just mention dat I am not a professional boxer, but always ready to take on a bout to oblige. In dis case I wanted to oblige Slogan, and I tink he will admit dat I obliged him quite as much as he required for one bout, but if he wants obliging a little more I shall be extremely pleased to do it. No doubt de man is a

good boxer, but it is pretty evident dat he has been trained in France, where dey use deir feet as well as deir hands, and dat accounts for de kick on de shins he gabe me, so dat he might hab an opportunity ob getting in de upper-cut dat sent me down.

"Now, I'm sorry for de man's disappointment in a sense, 'cos I feel sure he won't like habing been beaten, 'specially as it must hab been rader a painful process. You can see dat if you look at his face. But I would point out dat I was obliged to punish him pretty severely, after de cowardly manner in which he kicked me on de shins. I felt de man required a lesson, and so I gabe it to him, and he got beaten.

"It is a great pity dat a man who has de makings ob a boxer ain't been taught to fight fairly at de start, 'cos such cowardly tricks are bound to disgust good sportsmen. When de man saw he was being beaten on points, de proper ting for him to hab done was to use his science, and not his hoofs. De only ting I can gib him credit for is dat he kicked me so cleverly dat de judges and de referee did not see him.

"If he could only get ober dose contemptible, cowardly tricks, and learn to use his right as quickly as he uses his left, and stand in a little better attitude, he would make a first-class boxer. As it is—well, he ain't up to much, and, instead ob feeling de admiration I should hab felt for a man who fought fairly, I now feel de contempt dat his cowardly action deserves."

"Thunder! I'll not stand this!" roared Slogan, springing to his feet as Pete sat down smiling.

"You must stand it!" exclaimed Jack. "I saw you kick him, and expected that he would claim a foul!"

"You are a liar!"

"You are an insolent scoundrel, and know perfectly well that I am speaking the truth! Do you deny that you kicked him?"

"Of course I do! If I did kick him it was by accident, and I don't see what right you have to interfere!"

"I did not interfere, and for the simple reason that I knew my friend Pete would beat you. All the same, I saw you kick him. I did not say that you did it deliberately, but——"

"Well, of course that alters the matter, and I withdraw the expression I made."

"I was going to say, but my impression is that you committed the foul deliberately, that your intention was to get in the upper-cut, a thing you never could have done had you not kicked him."

"Now, Slogan," exclaimed Pete, "dis ain't got anyting to do wid Jack. You know quite well dat you kicked me deliberately—and hard, too. I could show de bump if de matter is doubted by de company, or denied by you. You also know dat you ain't a fair fighter, and as I know it, why, dere's an end ob de matter."

"You are a liar!"

"I must say dere's a good deal ob sameness 'bout your arguments. You'm like some old parrot. However, you can't help your stupidity. Dese gentlemen must see dat I would not be so silly as to tell you dat you fought unfairly if such was not de case. What could be my object, seeing dat I beat you?"

"You didn't beat me!"

"Yah, yah, yah! More convincing arguments! But what a fine chance it would be for me to call you what you just called me."

"You would find de difference."

"Suttingly! De difference would be dat I would be speaking de froof, while you were not. If I didn't beat you, p'r'aps you will explain to de

company how it is dat de judges and de referee gabe de verdict, 'cos dat's a ting I can't understand."

"I'll meet you any day."

"Well, dat ain't de point. De point is, did I beat you or did I not? Dere was suttigly one round where I got de worst ob it, but dat was because you deliberately kicked me."

"I don't believe I kicked you at all."

"Well, I ain't ob de same opinion."

"You must expect to get hurt when you box with me."

"I quite agree wid you, 'specially when you start kicking. Bring de man some fhistles, William."

William was the head waiter. He was a portly man of middle age and very dignified mien. He remained quite serious, and, in fact, looked at Pete with some contempt; but that worthy did not mind words, let alone looks.

Slogan sprang to his feet, and stepped up to Pete, while William shifted his position, and implored the big man not to do anything rash.

"It's all right, William!" exclaimed Pete. "Dat man ain't going to do anyting rash. He's only playing to de gallery!"

"Stand up, and I'll knock you down!"

"What should I do dat for, old hoss?" inquired Pete, peeling an orange. "You would hab a much better chance ob succeeding while I am seated, and, judging by your kicking abilities, you ain't de sort ob man to mind hitting anoder when he is sitting down."

"I'll fling you into the fireplace if you don't get up."

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, going on with his orange. "I ain't got de slightest objection to your doing dat, seeing dere's no fire in de grate."

"You are frightened of me, that's what's the matter with you!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Ain't de man too funny for words! I wonder what I should be frightened ob him for? I must say I don't see any reason."

"You dirty coward! You fear to get up, knowing that I won't hit you when you are sitting!"

"I don't see why not, seeing dat you kicked me deliberately when I was up."

"You are a liar!"

"So you hab said before."

"I appeal to you, gentlemen," cried Slogan. "No man would allow another to call him a liar unless he was afraid of him!"

"But I say dat you are a liar!" said Pete. "You know dat you are a liar, and a mean coward! You ain't fit to enter de ring wid a fair fighter!"

"If you say that again I'll knock your head off your shoulders!"

"Well, I don't want to say it again, and I don't want my head knocked off my shoulders; but, as I hab told you before, Slogan, you ain't got de slightest intention ob hitting me. If you do so, it will be because you can't control your temper. As it is, you are only making yourself ridiculous!"

"I think the matter has gone far enough!" cried Loman. "It's silly to have a row here!"

"I quite agree with your lordship," exclaimed Slogan; "but you will plainly see how this ruffian has insulted me. All the same, if he chooses to apologise, I am willing to accept his apology, rather than cause a disturbance in the place."

"Well, dat's all right, old hoss," said Pete. "I told Jinks dat it was my intention to show you up in your true colours, and all de apology in de world won't alter de fact dat you committed a foul. If you like to take dat as an apology you can; at de same time, I can only repeat exactly what

I said, and dat is—to put it in oder words—dat you ain't a fair fighter, and dat you kicked me on de shins when you saw you were losing de bout."

"Very well, you have asked for it, now take it!" cried Slogan, bringing his fist down on the top of Pete's head with all his strength. "Perhaps that will rouse you!"

"I dunno dat I want to be roused," observed Pete, winking at Jack. Slogan had hurt his knuckles, but he had not hurt Pete's head. "You see, I am quite comfortable as I am. Go and sit down, old hoss!"

Slogan would have been wiser to have obeyed, but his knuckles were pain-ing him badly. Besides, he really imagined that Pete was afraid of him with the bare fists, and he had an idea that with a trial of strength he would easily conquer.

He seized Pete by the collar, and wrenched him suddenly backwards. Pete clutched at the cloth to save himself, and those on the other side grabbed at it to prevent everything going off the table.

Pete was balancing on the hind legs of his chair, and might possibly have saved himself by the cloth, but at that critical moment the back of his chair smashed off, and the legs gave way. A huge piece was ripped from the opposite side of the cloth, then backwards Pete went, and decanters, glasses, dessert-dishes and plates, to say nothing of a couple of large epergnes, fell on the top of him, and a few bottles of wine streamed over the carpet.

"Waiter," exclaimed Pete, sitting up, "just send out for two-penn'orth ob best stickfast glue, 'cos dere's some crockery wants mending! Look here, Slogan, you will get yourself into trouble if you fool about like dis, and you will find it mighty expensive."

"Stand up and fight me like a man!"

"Well, I don't see how I'm going to stand up when you pull me backwards. Howeber, we will see if we can oblige you. I don't mind standing up at all. In fact, I prefer it to rolling on de floor. Dere you are, old hoss! Now you can do de fighting part ob de business, 'cos I ain't going to fight in dis room!"

Pete stuck both his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the infuriated man, who stood before him with clenched fists.

Slogan lashed out with his left, and Pete bobbed his head forward, and received the blow on the top of his head, then darted his head to the left as Slogan tried to cross-counter with his right.

"Yah, yah, yah! Ain't dat man knocking me about?" cried Pete, as Slogan went stamping about, and clapping his knuckles. "You ought to be careful, Slogan, my poor old hoss, 'cos you might hab hurt my head. Why not hab anoder smash at it? I don't mind it at all, and it seems to please you."

Slogan sprang in, and, seizing Pete round the body, made a desperate effort to throw him, and, as they struggled, they drew closer to the fireplace.

"He's evidently going to frow me into de fireplace like he said," observed Pete. "One—two—free! Here I go!"

But it was Slogan who went. He went backwards, with Pete on the top of him; then that worthy seized him round the body, and, opening the register with Slogan's head, stuffed him as far up the chimney as he could get him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack, as Pete wriggled the man about. "Are you trying to sweep the chimney with him, Pete?"

"You ain't got de right to laugh at de man, Jack. You can plainly see dat he's in difficulties, and you ought to feel sort ob sorry for him. By his yowls, I should say he feels mighty sorry for himself. Golly! Ain't

he fetching a lot ob soot down? I should say dis is de first time dis chimbly has been swept for months. Come down, old hoss, and look what a plaguy mess you'm making in de place! Yah, yah, yah! Golly! Don't he look mighty funny? Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, Slogan, but you'm looking black at ebery one. I would advise you to go and get a wash!"

Slogan's face was as black as midnight, and his fury knew no bounds, but he had had enough of attacking Pete, and he only expressed that fury with words, of which Pete did not take the slightest heed.

"You will have to pay for this damage," said William. "It will cost you thirty or forty pounds. You have ruined the carpet with the wine, and you have broken pounds and pounds' worth of glassware!"

"I will not pay one penny-piece!" howled Slogan, to whom the remark was addressed.

"Well, someone will have to pay for it," said William. "I don't care who it is. But I know if it isn't paid for I shall send for the police!"

"It's all right, William, old hoss," said Pete. "I don't tink de man has got de money to pay for it. You see, he must hab lost a lot ober de fight, when he lost dat. Go and get a wash, Slogan, and try to behave yourself like a civilised human being, and not like an uncivilised wild beast! You can reckon out de damage, William, and charge it to my account. I'll pay for it, dough I don't consider dat I was de cause."

"Neither do I," said William. "And I think that you have been very badly treated, and that you are behaving like a gentleman in offering to pay for what that man has done."

"Who cares what you think, you old fool?" howled Slogan. "Fury! I'll have vengeance for this!"

"You keep out ob his way, William," said Pete, stepping in front of the infuriated man. "He would like to turn de quarrel on you, 'cos he knows dat he might have some chance in a fight wid you, while he also knows dat he ain't got de slightest chance wid me."

"You are a liar!" howled Slogan.

"Dere seems to be a lot ob sameness 'bout dat man's arguments," observed Pete, pulling out his pipe and commencing to fill it. "All de same, dey ain't so mighty convincing. You run away, Slogan, and wash your face! Yah, yah, yah! You hab got black, too! And I dunno dat you hab improved your suit. Look here, old hoss, as you are rader short ob money, I don't mind buying you anoder suit. I don't want you to be a loser ober de little fun you hab supplied de company wid."

"I believe that is the best way to punish the brute!" snarled Slogan. "You will pay me twenty pounds for the damage!"

"Should say a suit like dat cost nearer thirty shillings. I ain't paying any fancy prices, or any consequential damages. You see, I meant stuffing you up de chimbly, but I didn't want to spoil your clothes. Now, you couldn't hab paid more dan four pounds for de suit, and I don't mind gibing you dat amount to buy anoder wid, but I ain't gibing you any more."

"Then I will put you into court."

"Bery well, old hoss; you can please yourself 'bout dat."

"I won't accept four pounds."

"How much did you pay for de suit?"

"What's that to do with you?"

"Eberyting, 'cos I'm going to buy you a new one."

"I am not going to take the money."

"You can please yourself 'bout dat; but if you take it, you will take before all de company. If you tink you are coming to me, and going to get it afterwards in private, you'm mistaken. Dere are four pounds. An

you going to take dem, or are you not? Mind, dis is de last time I shall offer dem."

Pete placed the coins on the table, and Slogan picked them up.

"I shall sue you for the rest!"

"Nunno, you won't, old hoss, 'cos dere ain't any rest. You buzz off, and next time you meet me, try not to make yourself so ridiculous. 'Nuff said."

Then Slogan strode from the room to clean himself.

CHAPTER 5.

How Pete Obeyed His Orders.

FOR some time after the company broke up Jinks remained seated in an armchair smoking a cigar, and nearly all the time his eyes were fixed on Pete. Ponder had got another easy-chair—the most comfortable one he could find in the room, and he was dozing.

Presently William came in, and handed the little bill for the damage done. He had an idea that it would be better to present that bill at once, for fear that Pete should change his mind, and with the proprietor's assistance he had worked that bill up.

Pete glanced at the total, then handed the astonished waiter the necessary banknotes.

"Dese little accidents will occur, William," observed Pete.

"They will indeed, sir."

"Well, don't call me 'sir,' 'cos I ain't done anyting to deserve dat. You weren't hurt?"

"Not a bit! I kept out of the way."

"Dat's a pity. Can't you find dat your back is broken, or dat you'm got concussion ob de brain, or someting like dat?"

"Well, I really wasn't touched, though I made sure I was going to be."

"Yoorrooh!"

William gave a violent start, for Pete's howl of joy was rather alarming.

"We can work it dis way," continued Pete, winking at Jack, who was laughing at William's nervousness. "To de injurious effects of William's expectations ob getting hurt, five shillings; 'noder five shillings for de effects ob what might hab occurred to William if he had got hurt; 'noder twopence for plaster dat would hab been required for William's injuries supposing he had received dem; noder four-and-tenpence for William's presence ob mind in not getting hurt. Dere's a sobereign to pay for de little bill, William, and you may keep de change."

"You are very kind."

"I dunno dat Slogan will tell you so if you ask him."

"He's staying here the night."

"Den we shall hab de pleasure ob de man to breakfast to-morrow morning. Buzz off, William, and remember dat we shall require our bill to-morrow morning. You can lump all de bills togeder, so as to save trouble, and if you present dat bill on a tea-tray wid a bunch ob primroses and a blade ob grass, I shall gib you anoder tip. See? It's got to be presented to my liking, and dere ain't got to be a capital 'Sir' wid it."

"A downright good fellow!" murmured William, as he bowed himself from the room. "But a little mad."

"Yah, yah, yah! He's a funny old chap!" exclaimed Pete. "I'll bet you twopence, Sammy, dose primroses and de blade ob grass come up."

"But what's the good of them to you?"

"Dey ain't any good at all; only, don't you see, I'm going to tip William

anoder sobereign 'cos he's a decent chap, and it ain't fair to gib him all dat money unless I make him do some work for it. He will hab to get up early, and go groping for primroses and a blade ob grass."

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Jinks. "Look here, Pete, I suppose you couldn't employ me as your primrose-picker in chief? I'll do it all day long at a sovereign a bunch."

"Nunno, Jinks! You would forget de blade ob grass. You'm such a slapdash, careless man. But William is methodical."

"Where are you going to-morrow?" inquired Jinks, shifting his position a little. He had a certain proposal to make, and although by no means diffident, really did not like to make it now."

"Eh?"

"Where are you going?"

"Where are we going to, boys?" inquired Pete.

"We were going to Liverpool, until we got that smash-up," answered Jack. "We are now going to the place you decide on."

"Look here, dear boys," exclaimed Jinks, "we are going to Liverpool, and when we get there, seeing that we are so close, why not go to America?"

"Eh?"

"Grand country! You can make your fortunes at farming."

"Golly! I ain't going to get up at free o'clock on a winter morning to milk cows and dig potatoes!"

"I don't think you dig potatoes in the winter. But, don't you see, I want to see you lick their champions. I want to take the conceit out of those wretched Yankees."

"Yah, yah, yah! Sammy is a Yankee."

"No matter. Present company are always excepted. But lock here, Pete, you are a good-natured chap. You might come to America, and knock all their best men out of time."

"I dunno dat dey would consider dat a sign ob my good-nature."

"Bother them! What do you care? They shouldn't brag! Now, if you don't want to make your fortune—and it seems to me it is pretty well made—why not make mine? Take on a few fights, just to oblige me."

"I'm not sure dat I wouldn't rader make my own fortune by milking cows. You see, it ain't so painful—unless dey follow Slogan's example, and start kicking me on de shins."

"They couldn't follow it up with an upper-cut," observed Jinks.

"Nunno! I would be much more likely to take an upper-cut off dem—or an under-cut, eider, for dat matter."

"Well, come to America. We will have a glorious time of it, and Ponder is bound to keep us in a state of high spirits. See how happy he looks now, lying like some old boa-constrictor after a heavy feed."

"Is supper ready?" inquired Ponder, rousing himself at the word "feed," which was the only one he caught. Then he looked very indignant at the roars of laughter that greeted him.

"Golly! De man wants supper when he's scarcely finished his dinner!" exclaimed Pete. "Look here, old hoss, you had better get eight hours' sleep before you eat any more, else you will be catching indigestion, or some ob dose infectious fevers. Howeber, we will consider your idea, Jinks, and decide to-morrow weder we will go to America wid you. 'Nuff said! Good-night, boys! I'm going to turn in."

"That settles the matter," laughed Jack. "You need bother yourself no more, Jinks. Pete means going to America."

"Why, don't you see my plot, dear boy?" exclaimed Jinks, rubbing his hands. "Slogan is going on a tour to America. I knew that all along. Well, if he beats a man, I am going to get Pete to challenge him. If a man beats him, I am going to get Pete to challenge that man. Don't you see, I shall take the wind out of Slogan's sails all roads. And the brute thoroughly deserves it, for he has played me about as dirty a trick as one man could play another. I'm not revengeful, but I am going to get my own back. He queered my pitch, but I'll return the compliment with more interest than he will require. Just you see if I don't! We will follow him up like a shadow, and if I don't teach him who is the better man, it won't be for the want of trying. You think Pete will come, Jack?"

"I am sure he will."

"Here, wake up, Ponder! It will be your duty to keep an eye on Slogan, for we have got to shadow him."

"Bother! I don't want any duties."

"I know you don't, dear boy; but you would get too fat without them. Bother it, you are too fat now! I could take three stone off you, only you would look so jolly funny running about in blankets! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you think you are funny?" growled Ponder. He was tired and cross.

"Yes, sometimes. But I'm never so jolly funny as you are. Bother it, dear boy, you are enough to make a cat laugh to look at! My only fear in taking you over to America is that, if you don't sink the jolly vessel, they will use you for a pushball when you get there. Come on, boys, let's get to bed!"

Pete was the first up the following morning. The only mark he had from the boxing bout was a huge bump on his shin, and as that was hidden, it did not matter at all—from Jinks' point of view.

Like a wise man, Jinks did not refer to the American trip, and they had just commenced their breakfast, when Slogan and his backer—generally known as Jim—entered the room.

"Well, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, gazing at his late adversary, "feeling all right dis morning? You look as fresh as a dead oyster! But your face will get all right if you only gib it time."

"I have the consolation of knowing that you are pretty stiff about the body," snarled Slogan.

"Well, dat's true enough. My shin, where you kicked it, is hurting a lot."

"I didn't kick it."

"Oh, I'm glad to hear dat! I tought you did. But get on wid your breakfast. I'm too busy to talk to you now. Pass me de hot rolls, Sammy."

Jinks held a whispered conversation with the worthy Ponder, who left the hotel directly Slogan and his backer took their departure.

"You see, dear boys," exclaimed Jinks, "Ponder will follow them up like an old bloodhound, and he will keep in touch with me by telegrams. He knows the hotel we shall stop at in Liverpool, and he will find out by what vessel Slogan sails. We shall take the same one. See?"

"Golly! Seems to me you hab arranged matters before we had come to a decision," observed Pete. "Howeber, I 'spect America will suit us as well as any oder place. Yah, yah, yah! Here come de primroses, and de one blade of grass to match. Dere's your sobereign for de tip, William, and here's de little bill—eh? Bery well; de next best ting to do is to pay it, and den we will be off to de station. But I shall hab to talk to de station-master 'bout de safety ob de train."

Arrived at the station, Pete learnt from the porter that the station-master's name was Smith, and he approached that worthy, who did not like being disturbed. He was reading the morning's paper in the booking-office.

"Good-morning, my dear old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, opening the booking-office door. "I want four tickets to Liverpool, and make haste about it, 'cos we'm in a hurry."

"There's no train for three hours."

"Eh?"

"I say there's no train for three hours."

"I neber came across such a badly-managed line in all my life! First ob all, de train we take smashes up, den de next train don't arrive. You must hab a train before free hours."

"P'r'aps you know more than I do."

"If I don't, I can't know so mighty much. But dat ain't de question. Now, see here, Smiff, you must put a train on at once!"

"Why, you raving maniac, how can I put on a train?"

"I dunno. Ain't you got an engine?"

Mr. Smith rose, and carefully laid down his paper, then he opened several small drawers; after that he felt in all his pockets—especially the waistcoat-pockets.

"I don't seem to have one, my lad," he answered slowly. "You might look under that pile of papers and see if one is there."

"Golly! You can't get a railway engine in your waistcoat-pocket!"

"Well, what you will have to do is to ring the bell for one," said Smith, looking very serious.

"How shall I do dat?"

"Shove your finger into that communicator," answered Smith, pointing to the ticket-dating machine, "and shove as hard as ever you can."

What Smith wanted Pete to do was to pinch his finger severely; but Pete did not quite understand his instructions, or else he would not understand them. He put his left finger into the opening and his right hand on the top of the machine, then he shoved it with all his strength, and the result was disastrous.

Something had to go, and as the screws that held the machine to the counter refused, Pete's violent shove wrenched up a board of the counter, while a second shove ripped that board asunder, and smashed the cast-iron feet off the stamping-machine.

Then Pete, with a face that was absolutely serious, although his comrades were howling with laughter, held the damaged machine to his ear.

"I can't hear de bell ringing, old hoss," he said.

Jinks, unaccustomed to Pete's playful ways, stamped about the ticket-office, and howled with laughter. Smith, forgetting all discretion in his fury, sprang at Pete, and commenced hammering him with his fists.

"You stupid scoundrel! You hulking idiot!"

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "I tink de engine has come, and it is frowing itself at me."

"You have broken that machine!" howled Smith, dancing about in his fury.

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete, gazing calmly at the damaged article.

"You have broken it, I say!"

"Well, you told me to push it, and dat's what I did. You can see dat if you look at de machine."

"I told you to put your finger in it and push."

"Dat's exactly what I did, old hoss. You told me to push as hard as I could, and dere you are. I dunno how you could hab 'spected me to push harder dan dat. I'm rader proud ob dat push. Do stop your laughter, Jack. You are making me so nervous dat I dunno what I'm saying to de silly old hunk!"

"I told you to push with your finger, you silly great lout!"

"I dunno, old hoss, but it seems to me dat if I had pushed my finger into dat biting-looking machine, I would hab hurt it!"

"That's exactly what I wanted you to do."

"Well, I didn't. I preferred hurting de machine to hurting my finger. Good-morning, my dear old hoss! We ain't going to wait for dat tra'n; and if we ain't here when it comes, just you keep it waiting till we arrive."

"Here, that won't do for me!" cried Smith. "You must pay for the damage done."

"Eh?"

"Idiot! I say you must pay for it!"

"Well, suppose I gib you my custom for sixpennorf ob tickets, will dat make it right?"

"Of course it won't! You will have to make the damage good!"

"I don't 'spect de company will mind a little damage, seeing de manner dey hab been frowing deir railway carriages about. Dey did a lot more damage dan dat to de carriage we were in."

"You will have to pay me five pounds for the damage."

"I'll toss you double or quits?"

"I'm doing nothing of the sort; but, under all the circumstances of the case, I will accept three pounds."

"Well, dere you are, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Now, if you like to come to de inn and eat mutton chops till dat train comes in, why, we shall be glad ob your company. You seem a decent sort ob old boy, dough you are rader too fond ob practical jokes."

"Well, I haven't got anything to do for an hour or so," admitted the stationmaster, "and as it is now twelve o'clock, why, we might have a trifle to eat."

They made their way to the inn, and Pete discovered that he could have as many mutton chops as he chose to pay for, so he ordered up a couple of dozen for a start, and he and the stationmaster astounded Jinks by the number they consumed.

"Now, look here, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, when the meal was finished. "We took tickets on your line to go by de oder train, and now we'm got to take more. I'm mighty disgusted wid your cistern."

"We don't often have accidents."

"Well, dat's a mercy, 'cos a few like de one we experienced go a long way. Can you guarantee dere won't be an accident wid dis train?"

"Certainly. You are perfectly safe. You can buy an insurance ticket if you like."

"I don't see how dat's going to prevent an accident."

"You don't want it to. Don't you see, it's to your benefit from a money point of view, that there should be an accident. If you get killed your relatives will get a thousand pounds."

"Golly! I would rader keep alive, and dat dey went short ob de money."

"Well, you come with me, and I will put you into a nice safe carriage."

The train came up at last, and the stationmaster took a very friendly leave of them, for he knew that he could have the damage repaired at something under a sovereign, so that he was well on the safe side.

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble on the Landing Stage.

WHEN the comrades reached the hotel at which Jinks had arranged to stay, they had some cold supper, then at once turned in; and the following morning they found Ponder in the breakfast-room. He had commenced his breakfast, and did not appear to be inclined to give them any information until he had finished.

"There!" he exclaimed, at last, pushing his plate away, and, choosing the most comfortable armchair he could find, ordered the waiter to draw it up to the table, so that he could give the comrades full particulars in comfort.

"Of course I shadowed them!" he growled. "Do you take me for a fool?"

"Well—really, dear boy!" exclaimed Jinks. "If I answer that question truthfully, I shall offend you, and as I am like Washington, why, we will leave the question unanswered. It is quite immaterial, and you really cannot help it."

"You are a stupid brute, Jinks! But if you can talk sensible for a minute, and can understand a sensible man speaking, I may inform you that the brutes are sailing on the Stella. She's a cargo vessel, and they are going by her because it is cheaper. There are not many passengers going, except those two; and I can also tell you that they have booked as saloon-passengers."

"Then we will do the same, dear boy! When does the Stella sail?"

"This afternoon at four o'clock."

"Then we haven't a moment to spare."

"Yes, we have."

"Don't be so obstinate, Ponder! I tell you we haven't any time to lose; and you surely don't pit your muddle brain against mine."

"No. I'd be frightened of it catching madness."

"Are the shipping agents far from here?"

"Of course they are not. Besides, what does it matter whether they are far or near?"

"I'd say it mattered a good lot in this beastly rain. Look here, dear boys, while you are getting our outfits I will be booking the passages. Ponder and I have got all we require, because we knew that we were going on the voyage, but you will be needing some things, and Ponder will show you where to get them. He was born in Liverpool. That's what makes him so fat and stupid."

"They are the smartest men on the face of this earth!" declared Ponder.

"Then you are an extraordinary exception to the rule; but don't get cross, Ponder. I have told you a dozen times that you can't help being fat and stupid. Just you show our friends the best place to get what they require, and I will meet you on the vessel. Where is she lying?"

"Along the landing-stage at the further end."

"Then I'm off!" exclaimed Jinks, hurriedly finishing his breakfast, and dashing away.

"Stupid idiot, getting excited like that! Now surely you are not going to eat any more, Pete. It's perfectly disgusting the amount you consume."

"Well, you hab had a breakfast, old hoss!"

"And you have had about four."

"I tink I can do wid a little more coffee," observed Pete, reaching across to the next table, and changing his empty coffee-pot for the full one the waiter had just placed on that table. Then Pete purloined the sugar and the milk, and went ahead again.

He had scarcely commenced—or rather recommenced—when an elderly,

sour-looking gentleman seated himself at the table Pete had been helping himself from. Then when he found his coffee-pot was empty he banged at his hand-bell, and the waiter, who knew him as a terror, came rushing up.

"What is the meaning of this, fellow? I told you to have breakfast on the table. This coffee-pot is empty, and there is neither milk nor sugar!"

"Why, p'r'aps I hab taken it, my dear old hoss!" said Pete.

"You insolent rascal! How dare you touch my breakfast?" cried the indignant party.

"Well, I wanted some more coffee, my dear old hoss, and as dere was some dere I naturally took it! De same remarks apply to de sugar and milk. Bring de old hoss up some more, waiter. Meantime, you can be getting on wid your rolls. You will find it all de better to eat a little before you commence drinking."

"I never heard such gross impertinence in all——"

"Just bring up our bill, waiter, and look alive, 'cos we'm in a hurry, and dis old hoss ain't."

"I am in a hurry!"

"Well, you shouldn't hurry before breakfast, and it ain't at all wise to hurry after it. You will find some more coffee dere, my dear old hoss, and you will be able to drink dat while you are waiting for your own lot. You see, you get some coffee free ob charge dat road. 'Nuff said! Come along, boys. I can plainly see de man is angry, and if he does all he threatens to do we shall get hurt."

Pete paid his bill, and all the time the gentleman stormed. In fact, they left him storming when they went, but that did not trouble Pete at all.

Having made the necessary purchases, they proceeded to the landing-stage. The rain was coming down harder than ever, and it was about as miserable an afternoon as could be imagined. A fog hung over the river, and when they caught sight of the steamer through it, they were not much impressed with her appearance.

Pete, who brought up the rear, was about to step on the gangway, when he received a violent shove from the back.

"Get out of my way, you hulking brute!" growled a voice, and Pete obeyed, for his feet slipped on the woodwork, and he sat down heavily in the sloop, while he saw Slogan ascending the gangway.

Pete was on his feet in an instant.

"Here, you come back, old hoss!" he exclaimed, grabbing Slogan by the ankle, and giving him a wrench that caused him to sprawl on his face. "You ain't got de right to shove your betters aside in dat rude fashion. I'm going first, so down you come!"

Then Pete wrenched him down the sloping gangway, much to the detriment of his light suit; and the few people who were there shouted with laughter; while Rory was inclined to come back and give him a bite.

Slogan rose to his feet, and presented a sorry appearance. He had got some mud on his face, and a good deal more on his clothes. His fury knew no bounds, and he made a wild rush at Pete, who darted aside just as the infuriated man was on him.

Slogan made a desperate effort to stop himself, but he found that quite impossible, and pitching over the chains, he banged his head on the landing-stage, then, turning a somersault, plunged into the river.

There was only a small space between the vessel and the landing-stage, but it was sufficiently wide for Slogan to tumble between. Pete sprang over the chains, and watched for a moment; then he saw his enemy's head appear, while Slogan uttered a shriek for help, and sank again.

Pete knew that he could not swim, and the next moment he leapt into the water, and clutched the drowning man.

But Pete soon discovered that he had a more serious task than he had imagined. Slogan was a very strong man, and he struggled like a madman. He was so terrified that he would not listen to reason.

"Keep still, old hoss, and I'll save you!" cried Pete.

But Slogan struggled more furiously than ever. If he heard Pete's words he took no heed of them.

And as they struggled the swift tide swept them along. What Pete feared most was that the vessel would grind against the landing-stage, and crush them to death.

He succeeded in clutching the struggling man at the back, and now he held his arms securely, while he kept afloat by treading water.

Had Slogan remained still, Pete would have had very little difficulty in saving him, but he struggled so wildly that several times they went under, and it was not until they were clear of the vessel that Pete was able to grasp the chains that ran along the landing-stage; and now he got a grip on Slogan's collar, and held him at arm's-length, while he shouted to the men above.

"Fling ober a rope, old hosses!" cried Pete, as a man looked over the side. "Dis chap is struggling worse dan a new-caught shark. I ain't at all sure dat he won't bite me just directly."

Slogan was hauled up; then Pete followed; and, finding the terrified man was little the worse for his ducking, Pete preceded him up the gangway.

"You see, Slogan, my dear old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "We'm in de proper order now. I only want to teach you manners, and it ain't manners to shove a person aside, and make him sit down in wet sloppiness, 'cos you want to go first. Just bear dat in mind for future reference, and p'r'aps it will save you anoder ducking. I dunno weder you tipped de man for hauling you out, but I gabe him a couple ob sobereigns, and I consider dat is ample pay for saving you. He won't mind a bit."

"You demon!" muttered Slogan, following Pete below. "I will have vengeance for this."

"Well, I must admit dat it was rader a bad action to pull you out ob de water 'cos you ain't a bit ob good in de world; at de same time, you may improve as you get older, and as you can't possibly get worse, why we will gib you anoder trial. 'Nuff said!"

"Is there enough said, you demon! Well, I intend to both say and do more."

"I'm glad to hear dat you are going to do more, old hoss! One ob de first tings I would recommend you to do is to learn to swim, 'cos it's a most useful accomplishment, 'specially for a man who has a yearning to frow himself into de water. Yah, yah, yah! What did you want to do it for? Did you want to find out weder it was wet?"

Jack, Sam, and Pete had a private cabin, and, entering it, Pete got a change, then he entered the saloon, to find Slogan already there. He was having a heated altercation with Jack, who had been lecturing him on base ingratitude.

"You silly villain!" cried Slogan. "Do you expect me to be grateful to this brute for having caused me to fall into the water?"

"Certainly not!" said Jack. "But you don't view the matter in a proper light. The whole thing was your fault. In the first place, you assaulted him, and he naturally retaliated. Would you not have done the same, if a man had caused you to fall?"

"You surely don't put me on an equality with that ignorant brute?"

"Certainly not! I consider my friend Pete to be your superior in every way."

"You had better be careful how you speak to me!"

"Now, you shut up, Slogan!" exclaimed Pete. "Jack could gib you de worst frashing you hab eber had in your life, 'cos he's a mighty fine boxer; but I ain't going to let him tackle you. If any one is to tackle you, I'm your man."

"That's right, Slogan, dear boy!" exclaimed Jinks. "You see, I'm following you across, and I'm going to pay you in your own coin. As you know, it has been your practice to follow me up, and challenge any man I bring forward. I admit that you have always beaten them with the gloves, and there isn't a doubt that you would be able to do so with your fists."

"Well, the last man I brought forward—and I admit he hadn't much chance against you, someone got at. I'm not saying it was you, but it was someone, and there cannot be the slightest doubt that the object was to bring disgrace to me. The rascal who played the trick knew perfectly well that I should be called a thief, because I was taking entrance-money, and couldn't bring a man forward. They would never have believed that the fellow had been squared not to turn up. Well, someone did it."

"Now den, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, stepping in front of Slogan. "I hab told you before dat if you feel like fighting aboard dis vessel, you will hab to fight me, and you will hab to keep on doing it till you beat me."

"I will fight you with bare fists!"

"No, you won't. You will fight me wid gloves—and we hab some aboard—or you won't fight at all. Do you suppose I want to knock you about so dat Jim, your trainer, won't know you?"

"It's a sight mor'n you could do!" declared Jim.

"Well, dat remains to be proved; but if you put it de oder way, I don't want him to knock me about so dat Jack and Sammy won't know me."

"Then why don't you say you are frightened of him?"

"Yah, yah, yah! Do you consider dat is at all likely? Nunno! I ain't going to tell a lie like dat. If you want a few rounds on dis voyage, wid gloves, I shall be quite ready to oblige you, and I don't 'spect de skipper and de crew will mind at all, and it's all de same if dey do; but I ain't fighting with fists, 'cos dat wouldn't be allowed, and it would hurt. You can tell who is de better man wid gloves just as well as you can widout dem; and if Slogan wants to get hurt, I shall be able to oblige him quite as much as he requires wid de gloves."

"What have you followed us for, Jinks?" demanded Slogan, turning fiercely on him.

"Why, it's quite simple, dear boy! If you get licked by any man in America, I am going to challenge him with Pete. If you lick any man, Pete is going to challenge you. See, I don't want any more of your brag that you are the champion heavy-weight boxer, because you are nothing of the sort, and if you don't know that, Pete will soon prove it to you. Now, Slogan, you have got to climb down a little, because we are not the sort of men to stand your bullying ways, as you are going to discover to your cost."

"See here, Jinks!" cried Jim. "You go your way, and I'll go mine."

"That's just exactly what I am going to do, my dear fellow, and both our ways will be the same."

"You mean to say you will stop me making money?"

"You can make it on the gates. You won't make it on the stakes. You can't possibly refuse a challenge, if you call your man the champion heavy-weight."

"Ah, you forget one thing, with all your cleverness!" sneered Jim.

"My man does not fight under a thousand pounds aside!"

"Dere ain't de slightest difficulty dere, old hoss," said Pete. "We can

find a lot more money dan you will be able to plank down; but you will discover dat later on. Are you a good sailor, Jinks?"

"Pretty good. Nothing to boast about."

"Are you, Ponder?"

"Of course, I am!" answered Ponder. "How could it be otherwise, when I have been used to the sea. Why, I've sailed in every sea. I've been in storms such as you have never experienced."

"Well, dat's all right, 'cos de vessel is under way, and it won't be so mighty long before we get into de open sea. Dere's a bit ob a wind blowing, and if I know anyting 'bout vessels, dis one is going to roll rader more dan any ob us will care for. What's your opinion, Jack?"

"That she's an awful old tub, and that we shall get a dusting!"

"It's all right, mate!" whispered Jim, leading Slogan aside. "They are finking the sea. I know it doesn't affect you. Just you wait till we get out. Then you can give that fellow Pete such an awful hiding that he will never want to box with you again."

"If I do put on the gloves with him——"

"You will have to do that. I can see it plainly. Jinks is a cunning brute; and he's going to pay us in our own coin!"

"He can't. He hasn't got the man who can touch me, when I am in form."

Jim knew better, but did not care to say so. His only hope was that Pete would be knocked over by the sea, and that then his man would have the certainty of winning, while he knew Slogan well enough to be convinced that if he once got the chance he would not spare Pete.

Jack and Pete were right. Directly the Stella reached the open sea she commenced to roll in a most uncomfortable manner. The skipper drove her at full speed through the great rolling waves directly he had dropped his pilot, and the comrades could hear those waves bursting on her deck, while when the steward brought up dinner he put plate-guards on the table.

There were no other saloon-passengers, although there were some second and third class ones, so that the party had the saloon all to themselves.

CHAPTER 7. Aboard the Stella.

PETE learnt that the steward's name was Bill, and he made friends with that worthy by handing him a tip of five shillings.

"You see, Bill, my dear old hoss, we'm Jack, Sam and Pete, and we want de daintiest fare dat you can place before us, 'cos we ain't regular sailors like Ponder. Jinks also likes dainty tings."

"You leave that to me, mate!" murmured Bill. "You shall have the same as the skipper, and that's the best we have got aboard. You ought really to have started afore we got into the open, 'cos we're going to get a dusting, if I'm not mistook. Still, I'll tell the cook as you are one of the tipping sort, and he'll see you don't get nothing greasy. You don't want too much grease in a sea-way. A sniff at the engines gives you all the grease as you will require in your system. We've got some prime soup coming up. Keep off stews as much as you can, unless I say 'Right!' You will know what that means. And if I make a remark like 'Rats!' you will understand what that means, too."

"Golly! Dey don't make some ob de stews ob rats, do dey, Bill?"

"There's no telling what that 'ere cook makes 'em on," said Bill, shaking his head ominously. "Any tips you want to give him, jest you hand 'em to me, and I'll see as you get the money's worth out of 'em."

"Yah, yah, yah! Tink de cook will get de money's worf out ob dem?"

"Why, what should prevent him?"

"Eh?"

"I shall tell him as they come from you. You will do better without having direct dealings with that 'ere cook. He's an honest man, but he ain't as truthful as he ought to be. But I will keep an eye over him. If you was to tip him half-a-sovereign for the start, it wouldn't be waste-money."

"Well, you gib him dat half-sovereign, and tell him he's to do his best in our direction."

"You leave it to me. The cook is the honestest man I ever met. His only fault is that he's rather partial to tips."

"Den I feel rader sorry for dat man, 'cos I don't tink he will get so many, Bill."

"Well, he's got ten shillings for the start."

"Well, I dunno dat."

"Why, you have just given it to me for him!"

"M'yes! I hab certainly done dat. It has got so far, but I was just wondering if it would get any furder."

"May I be drowned in the icy water and eaten by male sharks, if I don't give him every penny of it!" declared Bill. "Now, your dinner will be up in ten minutes. Here comes the old man. I wouldn't say nothink about tipping the cook, 'cos he don't like him being tipped. Mum's the word!"

Captain Hank was the skipper. He was just on the right side of forty, rather dignified, and a tremendous swell. Pete wanted a little information.

"You hab got rader a good cook aboard, I believe?" observed Pete.

"Yes, my man," answered Hank. "Bill is not at all bad."

"Eh?"

"He's an awful liar, but he can cook!"

"But I t'ought Bill was de steward."

"Well, he does the two."

"I understood him to say dere was a cook."

"So there is. Bill is that cook, and he serves the dishes up himself."

"He gabe me to understand dat dere was a separate cook."

"Well, if you believe all Bill tells you——"

"He said dat de cook was a bit ob a liar."

"A bit ob a liar! Why he's the worst liar that ever sailed the seas! If you want to know the exact truth, ask Bill, then take the exact reverse to what he tells you. I wonder why the silly swab does not serve up the dinner! Oh, here he comes!"

Jim, the trainer, appeared to be taking more interest in Pete than in his own dinner. He was hoping that Pete would be affected by the rolling of the vessel. So he was. It made him hungry, and when Pete got hungry, his appetite was something stupendous.

Ponder's was not. He struggled with his soup.

"You ain't getting on, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, commencing on his fourth plate of soup, while the skipper stared hard at him. He did not care for a passenger to start like that; but he took it for granted that Pete would stop at soup, especially as he consumed a vast amount of bread with it.

"Don't spoil the rest of the dinner," whispered Bill. "I want the cook to do justice to himself. He said I was to thank you for the half-sovereign."

Pete nodded and went on. Ponder sighed deeply.

"Cheer up, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, slapping him on the back.

"I'm leaving friends behind me," growled Ponder, looking about as wretched as a man could possibly look.

Jinks grinned. He was rather unfeeling, and began to doubt whether Ponder was as good a sailor as he had made out.

Roast mutton came up next. Bill placed the joint on the dinner-waggon, and carved it there. Pete kept him busy; but that suited him far better than it did the skipper.

"You will make yourself ill if you eat like that!" he grumbled at last.

"I'm taking precautions against seasickness, old hoss," answered Pete cheerfully, as he handed his plate for more.

"I'd say seasickness would do you less harm than eating like that."

"Maybe, my dear old hoss, but it ain't so pleasant! You attend to your own feeding, 'cos I'm quite competent to look after mine."

"So I notice," growled the skipper.

"What's de matter, Ponder? Don't you like roast mutton?"

"Never eat it," growled Ponder.

It was an abominable falsehood, and Jinks knew it well. Ponder saw him grinning, and added:

"Unless there's onion sauce with it, and potatoes done under the meat."

"I've got 'em both here!" exclaimed Bill, slapping a huge spoonful of the yellow-looking sauce on the unhappy man's plate, and giving him four extremely greasy-looking potatoes.

The expression on Ponder's face nearly caused Pete to choke himself. Those potatoes looked remarkably rich. Ponder ordered a brandy-and-soda, and made a manful effort to attack his food. He would as soon have attacked a lion. The brandy-and-soda cheered him a little, but he required a lot of cheering just then.

At last the remains of the mutton were cleared away, and those remains were of no considerable bulk. Pete had attended to that.

Ponder could stand it no longer. He muttered something about having forgotten his handkerchief.

"It's sticking out ob your pocket, old hoss!"

There was a fierce, though dazed, expression in Ponder's eyes, as he glanced at Pete; then he rose to his feet, and it seemed as though the vessel was trying to do the same, and turn over on its back.

Ponder took a dive against the dinner-waggon, and brought a vegetable-dish down with a crash; then he seemed to rush at the skipper, and clutched him by the hair to prevent himself falling.

Now, although Ponder was short, he was extremely fat and heavy, and the skipper found about sixteen stone rather too much to support by his hair. He yelled at the top of his voice, and Ponder parted from him, while the skipper parted with a handful of hair. After that, Ponder took a wild rush at the stairs, and he could not have chosen a more unfortunate moment, for Bill, balancing himself as only a steward can, came down the steps with a huge dish of stew in his hands.

Ponder's head caught Bill in the waistcoat, then the unfortunate passenger received the dish of stew down his back, and the dish was broken on the top of his head, while Bill dropped on him, and they both rolled to the cabin floor.

The skipper was the only one of the spectators who was not laughing. He was rubbing his head, and using language of a sort.

"You silly lubber!" growled Bill, rising to his feet. "What did you want to run foul of me like that for?"

Ponder made no reply. He merely howled at the top of his voice, because of the heat of the stew; then, rising to his feet, he struggled up the stairs, and disappeared from view.

"You will have to do without stew to-day, sir," observed Bill, slopping up the mess with the coal-scoop. "There's curry to foller."

The skipper was not paying much attention to this; he was more concerned about his head, where the hair had come out.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "I must say Ponder ain't as good a sailor as one would expect from a man who has sailed all over the world and back again. Still, he ain't done no harm."

"No harm, sink me!" howled the skipper. "He's torn enough of my hair out to stuff sofas with!"

"Yah, yah, yah! If you had many passengers like dat you would become bald before your time, wouldn't you, old hoss?"

"You stupid brute!"

"But I didn't let him hang to my hair to steady himself by."

"You silly swab, you haven't got any hair!"

"Well, you won't hab so mighty much if you let Ponder steady himself by it, my dear old hoss! But I wouldn't worry about dat. Here comes de curry!"

Bill helped the skipper first, then he murmured "Rats!" in Pete's ear; and when Pete said he wouldn't take curry, Jack and Sam, who knew it was one of his favourite dishes, also declined. They had noticed Bill whisper something, and if that something was sufficient to stop Pete partaking of his favourite dish, Jack and Sam felt convinced it would be sufficient to stop them.

Suddenly the skipper uttered a furious roar, and clapped his hand to his mouth.

"Bitten on a bone, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Bitten on a bone be hanged!" hooted the angry man. "I have bitten on a brace-button!"

He had, too, for he pulled it out of his mouth.

"Shiver my timbers!" gasped Bill. "It must have been one of Ponder's, 'cos I don't use 'em."

This was a foolish remark to have made. Bill made it without thinking. Pete knew at once why he had uttered the word "Rats!" Bill had metamorphosed that stew into curry.

"What!" howled the skipper. "Why, you filthy swab, you don't mean to tell me that you have slopped up that stew in a fire-shovel, then served it up as curry for me to eat!"

"I wouldn't tell you nothink of the sort, sir, 'cos it wouldn't be true. All cooking aboard this vessel is done with the utmost cleanliness."

"Cleanliness be hanged! How did that button come in the stuff?"

Bill scratched his head and thought. There was no need to think how it got in; Bill was only thinking of how he could get out of the little difficulty. If it had been a case with Pete, he would have laid the blame on the cook, but he could not possibly do so with the skipper.

"My dooties is far too honerous to permit of me keeping a eye on every brace-button aboard this 'ere vessel," observed Bill.

But that would not do for the skipper.

"You lubber!" he roared. "Who wants you to do so? Do you want to make me believe brace-buttons will dance about the place and get into stews of their own accord?"

"There's no telling what they would do when the ship is rolling like she is now," observed Bill.

"I have a good mind to stuff this stuff down your throat!" cried the indignant skipper. "Clear it away, and if you ever dare to serve it up to me again I'll—I'll masthead you, and shoot at you!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Is dere some more to come?"

"Potato-pie; and it's prime!"

"Den let me hab my little lot widout brace-buttons, old hoss! Just you hum' off, and don't you dare to use dat curry for de potato-pie!"

The remainder of the meal was all right. Bill was only allowed a certain amount of food for the passengers, and, being very desirous of pleasing Pete, he knew that he would have to economise with the others as much as possible; hence his little economy with the upset stew. As for upsetting the skipper—well, he succeeded in doing that every day of his life; but as he never got any tips from him it did not matter.

One of the puddings—there were two—Pete passed, because Bill, in a hoarse whisper, murmured: "Partial rats!"

Pete understood by that that it would be safer to try the other pudding; and the skipper, who had already been served with the doubtful one, and was now on the watch, demanded to know what Bill had said.

"I observed as the pudding was delicious, and one of the finest as the cook aboard this 'ere vessel—bless his honest heart!—has ever served up."

"You lying swab!" cried the skipper. "Do you dare to tell me you said all that in such a short space of time?"

"I talk rather quick when I whisper, sir."

"Sink you, you lubber! Don't you dare to tell me those lies! You never said all that. And if you don't tell me what you did say, I'll order you a dozen!"

"As true as I'm standing here, I only said as the pudding was delicious! I say, jest you try it, mate, and it will do you no end of good!"

"Then why didn't he try it?"

"I'd say it's on account of what he's already stowed away. It wouldn't surprise me at all if a chap was to refuse pudding arter the little lot he's wolfed!"

"He's eating the other pudding."

"'Cos it's lighter, sir."

"Sink me if I'll stand these lies!" roared the skipper. "I heard you say something about rats. What was it? Now, out with it!"

"I said rats was partial to some vessels, sir. As true as I'm standing here, them was my words!"

"You said partial rats."

"Well, that meant they was partial to some vessels. It ain't my fault. I can't help the nature of rats. We ain't got none aboard this one to speak of—only of a night. But some vesse's I've sailed in they were swarmed to sech an extent that one morning the whole of the starboard watch came on deck without their whiskers. Those rats had gnawed 'em off in the night. They used to drink the skipper's rum. I've known 'em drink a bottle in a night, and draw the cork and all!"

"Yah, yah, yah! After dat little lot we will try some more ob de second-rate pudding, Bill. Not de one de rats are partial to, you know."

This made the skipper mad. It seemed to him that Pete was receiving preferential treatment.

As soon as the meal was finished Pete said he was going to have a look at his cabin, and he also sampled the berth, and went to sleep on it with his pipe between his teeth. And then he commenced to snore.

Now, Slogan and his backer also went to their cabin, which adjoined, and directly Jim heard that awful groaning and tearing row, which constituted Pete's snoring he jumped to the conclusion that he was ill.

"Now's your time, Slogan!" murmured Jim; although if he had shouted, Pete could not possibly have heard him above the row he was making. "I knew the brute wouldn't stand the sea. He will be as weak as a rat in a

few minutes, and if he refuses to box with you, go for him, and give him the lesson he won't forget!"

"He is kicking up a row, too," grinned Slogan. "I don't believe that a fellow who is as bad as all that will be able to box."

"Not a bit of it! You must fairly double him up, and pay him so that he will never want to meet you again. Remember how he has disgraced you, and what Jinks threatens to do. He would spoil our tour—he would, straight! Now, Pete is just the sort of man to sing small after he has received a thorough hiding, and you ought to be able to break his ribs for him. I don't care how much you hurt him, so long as you hurt him enough. He said he would take you on any time you liked. Well, you like now, and as he's in his cabin alone, now is the very time. Come on! I've got some light gloves here. Put a pair on, and I'll make him put on the others fast enough."

Slogan was only too eager for vengeance; besides, he knew that he would have to conquer Pete sooner or later, and he quite thought now was the best time.

Putting on the gloves, he followed Jim into Pete's cabin.

"Now then!" cried Jim. "My man is going to stand your nonsense no longer!"

"What's de matter now, old hoss?" inquired Pete, gazing at the intruders with half-closed eyes, because he was not properly awake.

They both fondly imagined that he was ill. He had dropped his pipe in his berth.

"Get up, you brute!" cried Slogan. "You offered to box me when I liked! Well, I'd like now, and now is going to be the time!"

"Golly! I ain't in a boxing condition just now, old hoss! I'll take you on some oder time."

"No, you won't! You will take me on now!"

"Dis cabin ain't large enough for de purpose."

"Then come into the saloon. There's no one there except your precious friends."

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete. "If you are determined to box me, I 'spect you must hab your own way. Dis way to London!"

CHAPTER 8.

A Well-Merited Thrashing.

JACK and Sam were smoking cigars when the party entered the saloon, and Slogan explained matters in his own way.

"I am going to give that silly brute the worst thrashing he has ever had in his life!" he said. "He offered to box me any time I liked, and so I am going to take him on now!"

"What makes you want to take him on now, dear boy?" inquired Jinks.

"Because I choose."

"Well, that answer is about worthy of you, Slogan," laughed Jinks. "It is so remarkably stupid. I dare say Pete will be able to hold his own. Just keep that door shut, Jim. What is it, Bill?"

"Well, seeing that there's going to be a boxing match, I would like to see it, sir, if you ain't got any objection."

"The same here!" exclaimed another sailor.

Then they spread the news, and those who were off duty sneaked into the saloon, although they knew perfectly well that they had no right there.

Slogan did not feel quite comfortable. Pete did not look at all ill. All the same, Pete did not feel at all inclined to box after the heavy dinner he had eaten; he would much rather have finished his sleep out.

As he put on the gloves he made up his mind to finish the fight at the soonest possible moment.

"Time!" cried Jinks, and Slogan led off with his left, without going through the preliminary of shaking hands; and, ducking to the blow, Pete landed with his left in Slogan's face, and with his right on the mark. And that second blow was delivered with all his strength.

It lifted Slogan from his feet, and sent him flying against Bill with a force that caused them both to fall, while Bill's head struck the panel of the door with a force that split it from top to bottom.

"Sink me, if I'll stand this 'ere!" roared Bill, getting his left arm round Slogan's neck from the back; then, clenching his fist, he hammered at Slogan's head as hard as he could go.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, wrenching Slogan away, for Bill had got him in an absolutely helpless position. "You must not interfere wid de boxers, Bill."

"Let me get at the hound!" panted Slogan, struggling to free himself from Pete's grip.

"Nunno, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You'm boxing me, and you ain't got de right to box two ob us at de same time. What you'm got to do is to finish me off first. Bill is only de cook—I beg his pardon—de steward, and we can't hab our cook disabled. Nunno, you come and finish boxing wid me!"

"I am going to pay him first."

"No, you ain't."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"Golly! You make me tired wid your silly questions. You must know dat I'm de proper party to stop you. Try anoder start wid me. I dare say you will come off better dis time, and you'm got de consolation ob knowing dat you can't come off much worse."

Slogan was nearly mad with fury; all the same, he did not care to attack such a formidable foe. He watched his opportunity, and when he imagined Pete was off his guard, rushed in.

But Pete was taking particular care not to be off his guard. He guarded the blows with surprising skill, and when he returned them, Slogan, in spite of his size and weight, was driven backwards.

Pete was not hitting his hardest now, but he was hitting quite hard enough to keep his adverasry out, and what was more galling still to Slogan, was that Bill would keep making remarks. The fact is, Bill was very irate at the blow he had received at the back of his head, although that was certainly not Slogan's fault.

"Don't hurt him, Pete!" cried Bill. "He's like a blessed infant in your hands! Hit him on the nose as hard as you can. Haw, haw, haw! You are punishing him, too. Catch him oze in the eye, and see if you can knock his stupid head through the door—only be sure you don't hurt him!"

"You be quiet, Bill; and don't you incite me to hurt de man," growled Pete.

"Why, I'm telling you not to hurt him, mate."

"How can I hit him in de eye, and knock his head frough de door widout hurting him?"

"Haw, haw, haw! You can't damage a head like his'n. Stove in his star-board ribs. You ain't hitting him half hard enough. You will rile the lubber if you play with him like that. What he wants is a thundering good thrashing, and it's your dooty to give it to him. You can't expect me to induce the cook to serve you up all right if you don't do your dooty. The honest chap will be sending up partial rats!"

"Den he will come off badly wid de tips; and I shall rope-end him by proxy, using de steward for de purpose. Well, if you will hab it, Slogan, take dat little one on de mark! Got it first time!"

Again Slogan went down; and this time he pulled off the gloves, and roaring to Pete to do the same, rushed at him before he could have complied with the request, even if he had been so inclined.

Slogan was absolutely confident now of knocking his adversary out of time. He struck with all his strength, and with such rapidity, that it was almost impossible to follow the blows.

How Pete guarded them was a mystery to the spectators; but Slogan never once touched his face, although he got in several body-blows.

The strange part about it was that Pete did not return the blows. Several times Slogan tried to upper-cut him, but he never once succeeded.

"Bery well!" exclaimed Pete, at last. "Now I'm going to hit you, and it will be hard. Try dat one."

Pete stepped forward, then delivered his left in Slogan's face, and his right on his chest, and Slogan went backwards as though he had been shot, only with more violence.

He measured his length on the floor, and his head, coming in contact with the split panel, completely smashed it out.

He rose slowly to his feet, but it was plain to see that he had had enough of it; and at that moment Captain Hank entered the cabin.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful behaviour!" he cried. "Bill, you swab, how dare you encourage this sort of thing! This is a respectable vessel, and I won't have this blackguardism aboard. If you lubbers think you are going to turn my saloon into a prize-ring, you are greatly mistaken. You shall pay for the damage done, Pete, and I have a very good mind to place you both in irons. It is degrading and scandalous. There is nothing I abominate more than fighting, and you ought both to be heartily ashamed of yourselves. I tell you, I won't allow fighting aboard my vessel—as a rule. However, as you have begun, I suppose, on this special occasion, you had better finish it off. Shut that door, Bill, and don't allow any more in. These men have no right here. Now, go ahead; only take off those gloves, Pete; then you will both be equal."

"But I t'ought you didn't like fighting, old hoss?" gasped Pete.

"Of course I don't like it—not as a general rule—but you ought to know, at your time of life, that there are exceptions to all rules, and I consider that this is one of them. Go on, and may the best man win! I'm inclined to back Pete. He's so thundering cool! Would any of you fellows like to back Slogan for a level sovereign?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not I," laughed Jinks; "but I'll give you ten to one on Pete!"

"Well, I don't mind taking those odds. Now fire away, Slogan, and remember I am backing you."

"I have no intention of breaking the rules of this vessel," growled Slogan. Neither had he any intention of finishing that fight.

"Hang the rules of the vessel!" cried Hank. "I made those rules, sir, understand that! I have said you can finish the fight, and that is good enough for you. You must finish the fight. You are a bigger man than he is. Surely you are not afraid of him?"

"I can beat him, any day."

"Well, beat him now, and you shall have five pounds out of the money I win."

"I am not fighting now."

"Sink me! You don't mean to say that you are beaten already! Why, he has scarcely touched you. If you are afraid of him with bare fists, put

on the gloves. I only want to see a fair fight—at least, I am only willing to make an exception to my general rule. Don't you dare to guffaw like that, Bill, you silly swab! Remember you are in your captain's presence."

"Would you like to finish de round, Slogan?" inquired Pete.

"I am not fighting you now. The vessel is rolling too much."

"It won't roll worse for you than for him!" cried the skipper. "Don't be afraid, man. Go in and win. He won't hurt you!"

"I tell you I am not fighting him now!" snarled Slogan. "I shall meet him ashcre."

"Not if you can help it, my lad. Will you have a turn with him, Bill?"

"I'm friendly with him," said Bill. "I don't want to hurt the poor chap. If I was to knock him about the same as he's served that other poor chap, he might bear me malice."

"Why don't you say you are afraid of him? Sink me, if I don't have a friendly bout with you, Pete. I used to be a boxer once. Here, lend me the gloves, you cowardly swab! You are a bigger man than I am, but I believe you are afraid of Pete. Now, my lad, hit your hardest, and may the best man win! One of you chaps score the marks."

"You silly, conceited fop!" snarled Slogan. "He will kill you! It is as much as I can do to beat him."

The captain certainly shaped well. He was a scientific boxer. Pete saw that at once.

He led off with his left, and the skipper ducked, while he guarded the cross-counter, and Pete stepped back to avoid the return blow; then there was some really pretty boxing.

Suddenly the skipper sprang in, and Pete landed in his face; then the skipper delivered his left full in Pete's face, and his right on his chest, and the next moment Pete went over backwards, and, turning a complete somersault, sat on the floor, gazing around in a dazed sort of way.

"You silly swab!" growled the skipper. "What are you trying to do?"

"Tumble down, old hoss!"

"Well, get up, and don't do it again."

Pete got up, and they had a few more rounds. Twice more Pete went down, and the men cheered their skipper, while Slogan was so furious that he strode out of the place. He hated Pete, but would have liked to see him beat the skipper, who not only scored more points, but knocked him down.

"Here, clear out of it, you silly swabs!" roared Hank to his men. "Now, look here, Pete, what do you mean by this fooling?"

"I ain't boxing any more wid you, old hoss!" growled Pete.

"You have been fooling!"

"Golly, dat's a nice accusation to bring against a man!"

"Look here, Pete!" exclaimed Hank. "I wanted a turn with the gloves. I didn't want to play the fool!"

"You'm risen in de estimation ob your men, 'cos dere ain't a doubt dat you got de best ob it."

"Best of it be hanged! You know perfectly well that not one of my blows could possibly have knocked you down; while you never hit me hard enough to have hurt a child. Do you think I want to rise in the estimation of my men under false pretences?"

"Nunno! but you hab got to understand dat Slogan is a professional boxer, and if I ain't dat, I hab knocked him out ob time. Den again, beyond boxing, I hab been a strong man in a circus, and can lift pretty heavy weights, and bend iron about, and dat. Well, do you suppose I am going to use my full strength against a man a lot older dan myself, and one who ain't had time to fool about boxing half his life?"

"Well, I don't know that I wanted you to use your full strength," grumbled the skipper. "All the same, I wanted you to box, and not to pretend that the blows I delivered knocked you down."

"Yah, yah, yah! I wanted to impress Slogan. You'm a mighty pretty boxer, old hoss, but don't you take dat man on, 'cos he don't fight fair."

"Well, you are a decent sort, Pete!" laughed the skipper. "I will say that for you. There's my hand on it."

"Well, dat's all right, old hoss! Dere's no harm done."

"Not as much as would have been done if you had used your full strength. But come into my cabin, lads. We will have a smoke and a chat."

Now, the skipper proved excellent company; and when he found that the comrades had travelled nearly all over the world, he chatted in a most friendly manner, and gave them some of his experiences.

They were still laughing and talking when the door opened, and a pallid-looking object staggered into the cabin, and sank on a locker. It was poor Ponder, and he looked simply awful.

"You must go back!" he moaned. "I'm dying fast—though not so fast as I would like to. I believe I've burst fifteen blood-vessels—and my aorta."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pete. "It's lucky you ain't done much damage to yourself, old hoss!"

"My heart has stopped beating—and I'm dying!"

"Well, dat's what Jack would call a natural corollary, if your heart has stopped beating. What's de matter wid you, old hoss!"

"You silly brute, don't I keep telling you!"

"I 'spect you'm got de floo."

"You are only a bit seasick," exclaimed the skipper. "You will get all right in about three days' time."

"Seasick be hanged! I have never been seasick in my life."

"P'r'aps dat's 'cos you'm neber been to sea before, Ponder," suggested Pete.

"Idiot! Haven't I told you that I've sailed all over the world!"

"M'yes! But den Bill has told me tings."

"I could sail this vessel through the fiercest storm that ever raged, and— and port her bows, or furl her—her mizen sail."

"That I know you couldn't!" exclaimed Hank, grinning.

"I tell you I could."

"I'll bet you a sovereign you couldn't!"

"Oh, if I wasn't dying I'd take the bet!"

"Well, she doesn't carry a mizen, so it would puzzle you to furl it."

"She's a beast of a vessel. She ought to be sunk. Oh, dear! I wish she was, and then I'd feel better. I couldn't feel worse."

"Have a nip of brandy," suggested the skipper.

"I won't, you swabber—I mean you lubber! I don't mind taking a nip of prussic acid—if you've got it. Oh, dear—oh, dear! If it heaves again, I—shall do the same."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared a voice outside the cabin door. The skipper knew to whom that guffaw belonged.

"Here, Bill, you swab! Come in!"

"Thanky, sir!" exclaimed Bill, entering, and knuckling his forehead.

"I'll be most pleased to drink your health. You are the finest boxer as ever I set eyes on, and Pete is the next."

"Here, that will do. Help yourself. Now, Mr. Ponder doesn't feel well, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw! He don't look it, sir. A man what's bust his aorta never does feel well."

"How dare you listen outside my door! Do you know of anything that will put him on his legs?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Well, what?"

"Rum hot, with a bit of butter in it, then a good feed. I can get the cook to hot up some of them roast potatoes, and fry him a bit of salt pork; then after——"

The very mention of those potatoes was enough for poor Ponder. His swimming brain focussed itself on the, to him, fearful dinner; and he rushed from the cabin, muttering things about Bill that were not at all complimentary.

CHAPTER 9.

Pete as a Doctor.

"WELL, I wonder what's the matter with the man!" exclaimed Bill, gazing after him. "I was only suggesting what would do him good. I wish someone would start curing me that road."

"Oh, clear out of it, you silly swab!" growled the skipper. "Do you suppose greasy pork and greasier roast potatoes are a suitable diet for a man suffering from seasickness. Then, again, rum-and-butter would scarcely be comforting."

"But he ain't suffering from seasickness, sir."

"How do you know that?"

"He's jest told me so, sir."

"You tell me a good many things that are not true, Bill, but it does not follow that I am fool enough to believe any of them."

"Some people can't distinguish between truth and falsehood," said Bill, looking somewhat indignant and very pious.

"They can easily do so when you are speaking. Be off with you. Mr. Ponder had got a bad attack of seasickness, but he will be all right in the course of a day or two. Your remedy may be all right for a chill."

"I beg pardon, sir, but it's my dooty to report that there's one of the crew took awful bad with a chill. Shall I give him the rum hot?"

"What's his name?"

"Well, I wouldn't deceive you, sir. His name is Bill, and a more honest, truthful man I never met."

"Sheer off, you lubber! If you think I am going to order you hot rum you are mistaken, especially as there is nothing the matter with you."

"That's 'cos you don't know, sir. I'm downright bad, and——"

"Be off with you!" roared the skipper.

And Bill thought it well to go; but he remained outside the cabin door groaning like a sick camel.

Twice the skipper sprang to the door; but each time Bill bolted, though he soon came back again.

"The villain knows that I'm too easy-going," growled Hank. "He has made up his mind to get rum, and the easiest way out of it is to let him have his own way. Here, you silly swab! Tell the bo'sun to let you have the rum, and be off with you."

And Bill went away, grinning.

"It doesn't do to offend the ship's cook," observed the skipper apologetically. "There's no telling what the fellow would make you eat, seeing that he serves up brace-buttons when he's in a good temper."

"Yah, yah, yah! And shovels up de food wid a coal-spoon!" said Pete.

"He is a good cook, but he's a filthy beast—but then they all are. I

wouldn't dare to go into the galley; because I don't believe I would ever eat anything he had cooked again. What's up now, Tom?"

Tom was the boatswain, and he entered the cabin at that moment.

"Beg pardon, sir. Bill says you have ordered him rum."

"Quite right, Tom. He pretends to be ill, but there is nothing the matter with him."

"There will be after he has drunk the bottle, sir."

"A bottle! I told him he might have a glass of grog."

"He has been swearing hard and fast that you said he was to have a bottle."

"Why, the vagabond, I never mentioned the word bottle!"

"That's what he told me, sir; and when I said I didn't believe you meant him to drink a bottle, he said that it was your birthday, and that you wanted all the crew to drink your health. But he looked so innocent, and seemed to be speaking so truthfully, that I took it for granted he was lying again, and so took the liberty of coming to you to confirm the order."

"I am going to do nothing of the sort. Bill can have a glass of grog, but he is to have no more; and you can tell him that if he is not satisfied with that he is to come to me, and I will give him all the rest that I consider he deserves and requires. And you might mention that you are to come with him, and bring a handy rope's-end."

"Ay, ay, sir! I hope the swab will want the rest, 'cos I'm thundering certain it will do him good. He seems to think any sort of cooking will suit those who ain't his special favourites."

Here Tom fixed his eyes on Pete, for he knew there was a considerable amount of favouritism in that direction.

"Well, I'm glad Bill ain't going to hab a bottle ob rum," observed Pete, as the boatswain left the cabin, "'cos I don't consider dat such an amount would improve his cooking for breakfast, and I'm mighty certain de amount de remainder ob de crew consumed ob dat aforesaid bottle ob rum would not diminish de amount dat Bill would consume ob it. Now, boys, suppose we turn in, 'cos it's getting late. I'm hoping Ponder will feel better in de morning; but, judging by de yowl ob de wind, I don't tink de weather is going to moderate just at present."

"That is pretty certain," said the skipper, as he wished them good-night. "The glass is falling rapidly, and there is little doubt that we are in for a dirty night."

He was quite correct. A storm was soon raging, and the way the Stella rolled was something to be remembered. Pete slept comfortably through it. Ponder, who was in another cabin, never knew whether he slept or not. He was too horribly ill to know anything beyond his sufferings.

The following morning, Pete, who felt sorry for his sufferings, went to see him.

"Now, look here, old hoss!" he exclaimed. "De best ting for you to do—"

"Go away! Leave me here to die!"

"You ain't anything like dying. When a man is doing dat he doesn't feel any pain."

"Then I wish I was dying! Oh, dear—oh, dear!"

"See here, Ponder. If you take my advice, I will make you feel better. Seasickness in a ting dat—"

"Fool! It is nothing of the sort. I am never seasick. I have never seasick in my life!"

"Well, de complaint you are suffering from only needs a little treatment, and if you will take my advice you will feel a lot better almost immediately."

"I'll do any mortal thing to make me feel better. I'll blow my brains out, if you tink that would do any good!"

"Nunno! I don't tink dat would improve you; besides, I don't see how you could possibly do it, seeing you ain't got any brains to blow out! But you wait dere for a few moments."

It was not a matter of choice. Ponder was in such a weak state that he could not possibly have got off his berth without collapsing. Pete went into the galley, and was a little shocked, but he ordered Bill to make him some strong coffee; then he put a dose of brandy into it, which Bill said he could get if Pete paid for it. It cost Pete a shilling, and as Bill got it for nothing, for a sick passenger, he was perfectly satisfied, especially as he helped himself to some of it on the way.

Pete poured it into the coffee; then went back to his patient, who vowed he could not touch it.

"But you said you would do what I told you, old hoss."

"Go away, you silly vagabond! I won't take the stuff!"

"Well, I shall doctor you my own road," declared Pete, holding him up, and forcing the medicine down his throat.

Ponder spluttered a good deal, and, when he could say something, vowed he would shoot his medical man; but Pete persevered, and got about half down Ponder's throat, and the remainder down his waistcoat; then, raising him in his arms, bodily carried him on deck.

"Now, den, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, getting his arm round his portly waist, "you'm got to walk up and down de deck wid me, and I'm going to steady you de best road I can. 'Nuff said!"

"You murderous ruffian——"

"Neber mind 'bout dat. You will hab to put up wid de treatment."

Ponder appealed to the crew, but they only grinned at him; nor would the officers interfere, although Ponder threatened them with an action for damages.

Up and down the deck those two went. Pete knew that he would lose his breakfast; but he could see that Ponder was in a really bad state, and knew that if he remained in his cabin he would be in the same state for about a week.

The exercise was violent, and as the patient breathed deeply the terrible aching of his head grew less.

"I really believe I'm feeling better," he admitted at last. "I will rest a little now."

"Nunno, you won't!" growled Pete. "You will rest when I gib you permission. I don't want you to feel only a little better, and get bad again. What I want is dat you get quite well. Seeing dat I'm your doctor, you hab got to obey my orders."

Bill came up to inquire about breakfast; but Pete was only thinking of his patient.

"Listen to me, Bill, and if you obey my orders, I will gib you five shillings," said Pete. "Go down and bring up a mattress and a blanket. Shove dem in de deck-house, and open all the windows."

"Why, it's blowing a gale, and——"

"You do what I tell you, else you won't get your five shillings. And when you hab done de first part ob it, bring up a brandy-and-soda. 'Nuff said! Buzz off!"

"I can't take anything, Pete," moaned Ponder. "The very thought——"

"You ain't required to tink, old hoss. I'm tinkin for you. Do you suppose I want to make you worse?"

"No. I know you mean well; but——"

"Den shut up, and come dis way. We ain't stopping yet."

Bill soon executed his orders, and Pete made his patient drain the glass; then he put him on the mattress, and covered him over with a blanket.

"Go to sleep now, old hoss. You ain't to get up till I gib you permission; den I shall gib you a bit more exercise."

Pete now went down for his own breakfast, after which he spent a couple of hours on deck, during which time he had several looks at his patient.

Midday he gave him some dry toast and coffee, and Ponder was so much better that he actually ate the toast, and declared that evening that he would come down to dinner.

"You will do nuffin' ob de sort, old hoss," said Pete. "You see, if I was to allow you to do dat you might catch dat chill again, and as we don't want anything like dat to occur, why, we are going to take ebery precaution."

"You mind your own business, and don't presume to interfere with me."

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I ain't going to interfere wid you in any way. I am only going to make you obey my orders, and, if you won't do so ob your own accord, I shall make you do it ob my accord. 'Nuff said!"

"Don't you dare to presume with me, Pete! I won't allow it, and so I tell you!"

Pete merely locked him in the deck-house, and as he could not have got out of the window without considerable risk—more risk than he would have cared to run—it was all right.

Bill was busy in his galley, but he stopped when Pete told him he required some broth and more toast for his patient.

"Look here, mate!" growled Bill. "I'm in the centre of getting dinner, and that skipper would go on something awful if I wasn't to send it up punctual. Can't you give the fat little lubber ship's-biscuit and pickled pork?"

"Nunno! He's going to have toast and broth, and you are going to make it, else you ain't going to hab dese five shillings. I shall hab to send for de cook if you won't do it."

"You can't. He's been sent to the helm, 'cos the skipper has found out as I can cook better'n him. Well, I'll hot up the broth. I've got some ready; and while it's hotting up you can be making the toast. Here's the bread. I made it myself, so I know it's good."

"Any brace-buttons in it, Bill?"

"No fear," answered Bill, cutting Pete a slice, and sticking it on a toasting-fork. "Now, jest hold this 'ere in front of the fire till it's done."

Pete secured a stool, because he liked to cook in comfort. He smoked his pipe, and watched Bill warm the broth.

"Golly!" he exclaimed. "You can't gib de patient dat. You might use it as a skating-rink, and den oil de engines wid de superfluos grease. How do you suppose a sick man is going to slop down dat oily stuff?"

"Sink me! How do you suppose he's going to eat that 'ere toast? Haw, haw, haw! You've made it blacker than your best hat."

"Golly!" gasped Pete, gazing at the smoking toast. "Why didn't you tell me it was done?"

"Sink me, I'd call that a trifle overdone. You might use it for toast-and-water, or for blacking boots with!"

"Well, you make anoder piece, Bill, and frow dat stuff away, else serve it up to de skipper. It won't suit my patient."

"I tell you it's nootricious. It will ile his inside, and start him going again."

"Ain't you got any Eggbound's Extract ob Elephant, or Onion's Ointment ob Ocowa?"

"I dunno as we have."

"Well, go and see. What he wants is broth, and not hot dripping."

"He seems to be mighty partic'lar, too," growled Bill. "Don't you start making no more toast, 'cos I should have to make some more bread. The skipper won't eat ship's-biscuits—not when he can get bread."

Bill got some extract of meat, and made the broth; then Pete took it up, and Ponder was so much improved that he commenced to bully him, and declare he was going to have a proper dinner, and that he wasn't going to be starved just because he had caught a little cold. Pete, however, persuaded him to drink it by the simple means of getting his head in chancery, and pouring it down his throat.

"Now, den, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "you can eat dat toast or not, just as you like, but you ain't habing anoder mouthful till to-morrow morning, and you'm going to sleep in dis deck-house in de open."

"I'll be hanged if I do! Do you think I am going to sleep in a gale of wind?"

"I dunno; but by de look ob de weather I tink you'm going to sleep in a storm. We shall find dat out later on. I'm mighty certain dat if you went into de stuffy cabin, and saw it heaving about, you would start doing de same, and I ain't habing all my medicated work spoilt for de sake ob a few precautions."

Ponder got savage at these precautions. Pete absolutely refused to allow him solid food, and he soon became so hungry that he could even think of roast mutton and greasy potatoes without shuddering.

The weather remained rough; but the following day Pete allowed his patient to come down to dinner, when he made a hearty meal, and felt perfectly well after it.

"You'm got your sea-legs now, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You will be all right for de fiercest storm dat we are likely to encounter; and dere's just de chance dat next time you go to sea you won't be seasick."

"You obstinate rascal! I tell you I never suffer from seasickness!"

"Ain't it a funny ting, boys, dat a man won't own he's been seasick! Dey always find it is something else, and tell deir lady friends what a mighty fine sailor dey are. Neber mind, Ponder. Your little illness may take down some ob your fat, and tink what a mercy dat would be. You will be able to challenge Slogan, won't he, old hoss; only you must not start kicking him like you did me."

"You lying rascal!" cried Slogan fiercely. "If you-dare to talk to me like dat, it will not go well with you."

"Shall you start boxing wid me?"

"I shall do that which you will have cause to regret!" cried Slogan, showing his teeth in his fury.

"I tink he must mean dat he will start kicking again," said Pete, winking at the skipper. "He's a mighty fine kicker, and if he wasn't so timid he wouldn't make at all a bad football player. Why, what's de matter now, Slogan? Got a nut down de wrong way? Shall I up-end you, and see if we can shake de nut out. I believe dey do dat wid little children when dey swallow deir moders' thimbles. Yah, yah, yah! De man is trying to dance de can-can, or else de skirt-dance."

"Captain Hank!" roared Slogan, who had sprung to his feet. "I will not submit to this brute's impertinence."

"Why not put on the gloves with him?" suggested Hank, thinking he might have the pleasure of seeing a boxing contest.

"I call on you to stop the fellow's gross impertinence!"

"I haven't got the power to stop him speaking. You might as well ask me to stop the roughness of the sea. I would advise you not to take any notice

of what he says. Don't you see, if you show passion, he is sure to tease you a bit. And, after all, you started it by calling him a liar!"

"So he is a liar!"

"De captain ain't saying anyting 'bout dat, my poor old peppery hoss," said Pete. "You see quite well when I say dat you kicked me in a boxing contest, and you say you didn't, you and I know who is speaking de troof, and who is de liar. Now, de captain can't possibly know, 'cos he wasn't dere."

"I should think Captain Hank would take my word before yours!"

"Ah well, I shouldn't," answered Pete, filling his pipe. "'Cos you see, he's a sensible sort of man, and no one but a born idiot could mistake you for a trooful man, or one who has much sense ob honour about him. Yah, yah, yah! What's the man spluttering about now? You can't help your nature, Slogan. All you can do is to try to improve it, 'dough I'm 'most inclined to tink you'm got a hopeless task in front ob you."

"Do you want your head knocked off your shoulders, fellow?"

"Can't say I do, but dere ain't de slightest fear ob your doing anything like dat. Ponder would be more your mark. When you fight, you need a man weaker dan yourself, and one who can't box much, 'cos den you ain't got de need to start kicking like some oder donkey."

"You insolent vagabond!" roared Slogan, striding up to him with clenched fists. "If you don't apologise for those words, I'll knock you down!"

"Eh?"

"I say I will knock you down!"

"Well, lend me a match, first," said Pete, winking at the skipper, who it must be admitted, was thoroughly enjoying the scene.

"Do you hear me, scoundrel?" howled Slogan. "If you don't apologise, I'll knock you down!"

He had scarcely uttered the words, when the Stella was caught by a violent sea, and as she rolled heavily, Slogan was pitched across the cabin, and he went sprawling to the floor, face downwards. But this was not the worst of it. He caught the tip of his nose upon the edge of the stair, and that nose was badly grazed.

"Yah, yah, yah!" howled Pete. "Golly, golly! Yah, yah, yah! If dat man ain't mighty funny, I dunno what is. You'm scratched your nasal organ dis time, old hoss. Yah, yah, yah! You ain't got de right to sniff at de stairs like dat. Oh, don't laugh at him, captain. You must remember dat he's a fighting man. You could almost notice dat by seeing de way he went for dose stairs. Neber mind, Slogan. You take anoder dive at de stove, and hab a sniff at dat. Yah, yah, yah! You'm like some old blughound, sniffing at objects dat don't belong to you."

CHAPTER 10: Perils of the Sea.

PETE'S laughter and chaff drove Slogan into such a fury that his words came with a hiss between his clenched teeth.

"You demon! You utter demon!"

"But look here, my dear old hoss, I ain't touched you," said Pete. "All I hab done is to laugh at you a little, and when you make yourself so mighty funny by rubbing your nose on de stairs, you can't be surprised if a man laughs at you."

"I tell you, Captain Hank," stuttered the furious man. "I won't be answerable for my actions if you don't kick that insolent brute out of the saloon."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Hank. "He is a first-class passenger the same as you are, and he has as much right here."

"He has not got the right to insult me!"

"Absurd! It was you who insulted him. You called him a liar, and said the most insulting things to him in the first place, and then I believe that you were about to strike him when you fell."

"Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, Slogan," cried Pete; "but I'm tinkin' ob your nose. It looks mighty funny in its scraped condition. Now what you had better do is to go to bed and try to cool down. You'm got a mighty nasty temper, an' if you ain't a little more careful ob it, you will get losing it. I dunno weder you would like Sammy to put your nose in splints."

"I will have a settlement with you for this, fellow!" cried Slogan, striding from the cabin, and Jim, his trainer, followed him.

"Golly! My patient ain't looking as well as a West ob England farmer," observed Pete, glancing at Ponder. "I tought you were getting rader reckless ober dat dinner, Ponder."

"You are a stupid creature," growled Ponder. "I am going to turn in. Good-night!"

"Ain't it mighty disgusting, after all de trouble I hab taken wid de man, for him to go and eat himself like dat!" exclaimed Pete. "I rader fancy I shall hab to keep him on ship's biscuits for de rest ob de voyage."

"You might do worse than that," said Hank, who had a view to profit.

"A man who suffers from seasickness ought not to eat too much. Now, come to my cabin, and we will have a hand at whist."

"But what about lights-out, old hoss?"

"The rule does not apply to the captain's cabin," said Hank. "It is necessary for him to have some recreation."

"Well, I ain't playing cards to-night," said Pete. "You see, I don't like to break any ob de skipper's rules when dey happen to coincide wid what I want to do; and I want to go to sleep now, 'cos Ponder kept me awake last night. You'm got your four. Good-night, boys, and be bery careful wid dose lights, 'cos you ain't got de right to endanger de safety ob de vessel."

Then Pete turned in, with a pipe between his teeth, and fell asleep smoking.

It must have been about midnight when he was awoke by a terrific crash, followed by others in quick succession; then he heard the banging of doors, and the sound of excited voices.

The noise was enough to have awakened the heaviest sleeper; but although it aroused Pete, he was not properly awake when Slogan came rushing into his cabin, which was in complete darkness.

"Is anyone here?" shouted Slogan.

"Go to bed!" growled Pete. "How dare you make dis noise in de middle ob de nocturnal night!"

"Get up, you maniac! Don't you hear those crashes?"

"M'yes! I must say I hear some knocking. 'Spect it's de postman wid de letters. Go to sleep!"

"I tell you the vessel is sinking!"

"Well, yowling at it won't do it any good. Go and sit in de lifeboat, and don't come bodering me."

"I tell you that your life is in peril. Hark at the crashes!"

"Look here, old hoss, it wouldn't boder you at all if my life was in danger. Dat ain't what's troubling you. It is because you tink your own life is in danger. Still, as dere ain't de slightest danger, you needn't get in such a mighty state ob terror."

"How do you know there is no danger?"

"I can tell by— Eh?"

"How can you tell there is no danger?"

"De vessel would be rocking—or someting like dat—if dere was."

The vessel could scarcely have been rolling more than was the case, but Pete was very sleepy, and in spite of the terrific crashes, he did not believe that there was really any peril.

Slogan did, and he preferred Pete's company to being alone.

"What are those violent crashes?" he demanded.

"I 'spect dey are rats, or someting like dat. Dere, dey hab stopped now, so we'm all right. Good-night, old hoss!"

Pete turned over, and Slogan stood there listening in the darkness. Jim had rushed up on deck on hearing the strange noise, and Slogan would have done the same, only he got confused in the darkness, and found his way into Pete's cabin.

All was silent now, but the vessel was rolling in a manner that gave Slogan the impression that she was about to founder. He was in such a state of terror that he really scarcely knew what he was doing.

"Wake up, you reckless vagabond!" he cried, shaking Pete violently.

"If you ain't a perfect nuisance, Slogan, I dunno a man dat is!" growled Pete.

"I tell you the vessel is foundering!"

"Well, I can't help it. It ain't my fault. I 'spect de vessel has got de right to founder if she wants to. What's de good ob blaming me for what anoder party is doing?"

"She is sinking fast!"

"Well, she's bound to be insured. De owners won't lose anything."

"Fool! We shall lose our lives."

"Well, what's de good ob yowling at it. If we'm going to be drowned, it will save us de pain ob being burnt, or someting like dat. I knew a man who died a painful death, and dat was much worse dan drowning. Dere's no particular pain in dat, and you won't be de first rat who has been drowned. De best ting for you to do is to get to bed—'cos I want to get some sleep, and dere ain't much chance ob doing it while you'm yowling in my cabin like some old wounded wolf."

"I don't believe the villain cares!"

"Golly! Dat's just where you make your mistake. Do you suppose I want to get wet in de dead ob night? I should care bery much if I tought we were going to get wet, but I don't fink anything ob de sort. Den again, if I tought dat yowling was any sort ob good, I would start it off in a louder key dan you are doing it. Nunno, Slogan, I hab been to sea on and off nearly all my life, and a good lot ob it was on. Bery well, I hab learnt dat dere are a good many chances at sea. F'rinstance, de vessel may not be sinking, and if it happens to be sinking, dere may be anoder vessel close by; and if dere ain't de boats, dere might be time to make a raft, and failing dat, we might be able to swim, and if we couldn't swim, we might still escape being drowned."

"How, you silly rascal!"

"Dere's a lot ob sharks in de sea, and some ob dem might swallow us, and we couldn't be drowned dat road."

This last piece of consolation utterly failed to comfort Slogan. He rushed from the cabin, and after some little difficulty found his way on deck.

Here he met Jack and Sam, who had gone up to see what was the matter.

"Are we sinking?" gasped Slogan.

"Certainly not!" answered Jack. "One of the cranks has broken loose, and it has done a lot of damage in the engine-room. However, as it has

not knocked a hole in the bottom of the vessel, we are not likely to founder for some time to come."

"What is the captain going to do?"

"I really have not asked him," answered Jack, considerably disgusted at the man's cowardice. "He has not taken me into his confidence. I expect he will know exactly what to do. If it were my case I should set some sails, and keep her head to the wind until the engines were repaired—that is to say, if they can be repaired at sea. I should say it would be an easy matter."

"Go and suggest it to the captain."

"Not for pensions!" laughed Jack. "He would kick me off the bridge, in all probability, and tell me to mind my own business. Let's come below, Sam, and tell Pete it is all right."

Slogan followed them. He hated to be alone in times of peril, and somehow he had come to the conclusion that Jack and Sam knew a lot more about the vessel than did Jim, his trainer.

Besides, Jim was only looking after himself. He would have been very sorry if Slogan had been drowned, because he had made money out of him; he would have been a lot more sorry if Jim had been drowned; and he secured a lifebelt in case of such a terrible calamity.

When the comrades entered Pete's cabin, they were greeted with the most violent snores. That worthy was very tired, and not at all inclined to meet danger half-way. He had merely turned over and gone to sleep again.

"Here, wake up, you image!" cried Sam, shaking him.

"Golly! Here comes anoder one. You are a mighty nuisance, boys."

"Didn't you hear the noise?"

"I can hear your noise, Sammy. And I hab been listening to Slogan's noise, which is a lot worse. He's been yowling at me de pleasing information dat we'm all going to be drowned."

"Well, the vessel has broken a crank, and——"

"Den go and mend it, Sammy, and don't come bodering me!" growled Pete, groping about in his berth for his pipe, and having found it, he struck a match—he always kept a box at the side of his bed—and lit his pipe.

"I don't believe the scoundrel is sane!" declared Slogan. "I shall report to the captain that you smoke in bed."

"I don't suppose he will mind dat as long as he doesn't hab to supply de tobacco. Go away!"

Nothing would have given Slogan greater pleasure than to have got Pete into trouble. He determined to keep a watch for the s'ripper, and give him the pleasing information that one of his passengers was in the habit of smoking in bed; but Slogan had to wait a considerable time before the skipper came below. This did not much matter, for Slogan had such a fright that sleep was quite out of the question.

At last the captain entered his cabin, and having lighted one of the cigars that Jack had given him, he pulled off his boots and turned in dressed.

He was just enjoying that cigar, and feeling very sleepy, when there was a tap at his door.

"Come in!" he cried, hiding the cigar under the blanket. "Anything wrong again?"

"It is I—Slogan!" cried that worthy; for the cabin was all in darkness. "I have come to inform you that that reckless villain Pete is in the habit of smoking in his berth."

"Then I'll put him in irons! Go and make the rascal stop, and tell him he is never to do it again."

"Hadn't you better come to stop him? It's horribly dangerous."

"I'll see him hanged before I turn out again! Tell him I say he is not to smoke."

"He won't take the slightest notice of your orders unless you give them yourself."

"Well, I will give them to-morrow. I am not going to turn out to-night. Besides, if he stopped when I entered his cabin, he would start directly I had left it. Good-night!"

Slogan slammed the door, and the skipper grinned as he went on with his cigar.

"Glad he didn't see me," mused the skipper. "It sets a horribly bad example. But a captain must have something to comfort him."

Then he turned over, and was soon sleeping soundly.

All through the night the vessel rolled in a manner that was really alarming. The skipper had set some sails, but they failed to steady her, and the engineer reported that it would take several days to repair the damage.

Slogan passed a very anxious night, but towards morning the wind went down, and the sea moderated.

The skipper took the accident very coolly. Three days more or less to him were of little consequence; but Jim and Slogan, who had a match on, stormed at the delay, and, judging by their remarks, one would have imagined that they considered the skipper to blame.

"Well, it's no good bothering," observed Hank, when they were at breakfast. "Accidents will occur, and we are in no danger—unless, of course, we get another storm."

"That fellow Jack says you ought to have set sails," declared Slogan.

"I said nothing of the sort," laughed Jack.

"That's a lie!"

"Look here, my man," cried Jack, "you are rather too fond of making use of that language! Don't you let it occur again."

"I shall say what I like, fellow, and if——"

"Den you will hab to be corrected, old hoss," said Pete, bringing the flat of his hand down on the top of Slogan's head with a sounding slap.

"De man who insults my friend insults me. I know perfectly well dat Jack would go for you on his own account; but, seeing you'm a professional boxer, why, I'm de proper man to take you on. Oh, you can bluster, and call me all de names you like! I sha'n't mind a bit. If you want anoder turn wid de gloves, all you'm got to do is to say so, and I feel quite sure de captain will obercome his repugnance to boxing, and let you go ahead. Yah, yah, yah! Funny you don't like boxing, ain't it, old hoss?"

"You shut up, Pete!" growled the skipper. "Of course, I don't like fighting, but, under the circumstances, I consider you are in the right, and if Slogan wants to box with you—why, I——"

"Will look on. Yah, yah, yah!"

"I wasn't going to say that at all. I——"

"Nunno, old hoss; but you were going to do it. You know dat perfectly well. Suppose we hab a bout to last free days, Slogan. It will amuse de company till we get de engines mended."

"Do you know anything about mechanical work, Pete?" inquired the skipper, with a view to turning the conversation.

"Eh?"

"I was wondering if you could give some help in the engine-room, because——"

"I ain't de slightest use at mechanical work, my dear old hoss. I might be able to pull your engines to pieces, 'specially if I had de use ob a coke-hammer, but I wouldn't guarantee to put dem togeder again; and I'm

rader inclined to tink dat it would puzzle your engineers to put dem togeder again after I had taken dem to pieces wid de coke-hammer. You see, I ain't any good at any sort ob work 'cept smoking."

"You know perfectly well that you said the captain would set sails if he understood his business," declared Slogan, also desirous of turning the conversation, for he was not at all anxious to take Pete on at a boxing contest.

"Those were not my words," said Jack. "I made no such remark. I should not presume to dictate to Captain Hank. In fact, I should consider it a gross piece of impertinence and presumption were I to do so."

"Then perhaps you will explain what you did say."

"Certainly. You asked me what the captain was going to do, and I said he had not taken me into his confidence, and that I really did not know; but that if it were my case I should set some sails, and keep her head to the wind, until the engines were repaired. That was my idea as to what our captain would do. And it happens to be exactly what he has done. So that it shows I was right. You suggested that I should go and tell the captain, and I remarked that he would kick me off the bridge, and tell me to mind my own business. You see, Captain Hank, how he has distorted my words."

"Certainly! All the same, I never mind suggestions, if they are sensible ones."

"I 'spect dat means if dey coincide wid your own opinion, old hoss," said Pete, winking at Jack.

"Now, you shut up, Pete!" laughed the skipper. "Suppose we get up a match, Slogan?"

"I am quite ready to box three rounds with you at any time you like!" snarled Slogan.

Hank did not appear to relish this. At his time of life he preferred watching a match to taking part in it as a principal. However, it took a good deal to daunt the worthy skipper.

"Oh, I'll take you on with pleasure!" he said.

"Golly!" gasped Pete. He knew that the skipper stood a good chance of getting knocked senseless in that bout.

"Why, I took you on, Pete," exclaimed Hank, "and you beat Slogan! Of course, I know you were fooling with me, and let me beat you; but—"

"Supposing you'm right dere, old hoss. You ought also to know dat Slogan won't fool wid you and let you beat him."

"I don't care. I'll take you on, Slogan, and may the best man win!"

"He's bound to do dat!" growled Pete.

However, the skipper had pledged his word, and he was not at all inclined to back out of it, so Pete gave him the best counsel he could think of.

"Try to catch him on de mark, old hoss. If you get a chance at his jaw, bring your right up underneaf it. Dose two blows are de only ones dat will convince him, and don't you deliver dem till de last round, 'cos dey will make him as wild as a stirred-up wapsy!"

"I'll take your advice, Pete."

"Rely on ducking more dan guarding," added Pete, "and, above all tings, keep your chin down. If he gets in one on de point he will knock you out ob time. Act on de defensive de two first rounds, neber mind how you get hammered, and get in dose two blows just at de end ob de third round. 'Nuff said!"

Pete knew that the skipper had not a ghost of a chance, and he was very indignant that Slogan—who knew it also—should have hit so hard.

In the first round he punished the skipper séverely. But Hank could stand a good deal of knocking about.

The second round was even worse, and it ended by Hank being floored. But he was up again directly, and although he looked considerably the worse for the encounter, he did not appear to feel much the worse for it.

"Don't forget dose two blows," whispered Pete. "Duck, rush in, and try wid your left for de mark, den bring your right up wid a smasher under de jaw. You won't hurt him howeber hard you hit, 'cos he's used to it. Frow all de weight ob your body into dose blows. Mind he doesn't catch you as you duck."

Slogan was laughing. He knew that he could put the skipper to sleep at any moment he chose, and he was so absolutely certain of having matters all his own way that he was quite careless.

So far the captain had not once touched his face.

At the opening of the round Slogan played with him, and the skipper kept pretty well out of range, because he had been punished rather more than he cared for.

The last round was of four minutes' duration, and it was nearly up when Slogan sprang forward to get in his knock-out blow. He led off with his left at the skipper's jaw, but that worthy was bearing Pete's advice in mind, and he ducked in a manner that would have made Pete laugh had he not been so anxious.

The blow passed over Hank's head, and he got in on the mark with his left just beneath Slogan's elbow. He had expected the blow in his face, and had raised his guard just a trifle too high.

The next instant Hank struck upwards with his right, and it caught Slogan a heavy blow beneath the jaw.

At the same moment the vessel gave a violent lurch, and Slogan went sprawling sideways, then fell to the floor with a bang.

The two blows had affected him very considerably, for the skipper was a hard hitter; but Slogan would not have fallen had it not been for the violent lurching of the vessel, which was all against him and all in the skipper's favour, he being quite accustomed to such motion.

"Time!" cried Pete, stepping forward, as Slogan uttered a fierce imprecation, and sprang to his feet.

"Liar, it isn't time!" howled Slogan. "Stand out of my way, or I won't be answerable for what I do to you!"

"All right, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I'll be answerable for all dat. It is 'Time.' De free rounds are ended. Yah, yah, yah! Dose two last were scorchers! I hope you ain't hurt yourself in falling."

"It was through the lurching of the vessel."

"Yah, yah, yah! And de blows."

"Liar!"

"Ain't he like some old parrot? I tink his auntie must hab taught him dat one word."

"Demon! You will go too far with me!"

"Nunno! You don't dare to hit me, old hoss! You'm in a mighty bad temper just now, 'cos you'm had a fall."

"You liar! You know you are lying!"

"Well, it looked to me as dough you had had a fall. Ob course, I may hab been mistaken, but you certainly looked to fall."

"You know he did not knock me down."

"I don't tink you would hab fallen widout dose blows, old hoss. All de same, you ain't got de right to lose your temper wid me. I didn't knock you down. You must know time is up. I was just going to call it when—"

Yah, yah, yah! I 'spect I mustn't tell you what happened, else you will get vexed."

"Will you take me on for another three rounds, Hank?"

"Nunno! I'm going to take you on next," said Pete. "De skipper has got oder duties to perform. Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you, but how's your jaw? Nasty upper-cut, wasn't it? And I tink he touched de mark. Dose were mighty fine blows, captain! You'm a first-class boxer, and no mistake!"

"You are a silly fool!" snarled Slogan.

"We ain't talking about me, old hoss—we'm talking about Captain Hank; and he's one ob de finest amateur boxers I hab eber come across. Golly, golly! I can't help laughing when I tink ob dose two blows! Dey were in such quick succession, weren't dey, Slogan?"

"I suppose you think you are funny? Will you take me on for another bout, Hank?"

"No, he won't! I claim de next bout," interposed Pete. "De captain has placed himself in my hands. I'm his backer, and I shall make his next match. He ain't got de right to interfere wid my private arrangements, and he's far too good a sportsman to do dat. Any challenge you like I will consider."

"Will you box me if that fool accepts my challenge, Captain Hank?"

"Certainly!" exclaimed the skipper, who was not at all nervous.

"I challenge him to any number of rounds he likes to name," cried Slogan, "and for any amount a side!"

"I will consider de challenge," said Pete. "In de meantime I challenge you to twenty rounds, wid a hundred pounds a side, such bout to come off before de second challenge."

"Do you accept my challenge on behalf of Captain Hank?"

"Yes."

"Name your time."

"Directly we hab finished our bout ob twenty rounds."

"I am ready to meet the captain now."

"Bery well. But we must hab our twenty rounds first, and dey will only take 'bout an hour and a half. Stake your hundred pounds wid Jack, and I'll stake my hundred. Dat's fair enough."

Undoubtedly it was, but it was not what Slogan wanted. He meant having his revenge, for he had the feeling that he shaped badly with the skipper. All the same, he had no intention of taking on twenty rounds with Pete if he could help it.

"Will you have another bout with me, Captain Hank?" he demanded.

"Certainly. I will leave the matter in Pete's hands. I see no objection to his arrangement, and he can tell me when you are ready for me."

Then the skipper left the cabin, and the comrades followed him on deck.

CHAPTER 11.

How the Skipper Became a Famous Boxer.

THE skipper had no sooner got on deck than his crew set up a hearty cheer. They appeared to be in a state of great excitement.

Hank was a very popular captain. He knew that his men liked him, but why they should howl themselves hoarse on the present occasion was more than he could comprehend.

"I wonder if it's my birthday? No, it can't be that. What are the silly swabs cheering for?"

"P'r'aps de repairs are finished, and dey are pleased," suggested Pete.

"Not they. They would be sorry, because there isn't much for them to do now. Just hark at the row they are making!"

They were trying to sing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and they were making a frightful mess of it. Some of them appeared to be singing it to the air of "Rule, Britannia!" others to that of the "National Anthem," and a few to its correct air, according to their own lights; but you could tell what it was meant for by the words.

"Here, Bill, you swab," roared the skipper, "what is the meaning of this row?"

"They are a-cheering you, sir."

"What for? What have I done?"

"Knocked Mr. Slogan out of time. Haw, haw, haw! You are a professional boxer, ain't you, Mr. Slogan? But you ain't no good agin our old man."

Slogan had come up, and he did not look amiable.

"Did you see the bout, Bill?" demanded the skipper.

"I did jest happen to see a bit of it, sir."

"You silly swab! Did you tell the men?"

"No fear. I wouldn't think of doing a thing like that. Least said is soonest mended, is my motter. I ain't got a crest. It was buried with my grandmother."

"How did they know if you didn't tell them?" demanded the skipper.

Billy scratched his head, and thought a little.

"Why, it was this way, sir. One of 'em heard a fearful row. It was when you knocked Slogan silly. They arst me if another crank had gorn, and I says 'No,' jest like that. Then one of 'em says 'Has the Old Man been knocking Slogan silly again?' Well, I couldn't tell a lie, and——"

"Here, that will do!" growled the skipper. "You have told me about forty thousand."

"I said a single lie, sir. I worn't talking of 'em in bulk."

"Just you go and tell those swabs to hold their row! You know perfectly well that I don't hold with boxing—not aboard—and you had no right to go and tell the men."

"I could no more help your knocking Slogan out of time than he could, sir."

"He did not knock me out of time, you stupid idiot!" snarled Slogan.

"Haw, haw, haw! He can tell 'em singly! Why, I saw him do it!"

"No you did not, you stupid brute! You saw nothing of the sort. I fell!"

"Well, ain't that what I said? You fell when you got the Old Man's fist in your jaw. Haw, haw, haw! You did go down a treat! I thought he was a-going to knock you through the bottom of the vessel!"

"You are an idiot!"

"Maybe. But I can tell when a man gets a knock-out blow. Blest if I didn't think he'd knocked your 'ead off your shoulders! He did give you a welting, too! Haw, haw, haw! You got it hot and strong that time, young fellow! It's lucky for you that Pete pertected you from any more rounds. You would have had to go into horspital to a certainty. Sink me if ever I saw a man knocked about worse!"

"If there had been another round——"

"You would have got killed to a certainty, mate—you would, really. I know a bit about boxing, but the skipper knows more. He's too many for you, and it's a thundering good thing for you that he ain't a professional, else you wouldn't have no chance for the championship!"

The skipper was disgusted. He knew he was receiving hero-worship

that he did not deserve, but Bill had made up his mind, and there was no shifting him from his position. It would have been about as well to argue at a bulkhead.

The worst of it was that wherever Slogan went he heard remarks that maddened him.

"Fancy our skipper tackling a big 'un like him, too!"

"Nearly killed him!"

"Knocked him senseless! Bill says so, and he saw!"

And this went on for days, while Slogan was quite powerless to stop it.

One evening as Slogan entered the saloon just before dinner, he found the comrades already there, and they were laughing silently, while some of the crew, who were listening to Bill's story, were laughing noisily. Bill's voice was distinctly audible in the saloon, because he did not know that anyone was there. He was in the middle of his narrative.

"Then the old man makes a rush at Slogan—you never seed such a rush. Fire was flaming from the skipper's eyes, and I could see he meant mischief. Slogan seed it, too. 'Save me, Bill,' says he—jest like that. And with that he dodges behind me, and the blow intended for his nose comes straight for mine. Well, I ups with my fist, and guards it. Slogan is a taller man than me, and not knowing he was behind me—"

"You jest said he was, mate."

"You just shut up, Joe, you silly swab. I'm telling this 'ere story, not you."

"Then why don't you tell it truthful."

"So I am, you swab, and if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head I'll give you something for supper as you won't like the eating of. Don't I tell you that I found out Slogan was behind me, 'cos, as I turned upwards, it caught him on the 'ead, and knocked his head clean through the cabin door? Well, I sheers off at that, and the skipper he seized Slogan round the body, and hurls him clean through the cabin.

"'Have mercy on me, captain!' cries Slogan—jest like that, and with the tears streaming down his cheeks. 'You land-lubber!' says the captain—jest like that. 'Mercy him as mercy does. It's a text from the Latin, and it means—'"

"Never mind about its meaning, Bill. Get on with the fight."

"Well, arter that Slogan's howls was suthin' awful."

Here the skipper entered the saloon.

The skipper picks him up by one of his legs, and twirls him round and round his head, and all the time Slogan was shrieking for mercy, and every time he come round my way I could feel his tears a-falling like a blessed water-cart in full play. And if you don't believe me—"

"Bill, you lying swab!" howled the angry skipper.

There was a dead silence. The captain's voice could have been heard half a mile, and Bill was only in the next cabin, but apparently he did not hear it, though they heard a shuffling of feet; and as the skipper kept up the shouting Bill entered the saloon, looking perfectly innocent.

"Beg pardon for disturbing you, sir, but I've come to ask—"

"Why didn't you come when you heard me shouting?"

"I never heard you, sir."

"Have you got any of the crew in that cabin?"

"Not me, sir. I know it's agin the rules."

"Have you been telling anyone about the boxing bout?"

"Not a word, sir. You ordered me not to do so, and I always obey your orders."

"Did you tell them that you saw me seize Mr. Slogan by the leg, whirl him round and round my head, and that the tears fell from his eyes like a water-cart in full action?"

"I couldn't tell them that, sir, 'cos I never seed it."

"You lying swab! I heard you telling them!"

"Beg pardon, sir; you was mistook. I was saying that you might have done that, only it was agin the rules of boxing."

"You said just now no one was there."

"Which was the perfect truth, sir. They wasn't there, 'cos directly they heard you a hollering they bolted."

"You told me you didn't hear me shout."

"I said as I didn't hear you the fust time, sir. I distinctly said as I heard you the second time."

"How the thunder did you know it was the second time, if you didn't hear me the first?"

"Well, I guessed it was the second time, and——"

"Oh, go away!" roared the skipper. "If you ever tell such abominable lies again I'll order you two dozen. Now, be off, and see that dinner is served in two minutes!"

This was quite impossible, for Bill had been so interested in his little story that he had quite overlooked the fact that it was past dinner-time. The skipper had to wait a quarter of an hour, and then the potatoes were nearly raw. Bill said that they had got frost-bitten, and wouldn't cook, though how they could have got frost-bitten in the middle of the summer he did not explain. The skipper expressed his displeasure in pretty plain terms.

"You lazy swab, you!" he roared. "The fact of the matter is you have been gassing with those other idiots instead of cooking the dinner."

"I can make mashed on 'em, sir, if you prefer mashed potatoes, only you never said as you wanted 'em mashed."

"You lubber, I never said that I wanted them raw! I don't believe the beastly things are warm through! They are as crunchy as apples!"

"Of course, some folk like their taties done more than others."

"Sink you, you never yet came across a human being who liked eating raw potatoes!"

"My father used to be one of the largest tater-growers in the United Kingdom, sir, and he never had 'em cooked at all. He used to dig 'em and eat 'em straight out of the ground, and he lived to be over a hundred and forty."

"How old was he when you were born, Bill?" demanded the skipper, glancing at Jack, and picking up one of the hardest potatoes in his fingers.

"Twenty-three year, sir—as handsome a man as you could wish to see, and all his children took after him."

"How long has he been dead?"

"Forty year come Whitsun."

"All I've got to say is that you are the youngest-looking man for a hundred and seventeen that I have ever met, Bill."

"But I ain't as old as that 'ere, sir."

"Yes, you are, according to your father's age. Now, you swab, how are you going to get out of that?"

"I know I'm getting on, sir."

"You are not going to make me believe that you are a hundred and seventeen."

"Why, don't you see, sir, he was my stepfather. You see, my niece married the uncle of my mother's aunt, and—— Wow! Thump!"

The skipper had hurled that potato at Bill's head, and it sounded rather wooden.

"Bring up the rest of the dinner, you swab, and if it isn't better cooked than the commencement, I'll stuff it down your throat. I wouldn't bother about what the man says, Slogan. You can't always believe him."

"He has been telling all the crew that you knocked me to pieces," grumbled Slogan. "I object to it. The only way to convince them he's a liar is to box with me on the quarter-deck."

"Very well—if you can arrange the match with Pete," answered the skipper, looking solemn, and winking at Jack.

"I am determined dat my match shall come off first, old hoss," said Pete. "I ain't habing you knocked about by de captain in such a way dat you won't be competent to meet me. Nunno; we start first, and after we'm finished you can take de captain on."

"What has it got to do with you? Captain Hank is ready to box with me."

"I don't want you to be spoilt for your land fights, my poor old hoss."

"You silly brute! You know that Hank has no chance against me, and that is why you don't want him to meet me."

"Look at dat, now."

"You know that I could knock him senseless every time I wanted to."

"Well, de best way to settle de matter is for you to box wid me. De captain beat me easy, and if I beat you easy den it will show you dat you can't beat de captain. 'Nuff said! Get on wid your dinner, Golly! I believe we are in for another storm."

"She's bound to roll till we get her under steam," said the skipper. "The glass is falling pretty fast, so I shouldn't wonder if you are right about the weather, but I dare say she will come to no harm."

Pete was right, for that night a terrible storm arose, and the following morning such a heavy sea was running that the skipper warned his passengers against going on deck.

"You will be all right, Jack, Sam. and Petè," he said. "You are used to heavy storms, but these others had better remain below. There will be some heavy seas bursting over her, and it won't be safe on deck for longshore men."

Ponder was quite ready to remain below. He was not feeling at all well, and that was scarcely surprising, in spite of Pete's treatment, for the Stella was wallowing in the trough of the sea in a manner that might well have made a sailor ill.

But Slogan did not like to be ordered about like that. The sea had no effect on him, and he prided himself on being a good sailor, so he determined to go on deck; and Pete followed him up, because he thought it well to keep an eye on him, in case he got at the skipper, and induced that worthy to take on a second bout.

Now, Hank was a good deal worried that morning. He did not like the look of the weather at all, and knew that he would have to be on duty for many an hour to come. For this reason he was not in such a good temper as usual.

He no sooner caught sight of Slogan than he promptly ordered him below.

"Go down, there!" he roared. "I told you not to come on deck! How dare you disobey my orders?"

Slogan turned—not by reason of the skipper's orders, but because at that moment a mighty sea burst over the Stella's deck, and came rushing towards him in a very threatening manner.

Pete was at the top of the companion, and hung on to the rail, for he saw a lot of that water was coming down. Slogan was not in time. The

wave caught him, and, lifting him from his feet, shot him headfirst down the companion.

Pete made a grab at him, and caught him by the collar at the back; but although Pete held on, something had to go. A large strip, nearly a foot broad, was ripped out of Slogan's coat; then he dropped on the stairs with a heavy bump, and the torrent of water carried him down the stairs to the bottom.

But Pete had broken his fall, otherwise Slogan would probably have broken his neck. As it was, he escaped with some painful bruises, and as he sat up he was surrounded with water, while Pete held the piece of cloth in his hand.

"Hab you hurt yourself, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"You stupid vagabond," snarled Slogan, struggling to his feet, "of course I have!"

"Ah, den I was right, old hoss, 'cos I tought you were going to when you started diving down de stairs in dat reckless manner. It's rader damp, ain't it? I say, old hoss, you hab frown a piece ob coat on my hands. I dunno weder it's ob any use to you, but you are quite welcome to it. You might almost use it for a necktie. Yah, yah, yah! De man's coat has come in half. I should get Bill to stitch it up de back, and use it for a pair ob trousers."

"Has the silly swab hurt himself?" bawled the skipper.

"M'yes! He has done all dat. But what can you expect when he came prancing down de stairs like some old aeroplane? It's almost impossible for a man to go downstairs like dat widout hurting himself. I say, captain, are you in need ob a flag, 'cos you might use dis little lot as a signal ob distress."

"Here, you beauty!" laughed the skipper. "If you want a little fresh air, you had better come on the bridge. You will find it drier than on deck."

Pete was rather chary about accepting that invitation. He had an idea that the skipper was going to land him with some work, and he did not require anything like that.

"You tink de bridge would be sort ob more comfortable for me, old hoss?" he shouted.

"I feel sure it would."

"Well, I don't," mumbled Pete. "It's dis way, my dear old hoss. I'm wondering weder you want to set me to work, 'cos I don't feel strong enough to do any manual labour."

"What work could I have for you to do?"

"Dat's what I ain't certain about."

"Don't be so thundering lazy. I have to work, don't I?"

"M'yes! But two wrongs don't make a right, and I wouldn't like to wrong myself by doing any work. Howeber, I dare say I shall be able to refuse in an amiable sort ob style."

Then, watching his opportunity, Pete made a dash for the bridge, and he soon put the skipper in an amiable frame of mind, while he made him shout with laughter as he described Slogan's little mishap.

"I hope de man won't gib me in custody for stealing de back ob his coat," observed Pete. "I will preserve de piece in case he would like it. We will see about dat later on. Look here, old hoss. I happen to find I hab got Jack's cigar-case in my pocket, so we may as well smoke his cigars. I must hab borrowed it, and forgotten to return it. Jack is always complaining dat he is frequently mislaying his cigar-case, and dat it always comes back into his pocket empty. Sammy complains in de same manner 'bout his tobacco-pouch; but it shows you dat dey ain't careful enough"

'bout deir property. Now, what do you tink 'bout de state ob affairs in general, and de state ob de Stella in particular?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, Pete, I don't like the look of things at all," answered the skipper,

CHAPTER 12.

An Unexpected Meeting.

THE two remained on the bridge until lunch-time, and when they went below then they found Slogan in a very angry mood. He seemed to blame Pete for what had happened, and declared that he shoved him down the stairs.

"Ain't dis heartrending, boys?" exclaimed Pete, pretending to look very miserable. "Here's a man will go on deck when he has been told not to do so, and den when I try to save him from falling, he turns round and declares dat I made him fall. I declare dis base ingratitude affects my nervous cistern, and makes me feel so miserable dat—"

A roar of laughter drowned Pete's words. He had taken that large strip of cloth out of his side-pocket, and commenced to mop his eyes with it, while he pretended not to know what the spectators were laughing at.

Slogan showed no signs of laughter, however. He commenced to abuse Pete in every way he could think of; but it had not the slightest effect on that worthy, who every now and then caused more laughter by insisting on using that piece of cloth as a handkerchief, and while they were at lunch he used it as a serviette.

"I will keep dis as a little memento ob a sad occasion, unless you want it, old hoss. Do you tink you will want it?"

"You stupid brute! I suppose you think you are funny!"

"I tought you were de funny one. Yah, yah, yah! I must say you looked rader funny when you were diving down dose stairs. But neber mind, Slogan. De great ting is dat you didn't hurt yourself. You'm got a lot to be tankful for, only you don't appear to realise it. Go on wid your lunch, old hoss."

"How dare you speak to me like that?"

"I am only gibing you good advice—de same as de captain gabe you when he ordered you not to come on deck. I'm afraid your auntie didn't bring you up properly, Slogan. She wasn't near strict enough. She ought to hab made you obey orders better. But neber mind, old hoss. I'll keep dis bit ob cloth, and when you'm worn your trousers out, and want a patch, p'r'aps it will come in handy. Oh, don't laugh at de man, Jack! Are you sure dese potatoes are soft, Bill? I like mine soft, you know. Dose last lot nearly smashed my front teeth."

"You will find 'em done to perfection," declared Bill. "I've had some myself, so know. You can't go wrong to-day, if you try, 'cos I've had lunch off the whole lot before you."

Needless to say, Bill made this remark in a whisper, because he did not want the skipper to hear; but when that worthy saw Bill whispering to Pete he seemed to have his doubts, and he smelt his food before he commenced eating it. After that he watched Pete closely, and, seeing that he partook of all that was placed on the table, the skipper did the same.

He knew that Pete was favoured by Bill, although he did not know the cause was the many tips Pete gave.

Bill did his utmost not to let the captain notice this favouritism, but it was obvious to all. If Bill was about to serve one of the others, and Pete happened to want anything, Bill would put the dish down, and rush off to supply Pete's requirements; and as he generally found he

wanted something just as Slogan was being served, it made that individual very furious.

"Hang you, fellow!" roared Slogan at last. "Why don't you attend to me?"

"Jest a-coming, sir."

"Just a-coming, be hanged! You have commenced to serve me three times, and have stopped in the middle of it."

"You ought to hab a little patience, Slogan," said Pete, who had sent Bill for some more bread. "It's mighty greedy ob you wanting to be served before anyone else."

"He is doing nothing of the sort. Here, fellow! Will you serve me?"

"Certainly, sir. Only I can't attend to all at once."

"You are giving all your attention to that fellow, for some reason best known to yourself?"

Bill picked up the dish again, and was about to fill Slogan's plate from it, but there was another slight interruption.

"You might just let me hab de hot sauce, Bill," said Pete. "Dere ain't quite enough flavouring 'bout dis stew for my liking."

And as Bill rushed off again, Slogan, in desperation, helped himself, and expressed his displeasure to the captain, who had got his own lunch, and did not care about the rest.

"You can't expect a man of a hundred and seventeen to be very active," he observed. "That is Bill's age, according to his own showing."

"Why should he give that fellow the preference? This stuff is all cold. I can't eat it, and don't intend to try."

"Sorry, sir!" exclaimed the obliging Bill, who did not want to quarrel with anyone, but was quite determined not to do so with Pete, whomsoever else he quarrelled with. "I'll warm it up in a moment."

Then Bill rushed the plate away, and put it on the stove until the stew frizzled.

He was back in a very short space of time, and Slogan most unwisely snatched the plate from his hand.

Now, in putting that plate on the stove, Bill had left the edge by which he held it sticking over the front of the stove, with the result that it did not get very hot, but the other part of the plate, which was right over the top of the stove, got nearly red-hot, and it never occurred to Bill that one side of that plate would be hotter than the other.

But it occurred to Slogan directly he caught hold of it.

He uttered a wild howl, and flung it into the air; then it turned over, and, dropping on the top of his head, was badly broken, while he got a dose of uncomfortably hot stew all over his head and down his face.

It would have been quite impossible for Pete to have remained serious even if he had tried. He never tried.

"Yah, yah, yah!" he roared. "Golly—golly! Hold me up, someone! I know I shall get a stitch in my side just directly. Yah, yah, yah! What are you trying to do, Slogan? I believe de man is boxing wid his lunch. Why don't you kick it while you are about it, like you kicked me de first time we boxed together? Yah, yah, yah! You won't find Bill. He's in anoder place!"

"I'll break the villain's head!" howled Slogan.

There came a noise like stifled laughter from the next cabin; but Bill was not so silly as to enter the saloon just at that moment.

"What made you— Yah, yah, yah! Do stop your laughter, Jack. What made you frow your dinner at your head, old hoss?"

"You stupid vagabond, I—"

"Seems to me dat de stupidity is on your side," observed Pete. "I wish

you wouldn't play dese giddy-goatish tricks in de middle ob de lunch, Slogan. I know all dis laughter will spoil my digestion. If I had been you, and I wanted to break de plate, I would hab frown it on de floor, and not on de top ob my own head."

"It won't go well with that villain when I come across him!" cried Slogan. "I'll break his head!"

"What did he do?" demanded the skipper.

"Made the plate nearly red-hot where I caught hold of it."

"Well, I don't suppose he did it on purpose, because he could not know that you were going to take hold of the plate at all. Here, Bill! Bill, you lubber!"

"I'm took ill, sir," shouted Bill. "I've been seized with paralysis in both legs, and can't walk!"

"Come here, you silly swab! No one shall touch you. Do you hear that, Mr. Slogan?"

"Won't I? Won't I touch him?"

"If you strike him, as sure as I'm a living man, I'll clap you in irons, my lad. Don't you think you are going to rule the roost aboard this vessel. I'm captain, and when I give a command it has got to be obeyed. Come here, Bill!"

And Bill entered the saloon boldly. He had heard the skipper's words, and knew that he would act accordingly, if Slogan should be so foolish as to strike him.

"Was that plate hot?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. You see, I shoved it on the stove. I never thought one side would get hotter than the other. What should I want to burn him for? He ain't done nothing to me, and if he had I wouldn't burn him. The plate must have been hot, 'cos he says so, and he's the properest party to know. Besides, I'm not going to believe a chap would bash a plate of boiling stew on the top of his head for the fun of the thing. Ay, ay, sir. You can depend on it that 'ere plate was hot."

"Do you assure me that it was an accident?"

"I do, sir."

"You are speaking the truth, Bill?"

"I've never told a lie in my life intentional. May this 'ere vessel founder this moment——"

"Here, you swab, stow it!" growled the skipper. "If you are going to hope this vessel may sink if you have ever told a lie in your life, have a little consideration for the other people aboard!"

"Not intentional, sir. I've never told one intentional."

"Then, all I can say is, you have told a few thousand unintentionally!" growled the skipper. "However, I am inclined to think you are speaking the truth now. You must be more careful in future. Bring up the remainder of the lunch. Mr. Slogan will not touch you."

Slogan deemed it advisable to take that hint. He strode from the cabin to get rid of the superfluous stew, and by the time he returned lunch was finished; but the skipper gave Bill orders to bring up some more, and so the little incident ended. But Slogan still believed that Bill was guilty, and he determined to take it out of him, if he were so fortunate as to meet him ashore after they had landed.

That was not at all a comfortable night. Wave after wave burst over the vessel, and her violent rolling and pitching rendered the work of repairs very difficult, but the following morning the engineer reported all to be in order, and once more she got under steam.

Matters went better now. The weather moderated, and they made fairly good progress. Bill gave Slogan a wide berth, because of the manner in

which he scowled at him; but he made no attempt to resort to blows, and Bill did not mind black looks at all. He knew perfectly well that a tip was hopeless in that case, but as Pete made up the deficiency that was all right, from Bill's point of view; and when they reached port, Bill gripped Pete's hand, and vowed eternal friendship.

"Why don't you engage me as your secretary, mate?" inquired Bill. "I'm a man of eddication, and could write all your letters for you."

"Nunno, Bill!" exclaimed Pete. "You buzz off, 'cos I ain't got any furder need ob your services, and it would be a mighty shame to rob de skipper ob such a trooful steward."

"Now, look here, Ponder!" exclaimed Jinks, when they had got rid of Bill. "You must follow Slogan and Jim ashore, find out where they are going to put up, and we will engage rooms at the same place."

"Suppose it's a slap-up hotel?"

"I don't expect it will be, but even if it is, it won't matter a bit, because Pete will pay."

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete.

"The way he has been spending money aboard this vessel proves to me that he likes doing it, and I will give him every facility," continued Jinks.

"Have you got enough brass to pay a deposit?"

"I'd rather use Pete's money than my own."

"Right you are! Tell them that he's the King of Haiti, or the Emperor of Sierra Leone, or anywhere you like, then we shall get better attention than Slogan, and that will serve him right. You might hand him a bit, Pete."

Pete gave him twenty pounds, and Ponder looked almost happy. He had an idea that he would be able to make a market penny out of that sum; and, seeing that Pete had plenty of money, saw no earthly reason why he should not have some of it.

"Now we shall be all right, my dear fellows!" exclaimed Jinks. "We shall have to humbug about with those Customs officers; but, as we are first-class passengers, I don't suppose there will be much trouble there. At any rate, we are in no hurry. Ponder will get through all right. Ha, ha, ha! They won't imagine you are consumptive, Ponder. If you were melted down you would drive motor-engines a treat."

"What I can't stand about you, Jinks, is that you are so beastly personal!"

"Never mind, dear boy; you can't help being fat. I wonder that chill you caught didn't take some of the superfluous flesh off your bones. Now, you follow Slogan up, and be sure you find out where he puts up. We will give him a bit of a surprise."

Ponder had far less trouble than he had anticipated. He discovered from their conversation, to which he did not hesitate to listen, that they were going to put up at a boarding-house close to the quay, and he followed them there, and engaged rooms for his party.

It was a house much frequented by sporting gentry, who found it quieter than an hotel, and the proprietor, whose name was Jonathan, declared that it was the finest place in the city of New York, and that the pleasure of staying there was worth ten times more than he charged, although he took particular care to charge as much as he thought he could squeeze out of his customers, many of whom were of a very shady character, and did not mind paying a little extra for additional quietness.

It was late at night before Pete and his party turned up, but Jonathan was there to receive them.

"I reckon you've been lucky in coming here," observed Jonathan, who was not at all bashful. "My guests are the highest in this land—or any other

land! They know I'm an honest man, and that they will get their money's worth here. As a rule, I have customers waiting fifteen and twenty deep. Some of them come every year. The fact is, I guess, if a man once stays here he never goes anywhere else, if he can possibly help it. Most of my customers leave their money to me in their wills!"

"Reminds one ob Bill!" observed Pete. "But look here, Jonathan, we ain't leaving you a pennypiece in our wills. You may as well make your mind quite clear on dat point, 'cos we don't want you to poison us on de chance ob getting a legacy!"

"I guess you will have to behave yourself if you want to stay here, my lad."

"We don't want to stay here, old hoß; but we'm got no choice in de matter, seeing dat we hab paid you a deposit."

"I can return that deposit, and tell you to go!"

"M'yes! You might be able to do all dat, Jonathan; but, you see, as you ain't going to do anyting ob de sort, it ain't worf discussing. You'm remarkably like Bill in your conversation, I must say."

"Who was he?"

"He was de steward aboard our vessel, and dat man was de worst liar I hab eber mpt, until we came here!"

"You don't mean to say that you doubt my word?"

"Nunno! Dere ain't any doubt about it. Now, we sha'n't want any supper to-night."

"I guess that's lucky, 'cos you wouldn't have it if you did! I don't serve suppers this time of night. You can come into the smoke-room. There are some gentlemen there, but if you behave yourselves I guess they won't mind you."

"I ain't so sure on dat point, old hoß!" said Pete, who guessed who those gentlemen were. "All de same, you lead de way, and we shall soon be able to see weder dey mind us or not. At de same time, it will be all de same if dey do, 'cos we'm going to stay here weder dey like it or not!"

As Pete fully expected, the gentlemen were Slogan and his trainer, Jim, and they looked far from pleased when the comrades entered the room.

Jonathan went on concerning the beauties of his establishment, but as he was in the middle of his panegyric a deep bell-like voice sounded from the top of the stairs.

"Jonathan!"

Pete glanced up, and saw a tall, commanding-looking woman standing at the head of the stairs. She was dressed ready to go out, and she looked severe. Her voice was rather startling, too. It was so deep, and there was what the Spaniards would have called a no se que about it that gave the impression that that voice must be obeyed.

Jonathan seemed to think so, at any rate.

"Yes, my dear!" he cried.

And he gave a little start, as that voice awoke the echoes.

"Jonathan! I desire to speak to you!"

"Bother!" snarled Jonathan.

But he darted out of the room, and when he came back he did not look quite at his ease.

"As I was saying when interrupted by my wife—she wants money, of course; always the same with women! Waal, this is the finest establishment in the city. Here you get food. I say food, and I mean food! Not tinned stuff from Bubbly Creek, or ofal like they supply to their guests over the way, but good, wholesome food, and you can——"

"Jonathan!"

There was no mistaking that flutelike voice. Jonathan would have known

it in a hundred. He walked out of the room in the most dignified manner he could assume, then rushed upstairs, the direction whence the voice came.

In about five minutes Jonathan returned, looking hot and very cross.

"I don't know where she is!" he snarled.

"Pr'aps de lady has gone out," suggested Pete.

"No; she hasn't—at least, the lad says she did not—if the young rascal has been there. But how could she have gone out if she was calling to me?"

"I dunno, but——"

"Jonathan! Jonathan! Save me!"

"Golly! Dat's rader a big handful, too. She wants saving now, Jonathan. You had better buzz off and save her, and we will come and help you. Hurry up!"

Jonathan did. He rushed into his wife's bed-room, but she did not want saving there. He muttered things that he would not have dared to mutter had she been in that room.

"Jonathan! Jonathan! Why don't you come? How dare you keep me waiting?"

"Where are you, my dear?"

"Here, you stupid creature!"

"Why the thunder doesn't she say where she is? How am I to know where 'here' is? It might be in the middle of the next street."

"I don't tink you would hear her voice as far as dat, old hoss," said Pete.

Jonathan gazed at him with supreme contempt.

"You could hear that woman's voice three streets off when she gets excited," he said. "Don't tell me anything about her. I know a sight better than you do, and better than any other living man, and——"

"Jonathan! Jona—than!"

"Not hear that! Hang!"

Up to now Jack and Sam had really believed that the lady had been bawling for her husband, but by the startled and extremely serious expression on Pete's face they now came to the conclusion that all the upset was due to his ventriloquism.

They left the angry man chasing from room to room, and went downstairs.

"Funny ting he can't find his wife," mused Pete.

"Extraordinary," said Jack, looking him full in the eyes.

"Yah, yah, yah! I 'spect he will find her later on. All right, Slogan; sit down, and make yourself at home!"

"What are you doing here, fellow?"

"Lodging! What do you 'spect? Did you tink dat we were going to sleep in de open street?"

"What did you want to come to the same place as I have?"

"I 'spect 'cos you wanted to come to de same place dat we hab. But neber mind 'bout dat! Golly! Here's a stuffed fish! Fine fish, dat!"

Pete stepped to a glass-case on a bracket, in which there was an enormous stuffed trout, and at that moment Jonathan entered the room, on his return from his fruitless search. He imagined that his wife must now have gone out, and he felt relieved.

"I reckon you are right about that fish," he said. "It is a fine fish, and one of the finest that have ever been caught."

Pete had lost interest in that fish now. He seated himself in an easy-chair, and Jonathan buttonholed Slogan.

CHAPTER 13.

Bought and Sold.

"YOU are a fisherman, I can see!" exclaimed Jonathan, knowing that was the surest way to interest him. "Now, I nearly lost my life in catching that fish."

"Then you caught it?" exclaimed Slogan.

"I—caught—that—fish!" Jonathan said this with a wave of his arm, intending to convey the impression that no other living man could have caught that fish. "It is the largest trout that ever has been caught by mortal man. I don't suppose you have heard the story, because I seldom mention it."

This was not exactly true. Jonathan had told that story a few thousand times, and each one differed. If he had ever caught the fish he must have doubted how it really happened, because he had told it in so many different ways.

"Three hours I waited in the pouring rain and the thunder, and then I hooked that fish, and——"

"Oh, you wicked liar!" came a high-pitched voice, apparently from that fish.

Jonathan gasped, but Slogan, who was standing close by, uttered a yell, and sprang back, and this spoilt Pete's acting.

He had sprung up, and rushing forwards, stood gazing at that fish, with an expression of horror on his face.

But when Slogan uttered that yell of terror, it so tickled Pete's fancy that he laughed. He did his best to conceal it, but Slogan at once jumped to the conclusion that Pete was making the fish talk by means of ventriloquism, and he was so enraged at being made a fool of that he clenched his fist, and caught Pete one on the back of the head that drove his face through the glass-case.

Fortunately Pete's face was not cut, but he got some digs from the splinters of glass, and as he turned, Slogan followed up the attack, so Pete rushed in, and, seizing him round the body, hurled him over his head.

If he had tried to drop his adversary on the top of that glass-case, he could not have done it more accurately.

Slogan fell right on the top of it, then the whole bag of tricks came to the floor with a crash, and the stuffed fish was a thing of the past. It was quite beyond repair, so was the case.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "It looks to me as dough you will hab to go and catch anoder trout, old hoss. You had better go and find him some worms, Jack! If you can't do dat, you might shove Slogan on de hook, Jonathan, and use him as a worm!"

"You demon!" howled Slogan, springing to his feet, and glaring at the convulsed Pete, although he did not care to renew the attack. "I'll have vengeance for this."

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"I'll have fifty pounds for that fish!" hooted Jonathan.

"It didn't weigh as much as dat, old hoss."

"It is scandalous, and I guess I'll make you pay for it!"

"I'd much rader you caught anoder fish," said Pete. "I didn't tell Slogan to fall on it."

"See here, stranger, that fish cost money, and I've got to be recom-pensed."

"Well, what will you take for de fish in its present condition?"

"What will you give me? There, I leave it to your honour."

"Should say five pounds ought to square de matter."

"It's yours, my dear fellow. I guess I'll sell the blessed thing!"

"Den dere's your money!" exclaimed Pete, handing over the gold.

And Jonathan left the room, looking perfectly happy; and the comrades went to their rooms, because Slogan was not at all pleasant company in his present state of mind.

The following morning, when the guests were seated at breakfast, a middle-aged gentleman made his appearance, and took his seat at the table, and he told the servant to ask Jonathan to step that way.

When that worthy came into the room he seemed to be rather taken aback, but he quickly regained his composure.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hunter!" he exclaimed.

"I have decided to give you the sovereign you asked for that fish," said the new-comer. "Mind, I consider fifteen shillings enough; but I want it for my museum, and will therefore pay your price."

"I guess you are too late," said Jonathan. "I've sold that fish."

"Why, you promised not to sell it till you had seen me."

"I know I did; but circumstances alter cases. You see, I sold it for five pounds!"

"That be hanged! The blessed thing wasn't worth ten shillings, only I wanted it. I don't believe that anyone would have been such a fool as to pay five pounds for it!"

"Where do I come in?" gasped Pete. "Look here, Jonathan, you ought to hand me four pounds back!"

"Did you give him five pounds for the thing?" demanded Hunter.

"Yes, old hoss."

"Then you are a bigger fool than I took you for when I first saw you, and that's saying a good deal!"

"But I didn't want de fish."

"I'll give you fifteen shillings for it."

"It's yours, my dear old hoss!"

"Done!" cried Hunter, handing Pete the silver.

He wanted that fish badly. Being an ardent fisherman, he naturally wanted to show his friends the finest fish he had ever caught—or, at any rate, one of the finest.

"Tank you, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, pocketing the money, while Jonathan grinned. "I'm much obliged to you. You will find your fish in de next room, bones and all, and you can take it away in de case as it lies. Has dat fish been cleared up, Jonathan?"

"No."

"Den we will collect it directly we hab finished breakfast. Fire ahead, old hoss, and enjoy yourself while you can. Dere may come a time when you ain't so happy, and den you will find it more difficult to enjoy yourself."

Hunter was really anxious about his fish, and directly the meal was finished he went into the next room for it, while the others followed him to see the fun.

"Why, it's broken!" howled Hunter, when he saw the smash.

"Dat's why I'm selling it so cheap, my dear old hoss," answered Pete cheerfully.

"You villain! Give me back my money! Do you hear me?"

"Should say so. I would be able to hear you if you spoke in a much lower voice dan dat. But you certainly bought de fish!"

"It is smashed to pieces, you vagabond!"

"I don't see dat dat has got anything to do wid de bargain. I neber guaranteed dat fish was sound in wind and limb. I merely sold it to you

sort ob casually, and I 'spected you to find out all its defects. You can take de measurement ob de fish, and tell your friends dat would hab been de size ob it if you had happened to catch it."

"You silly vagabond, if you don't return my money, I will give you in custody!"

"Now, look here, old hoss, dat ain't at all de way to treat de matter. You'm bought de fish widout any sort ob guarantee. Well, all you'm got to do is to take it home!"

"You senseless rascal, how can I take that thing home?"

"I should say a fish-basket would be de most appropriate way. But look here, suppose we toss weder I gib you thirty shillings or nuffin'?"

"No, I won't! You hand me the fifteen shillings!"

"Seems to me dat I ain't coming off first best ober dis transaction. I dunno why you shouldn't bear some part ob de loss, and I certainly tink dat Slogan ought to bear some more ob it. Howeber, dere are your fifteen shillings!"

Hunter examined the silver carefully, then he cried:

"You thieving rascal, this is a bad dollar! Look here, don't you try to pass off bad coin on me, 'cos I won't stand it!"

Pete examined the coin, then bent it backwards and forwards between his thumbs and fingers until it broke in half.

"So it is, old hoss!" he exclaimed. "But, seeing dat it is one ob de dollars you paid me wid—why, it stands to reason dat it belongs to you!"

"I didn't give you that coin!"

"Yah, yah, yah! You'm too smart, Hunter, but it won't come off dis time. You gabe me dat coin, and, tinkin' you were an honourable man, I neber examined dem!"

"I did not give you that coin, fellow!" cried Hunter. "If you dare to assert such a thing again, I will give you in custody for passing off a bad coin on me!"

"Bery well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You say dat I gabe it to you?"

"You did. The coins I gave you were perfectly good. I examined them!"

"All right. You'm going to gib me in custody?"

"Well, I shall let you off this time, provided you hand me another dollar for this one!"

"I ain't going to do anyting ob de sort. Just you call in a constable and gib me in custody!"

"Now, I don't want to punish you," said Hunter. "It is quite possible that you may have made a mistake, and taken the coin unknowingly; but I am not going to be the loser. Mind, I do not accuse you of theft!"

"You send for a constable, old hoss."

"I don't want to waste my time."

"You will waste it, if you don't send for a constable, 'cos I ain't going to allow you to leabe dis room unless you send for a constable!"

"Do you want to be taken in custody?"

"Not at all. It stands to reason dat if I gabe you dat bad dollar, and you gabe me a good dollar, dat I must hab dat good dollar in my possession—see? Well, I ain't got one. I ain't got any American money at all. I hab got some hundreds ob pounds in English money, but, habing only just landed in dis country, I ain't changed any ob it into American money. Now, you see, you are in an awkward position, you swindler!"

"What's that you call me, fellow?"

"I say you are a thief, and dat it is you who ought to be in prison. You know perfectly well dat you tried to rob me ob a dollar, and I must say dat, under all de circumstances ob de case, you ought to be ashamed ob yourself!"

"I will not stand this impertinence!" cried Hunter, striding from the room.

But Pete caught him by the collar, and dragged him back, then shook him a little.

"You ain't going like dat, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You called me a thief in pretty plain language, and——"

"I said that you might have made a mistake."

"Knowing all de time dat you were trying to rob me! Nunno, you ain't going yet! You'm got to listen to what I'm saying, and dese people are also going to hear it, 'cos you might try to pass bad money on dem later on, if dey do not know your true character. I suppose you tink dat because you lib in New York dat you are mighty smart? Now, dat ain't de case at all, 'cos you'm mighty stupid!"

"I admit I must have made a mistake."

"You hear dat, gentlemen!" exclaimed Pete, holding him at arm's length, and looking at him with supreme contempt. "He admits he has made a mistake, 'cos he tinks I am going to gib him in custody. Now, he was positive a moment ago dat he didn't gib me de bad dollar—at least, he said so. If he tought I was thief enough to do dat, is it at all natural dat he would take my word dat I had no American money in my possession?"

"If you ask my impression of the man, Pete," exclaimed Jack, "I should say that he was a thief, and that he has tried to rob you."

"Be careful, young man!" cried Hunter. "Your words are libellous!"

"Oh, you won't frighten me, Hunter!" laughed Jack. "It is for you to be frightened, for there is not the slightest doubt that you passed the bad coin to my friend, and then accused him of swindling you. If you ask my opinion, it is that you are in a very awkward position!"

"I don't want any bother about the matter," stammered Hunter.

"I dare say you don't, old hoss; but you are going to hab it, all de same. You see, an action like dat requires some punishment, and it is my duty to punish you!"

"I tell you, it was quite a mistake, and I am very sorry for it."

"Yes, you are sorry, because you hab been caught trying to swindle!"

"I assure you that such was not the case!"

"Lying won't help you a bit. Jonathan, for one, is smart enough to see my point. You dunno dat I ain't got any American money in my pocket. You are only taking my word for it, and you would not take de word ob a man who had tried to rob you. A few minutes ago you pretended to believe dat I was a thief; and dat is what you called me, and threatened me wid de police. Now, when you see I hab a perfect defence, you turn round, and say you made a mistake. It can't be a mistake, 'cos you also said you examined ebery coin before you handed dem to me!"

"I see now that I may have overlooked that one. It is well made."

"Did you make it yourself, old hoss?"

"Of course not. Come, my man, this has gone far enough. I acknowledge that I have made a mistake. You know that you tried to swindle me out of fifteen shillings!"

"Nuffin' ob de sort. You know perfectly well dat I did dat for a joke, and at once returned your money."

"Well, suppose I did this for a joke?"

"But you did nuffin' ob de sort. You threatened to gib me in custody, and I firmly believe you would hab done it, too, if you had not believed my statement dat I had no American money in my pocket."

"I apologise for my error."

"Ah, but don't you see, it wasn't an error! If it had been anything like dat, it wouldn't hab been at all necessary for you to apologise. Do you admit dat you are a thief?"

"Certainly not! These gentlemen—at least, some of them—know that I am a straightforward gentleman!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Do you consider him a fair sample ob a straightforward gentleman, Sammy?"

"I reckon not."

"Neider do I. Well, you ain't going, Hunter, till you hab acknowledged dat you are a thief, and dat you tried to rob me ob a dollar, and dat you falsely accused me ob your roguery! Tink you can remember dose free, 'cos you hab got to confess as much before all de company before you leabe my presence; and if you don't do it, I shall just march you frough de streets to de nearest police-station, and gib you in custody. You can't get ober dose facts."

"I declare I was mistaken."

"Den I declare you shall come to de police-station wid me, and convince dem dat it was only a mistake."

"Do you want to degrade me?"

"Nunno! I want to make you confess de error ob your ways, and it's what you'm got to do in de present company, else dere will be trouble in dis world for you!"

"I—I certainly thought that——"

"Here, I don't want anyting ob dat! Did you try to rob me ob a dollar, and did you falsely accuse me? Yes or no! I ain't taking any oder answer!"

"Well, yes, I——"

"Nebber mind saying any more! Do you acknowledge dat you are a thief?"

"Let me explain. I——"

"Nunno! Are you a thief?"

"It is impossible!"

"You tried to rob me, according to your own admission, and derefore you must be a thief. Now, you may go away; and if you don't feel ashamed ob yourself, you ought to do so!"

And Pete gave him a shove to emphasise his order.

"I hope you will take dat little lot to heart, Slogan," said Pete. "You know, it is just as dishonest to try to win a fight by kicking your opponent; and as we are likely to meet in de ring—why, I want you to get ober dat nasty habit you hab got ob kicking!"

"You lying rascal, I have never done any such thing! How dare you speak to me like that in the presence of strangers?"

"'Cos I want you to take de lesson to heart. You ain't at all a bad boxer, and I want to see some improvement in you!"

Slogan was mad with fury, but he thought it advisable to let the matter drop. He had an engagement in the ring the following night, and, as they were leaving the boarding establishment in the morning, he hoped that he would see the last of Pete. But he did not reckon with Ponder. That worthy, although so fat, was an excellent detective, and he learnt from the boots that Slogan and his trainer were leaving on the morrow, and that their destination was a small town named Lewis, about forty miles out.

CHAPTER 14.

A Desperate Bout.

HAVING made sure of Slogan's destination, the comrades, at Jinks's instigation, decided on going by an earlier train.

"You see, dear boys," he exclaimed, "I find there's only one decent inn in the place! They call it the Station Hotel, and if we arrive there first they won't be able to say that we have followed them. It will rather surprise them to find us comfortably fixed up there on their arrival. We need not mention here that we are going. I'll just leave word that we are going for a trip, and mention nothing about coming back to-morrow night."

Thus it was arranged, and when Slogan arrived at the inn at one o'clock the comrades were seated at lunch.

"I tink dey are coming now," murmured Pete. "Go on wid your lunch, boys, as dough nuffin' unusual had happened. P'r'aps we shall hab a bit ob fun wid Slogan. Here he comes. You see, boys," added Pete, raising his voice, "dis little country trip will freshen us up, and den we shall be free from de company ob Slogan, and dat's worf— Golly! Here, where did you come from, Slogan? Buzz off back. You ain't wanted in dis establishment—least, not by us."

"You beast!" snarled Slogan. "You have followed me."

"Yah, yah, yah! Well, ain't dat funny, now? All de same, if we followed you, I don't see how it is you didn't arrive first. However, if you behave yourself sensible, and don't start kicking, we ain't got any objection to your coming here. I don't suppose de landlord will eider, so long as you pay your bill."

"Look here, Jim," exclaimed Slogan, "we are not going to stand this sort of thing! The silly brutes shall not follow us all over the place."

"I don't call it very sportsmanlike of you, Jinks," said Jim.

"You tried to queer my pitch, my dear fellow," said Jinks airily. "Thanks to Pete turning up in the nick of time, you didn't succeed; all the same, it wasn't for the want of trying. Well, I shall follow you up if I choose, and, what is more, I am going to challenge the conqueror in your fight to-night."

"Then you admit you knew we were coming here?"

"Rats! Of course I did. Do you suppose I came here by chance? Ha, ha, ha! I'm not so remarkably lucky as that. If you think you are going fooling around fighting second-rate men, then going to swear your man is the champion of the world, you make a great mistake. You do really, my dear fellow. You have got to count with Pete."

"Slogan can beat him easily."

"In that case, you ought to be glad that I'm following you up, dear boy. However, it really does not matter whether you are glad or not, because it is what I am going to do. If Slogan gets the worst of it to-night, I shall challenge Burch. You see, I know your opponent's name, and I know where the fight is to come off. I may also mention that we have already purchased tickets, so that we are quite ready for you. It isn't likely that you will be able to keep a thing like a boxing contest secret; besides, if you did, the gate-money would not pay you. Now, run away, because you see that we are busy."

The contest was to take place in a large building that served for a good many purposes. Sometimes it was used by lecturers, at others for school work—in fact, for anything that it would let for.

Jinks and the others were early arrivals, and as Burch, Slogan's opponent, was already there, Jinks took the opportunity of getting into conversation with him.

"Are you going to give him a whacking, my dear fellow?" inquired Jinks.

"I reckon so. Do you know anything about him?"

"I've seen him fight on many occasions, so I ought to."

"Are you one of his backers?"

"Not I, dear boy. I'm dead against him. Pete there has met him once, and knocked him out of time."

"Why, he claims to be the champion in your little isle."

"You must not believe all dat man tells you, old hoss," said Pete.

"So you licked him?" inquired Burch. He was inclined to be friendly, because he wanted to get all the information he could.

"I certainly got de best ob de first fight."

"What sort of fellow is he? I guess I've never seen him."

"He's heavier dan you, and I should say he had a longer reach. Den he's pretty strong."

"I guess I am, too!" exclaimed Burch, smiling at his trainer. "He won't score much off me. Is he quick?"

"Oh, yes, he's all dat, and if you take my tip you won't start dis little bout tinkin you'm going to hab a walk ober, 'cos I should say dat you will hab all your work cut out."

"I guess if you can beat him I can."

"Well, dat doesn't follow at all."

"Do you mean to say you would meet me in the ring?"

"If you beat Slogan, I am going to challenge you, my dear fellow," said Jinks. "If he beats you, then I shall challenge him. He won't accept that challenge if he can get out of it. At least, if he does accept it, he will try to get out of the fight."

"All right!" exclaimed Burch, who had plenty of assurance. "I'll meet you all right. We will arrange it now, if you like."

"Here, you are going too fast, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You ain't beaten de man yet, and if I know anyting 'bout de matter, I rader fancy you will find it as much as you can do—if not a little more."

"I guess I can beat anything that you can."

"Well, I don't tink you'm heavy enough for Slogan. You see, you wouldn't scale as much as I do, and he scales a lot more dan me."

"What's his weak points?"

"He ain't got any, old hoss, and if he had I wouldn't tell you, 'cos it wouldn't be fair. De same, if I knew you had a few weak points, I wouldn't tell him."

"Waal, you would be quite at liberty to do so, 'cos I haven't got any weak points. He will discover that when we put the gloves on to-night. We had better make it a public challenge, then we are certain to get all who come to-night, and a lot of them are coming from New York."

"How many rounds do you box?" inquired Jinks.

"Twenty. At least, he is supposed to stand up to me for twenty. I may let him have, say, fifteen, but I shall knock him out soon after that; then I will give a formal challenge, and you can accept it—if you don't change your mind after you have seen me box."

"Right you are, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Dere ain't de slightest chance ob my changing my mind, 'cos I will take you on eben if I feel sure you can knock me out."

"I reckon I like your pluck," said Burch. "You are sure to make a bit of money out of it, and I will let you down as lightly as possible. Of course, I shall have to give the spectators a run for their money, at the same time you may be pretty sure of fifteen rounds before I finish you off. Waal, it's about time I went to dress. So-long."

"Golly! Dat man has got a mighty fine opinion ob himself," exclaimed Pete. "I 'spect we had better take our seats, else some ob dese people may take dem for us."

Long before the combatants entered the ring the hall was packed, and a good many bets were made. At first Burch was the favourite, because he was an American. But when Slogan entered the ring there was no difficulty in getting backers for him.

It looked an unequal fight, because Slogan was so much taller, and bigger, but Burch seemed to be quite cheerful and sanguine.

At the call of time, the two men shook hands and commenced to spar, Burch retreating even before Slogan opened the attack in earnest. It seemed as though Burch, with all his brag, really feared his big opponent. But he was a cunning fighter. His one idea was to win, though how he did so he did not care at all, provided the referee raised no objections.

The first half of the round was a very feeble affair, and Pete felt rather disgusted with the exhibition. It seemed to him that Burch feared his adversary, and that Slogan feared to make the attack; but at last he went in with a rush, and Burch dodged round him, then commenced the attack with a vigour that drove Slogan on to the ropes.

This is exactly what Burch had been manœuvring for, and now he took full advantage. Slogan was hemmed in, as it were. Retreat was quite impossible, and Burch landed one on the mark that sent Slogan on the ropes, then in an instant the smaller man upper-cut his adversary, and Slogan went over the ropes on his head.

There was no need to count, for the round was just at a close. Besides, although that blow on the jaw had dazed Slogan, he sprang to his feet in an instant.

"Burch looks like your opponent, Pete," whispered Jack.

"I dunno, Jack. I don't call dat fair boxing. It's trickery, and Slogan ought to hab seen frough it. You see, Burch was working his way to de ropes all de time, and he carried out what he wanted to do. But you'm got to recollect dat it won't come off a second time, and if Slogan keeps his head, and uses his strength, he ought to come off best."

But in the second round Slogan again got the worst of it. He was very much affected by the blow on the jaw, and his opponent took full advantage; besides this, Burch was a very tricky boxer, and he had a knack of appearing to make a forward spring, then keeping clear of his opponent's lead-off, and getting in his right on the mark, or as near the spot as he conveniently could.

To the surprise of all, Slogan went down a second time, and in the third round, although he kept his feet, he received a good deal of punishment.

There could not be a doubt that he was a stubborn fighter, for he came up round after round, looking little the worse for what he had gone through. As he had a considerably longer reach than his opponent, Burch confined his attentions to body-blows, and towards the end of the eighth round, he ducked beneath a heavy blow, then, springing up, landed on Slogan's jaw again, and for the second time drove him over the ropes; while Jim was very liberal with the water.

"I wish Slogan would buck up!" growled Pete. "De man ain't boxing anyting like his best, and if he ain't careful he will get too weak to carry dis fight frough. We'm got to watch dis round carefully."

It was a disastrous round for Slogan, and a very shameful one.

Burch got him on the ropes again, and showered blow after blow upon his face, while the referee took no heed. It was a lucky thing for Slogan that the ropes did not break, otherwise there is little doubt that he would have been knocked out of time.

Jim had to give him some brandy to get him up to the scratch the next round, but Burch took matters more coolly now. He felt absolutely confident of winning.

Suddenly he tried to deliver one of his springing hits, but Slogan ducked, and with all his great strength landed on the mark with his left, and on Burch's jaw with his right, and the American went down like a log.

Even then the counting did not begin immediately, but as Burch showed no signs of rising, the ten seconds were counted off, and as Slogan was proclaimed the victor angry cries rang out.

"Look here," shouted Pete, "dis ain't at all fair! Slogan is no friend ob mine—in fact, he is my foe, but he ain't had fair treatment. Dis is supposed to be a boxing contest, and Burch has fought it in a disgraceful manner."

"You are a liar!" roared Burch, who had now regained his senses, and appeared to be very little the worse for his defeat. "It was a chance blow that knocked me out, and everyone here knows that I am the better man."

"No you ain't!" cried Pete. "I know nuffin' ob de sort."

"Step into the ring, you stupid brute," howled Burch, "and I'll soon show you that I am a better man than you! You say you have conquered Slogan. Very well! Step into the ring, and I'll take you on any number of rounds you like to name."

"I'll box wid you when you are fresh, old hoss," said Pete.

"Just what I expected. You want an excuse, but I tell you what it is, if you don't step into this ring and put on the gloves with me, I'll step out of it, and give you the worst thrashing you have ever had in your life."

"Well, if you put it dat way, dere's an end ob de matter," said Pete, climbing on the platform. "Dere's only one stipulation I am going to make, and dat is dat you hab a quarter ob an hour's rest. You can't object to dat?"

"I'm ready for you now."

"Well, I ain't ready for you. I am going to gib you a quarter ob an hour, and just you recollect dat I'm going to hit you hard, 'cos I consider you deserve it. It ain't fair boxing to get a man on de ropes and hammer at him. De referee ought to be ashamed ob himself for allowing it. All de same, you can try it on wid me, if you like, always bearing in mind dat I'm going to hit you hard."

"Your remarks are insulting!" cried the referee, approaching him.

"Maybe, old hoss. But ebry word ob what I said is de troof. I like to see fair play in a boxing contest, and we ain't seen it to-night. If you don't know dat, you ain't fit to act as referee."

"I suppose you expect favouritism?" sneered the referee.

"Seems to me dat I'm going a funny way to get it, any road!"

"How many rounds will you box?"

"One!"

"You stupid lout!"

"Well, you can call dem free, if you like, or thirty, or free hundred. I hab told you what is going to happen, dat's all. Dere will be one round, and one blow, and dat won't be an upper-cut. I'm speaking from my point ob view. Ob course, dere may be a good many blows on Burch's side, but he won't draw me to de ropes. 'Nuff said! He's got to hab de remainder ob de quarter ob an hour."

During that interval some angry words passed between the spectators, but it so happened that a good many had backed Slogan, and, of course, they were quite satisfied with the result of the contest.

They made fresh bets on Pete, because he appeared to be so sanguine of victory, but they took particular care to get long odds, feeling sure that Slogan had only gained the victory by a chance blow.

"You must keep your weather-eye open, dear boy," whispered Jinks. "As you will have seen, he is a crafty boxer."

"I don't call him a boxer at all," growled Pete. "He might do as a prizefighter, but you don't expect a man to play tricks at boxing. I like a fair bout."

"Then you can make up your mind that you are not going to get it, Pete."

"Well, I hab warned him dat I'm going to hit hard. Ob course, I'm not going to hurt him. At de same time, he will find dat I strike a fairly hard blow when I consider dere's de need for it. On dis occasion I consider dat dere is de need. I want to gib Burch a lesson, and try to make him box fairly in de future. 'Nuff said!"

"Are you ready now?" demanded the referee. "The quarter of an hour is up."

"Yes, old hoss," answered Pete cheerfully. "I am quite ready, and I hab been ready all along, but I meant to let Burch come up fresh; and I tell him now dat if he likes to put off de contest till to-morrow or some later time he is at liberty to do so."

"I guess I am not going to put it off for five minutes," retorted Burch. "If you think that a chance blow is going to affect me, you are mistaken, you chunk of stupidity! It's plain to see that you are funkling, and I don't believe you ever beat Slogan, for he's a fairly good man. I shall take him on again, and then there will be a very different ending to the contest, I reckon."

"Seconds out of the ring! Time!"

Pete bowed to the spectators, and, stepping up to scratch, offered his hand; but Burch led off with his left straight away, and Pete ducked to the right to avoid the blow.

Burch did not rush in. He was not so reckless as all that, but he kept lashing out, and every blow was struck with his whole strength, but not a single one landed.

Pete either guarded them, or ducked to them, and although Burch tried hard to get in several upper-cuts, he failed each time.

What surprised the spectators so greatly was that Pete never once countered. It seemed as though he had several opportunities; but, though the round was well advanced, he did not strike a single blow.

At last Burch rushed in; then, like a flash, Pete's left shot out, and the sound of it was audible all over the hall.

Whether it landed on the mark or on Burch's elbow could not be seen, so rapid was it; but Burch was lifted from his feet, and he fell quite close to the ropes.

"I hope I ain't hurt him," growled Pete, pulling off the gloves, and flinging them out of the ring. "He deserved some punishment, and he's got it, but he will be all right directly."

Seven seconds were counted off, then the referee declared the round at an end, and Burch had another minute.

Pete stepped towards his opponent's corner, and glanced at him. He saw that there was nothing much the matter with him, and he waited patiently till the minutes were up; but that was a knock-out blow, and several minutes elapsed before Burch was able to rise, and even then he was in a very breathless state.

When Pete was declared the victor he received some cheers from his friends and those amongst the spectators who had backed him. They were quite elated because they had got long odds, and had won a lot of money; but it was obvious that it was not a popular victory.

For that, however, Pete did not care a bit. He knew that he had given Burch a lesson he would not forget in a hurry, and that was all he cared for.

"Gentlemen," cried Jinks, stepping forward, "I now challenge Slogan, the victor in the first bout, to meet Pete with the gloves, any day, and for any number of rounds. There need be no stakes, or they can be anything that Slogan likes to name."

"I accept the challenge for to-morrow night in this hall," cried Jim. "The stakes to be arranged, as also the number of rounds."

Then there was a good deal of cheering, and the comrades made their way back to the inn.

CHAPTER 15.

Silas's Lost Tips.

PETE had ordered a supper to suit the tastes of the party, and he had made special arrangements with the landlord concerning it, and paid that worthy in advance.

Silas was the name of the waiter, and he seemed to take a great dislike to Pete, whom he had treated in such an off-hand manner that Pete had not followed his usual custom and given him a preliminary tip; for, although he disliked being addressed as 'sir' by a waiter, he did not appreciate being treated as an inferior.

Another thing that angered Silas was the hot supper. It gave him a lot of extra trouble, and he was quite determined to give as few of his services as possible to the comrades, and to snub Pete all he conveniently could.

Slogan and his backer followed to the inn, as did a number of the spectators and Burch, who now seemed to be none the worse for the knock-out blow.

"Well, Silas, old hoss," exclaimed Pete, "is supper ready?"

"I guess if you want a civil answer you will give me a civil question!" snarled Silas. "I don't want none of your thundering impertinence, my man, and, what's more, I won't stand it!"

"Poor old hoss, you'm got de dyspepsia. You ain't in a good temper, dat's what's de matter wid you. What sort ob pomatum do you use for your hair?"

"It's like your impertinence to ask me!"

"Well, I was going to recommend a few spoonfuls ob it for your liber. What you want is oiling in de cogwheels. You ought to send yourself to de clockmaker to be overhauled and regulated. If I was your master I would take you in hand, and regulate you wid a good-sized stick. Go and get de supper up!"

"I reckon I'll get that supper up when I choose. If I am a waiter, I guess I'm a gentleman by birth and education, and that's a sight more'n you are, or ever will be."

"Nunno! I'm 'most afraid it's too late in de day for me to become a gentleman by birth, old hoss. As for de education—well, I'm too delicate to take it on now. I used to find it a rare trouble when I was a boy, and I 'spect I would find it a lot more now. But don't you tink you could get a little more cheerful, and fetch up de supper?"

"It's a pretty time to get fooling about with hot meals!" snarled Silas. His master was out, and he always gave himself airs on those occasions. Sometimes he gave them when his master was present, for he liked to show his independence.

"It's de usual time for a hot supper, my dear old growler."

"I reckon it ain't."

"Well, seeing dat you tell us you are a gentleman, you ought to know about it. Ob course, some people may prefer deir supper at eight o'clock in de morning, but as I ain't a gentleman I like it overnigh, in case it might spoil my breakfast. Buzz off and get it!"

"If cold suppers are good enough for your betters, I don't see why they ain't good enough for you."

"Well, dere's something in dat, as de man said when he ffound a free hundred guinea pearl in a twopenny oyster. But, being rader delicate, hot suppers are quite good enough for me, and, seeing dat dis one is paid for, why, it stands to reason dat you hab got to obey your master's orders, and serve it up."

"In the first place, I haven't got a master, and even if I had, I reckon I wouldn't obey his orders if they didn't suit me. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"I'm afraid dere's too much gas about de remark for smoking purposes; but see here, Silas, if you ain't placed de first instalment ob dat supper on de table in free minutes from now, I shall lay you across dat oder table, and take a slipper to you."

"You'll do which, you rat?"

"Eh?"

"Why, I'll knock your head off your shoulders, if you talk to me like that."

"Look at dat, now!" exclaimed Pete, pulling out his watch, and checking off the minutes.

Silas took the hint, and his departure, and within two minutes a haunch of mutton was placed on the table, while Pete winked at Jack as he commenced carving.

"Tank you so much, Silas!" exclaimed Pete. "It's mighty kind ob you to condescend to do your duty. Will you be so good as to bring up de vegetables? Tank you!"

Silas favoured Pete with an insolent stare, but when that worthy looked up he slunk out of the room.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Ain't he a mighty funny waiter? I can plainly see we ain't going to get any sort ob attention from him, but I'll wake him up before I hab done wid him. He's keeping us long enough ober dose vegetables. You go on wid de carving, and I'll go down and fetch dem up myself, den p'r'aps I shall be able to make oder arrangements."

Pete found his way into the kitchen, and was promptly ordered out by Silas. There were two servants there, a cook and a housemaid, and the latter was reading.

"Look here, my dear!" exclaimed Pete, to the housemaid. "Do you tink you could bring up our supper for us? Silas is such a wooden-headed idiot, dat I can't teach him at all. What's your name?"

"Jane."

"Funny ting dat all girls named Jane are pretty. Eber noticed dat, Jane?"

"Go along with you. I am not supposed to wait at table, still, I don't mind for once."

"Dat's a good girl. And look here, Jane, I always consider dat it is de duty ob de man habing a hot supper to tip de waiter. Now, Silas is too busy to wait on us, so you will hab to take all de tips. We will start wid dis sovereign. Dat's for bringing up de meat."

"I brought up the meat," gasped Silas, as the delighted Jane pocketed the sovereign.

"Yes, but you didn't do it willingly, old hoss, so dere won't be a tip for you on dis occasion. Now, dere's de second sobereign for bringing up de vegetables. Dis third one will be for bringing up de turkey. Jack and Sam will be rader surprised when dat bird comes up. Looks nicely cooked, too. I tink, my dear, you ought to hab a couple ob sôvereigns for cooking it like dat. Will you kindly accept dem? Tank you!"

"Why, what are you thanking me for?" laughed the cook.

"For taking de two sôvereigns, my dear. Silas won't take dem."

"I reckon you don't know me," cried Silas, perfectly astounded at Pete's lavishness. "I'm much obliged to you!"

"You'm quite welcome, Silas."

"But you haven't given them to me yet."

"Nunno! Didn't you hear me say you wouldn't take dem?"

"I reckon you are off your horse, sir. You try me."

"Nunno! Dat would prove me to be wrong. I said you wouldn't take dem, and I'm mighty certain you won't, 'cos I ain't going to offer dem. Dere's anoder sôvereign, Jane, for bringing up de plum pudding, and dere's a sôvereign for you, my dear, for cooking it. I shall gib you de remainder ob your tips to-morrow morning."

"Well, I never!" gasped the cook, gazing at the gold, and the delighted Jane was doing the same. "He really means us to take it."

"And he's going to give us more!" exclaimed Jane. "He's a darling!"

"I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself, calling a brute like that a darling!" exclaimed Silas. "But, of course, I am to share the money the fool has given."

"I don't know whether you are going to share cook's," observed Jane. "But you are not going to share mine, and so I tell you."

"And he won't share mine," laughed the cook. "You should behave yourself properly, Silas, and then you would have got these tips—only I'm very thankful you didn't."

"I shall wait on them," cried Silas. "It's my duty, I guess, and I shall do it!"

"No, you won't," retorted Jane. "I'm going to look after them. I've been paid for it, and I shall do it!"

And so he did. Silas neglected the other guests, and gave his best attention to the comrades, and Pete kept sending him chasing about for something he found he required, and at the end of the meal Silas waited for his tips, but he did not get anything.

"I ain't gibing any more tips to-night, Silas!" exclaimed Pete, glancing at Jane, who was laughing. "I shall reserve de oder tips for de morning. 'Nuff said! You can buzz off to bed—or go v. here you like, 'cos I sha'n't require your services any more to-night."

"Now, listen to me!" cried Jim. "You have challenged the champion in public, and you will surely have to meet him!"

"What do you suppose I challenged him for, if I didn't want to meet him, old hoss?" inquired Pete.

"Bounce—merely bounce! You know perfectly well that you have not the slightest chance against him, and it is like your impertinence to challenge him when you have not the slightest intention to meet him! You will fight twenty rounds, and we will make the stakes small, so that you may be able to find the money—say, ten pounds a side. There, I don't think you can say I am trying to place any obstacles in the way. I presume you will be satisfied with the same referee?"

"I don't care what referee you hab, old hoss," said Pete. "At de same time, I ain't at all satisfied wid dat man, and I don't tink Slogan can be satisfied wid him, considering de shameful manner in which he favoured de Yank."

"You see what sort of man he is, Mr. Johnson."

"I reckon so!" exclaimed the referee. "But I don't take notice of a fellow like that. It is a scandalous thing that he should dispute my decisions!"

"Den you should make dose decisions honest, Johnson," said Pete. "You know as well as I do, and all de people in dis room know—dough you may not be honest enough to acknowledge it—dat you favoured Burch. Burch ain't de best boxer I hab eber met, but he knows enough about de rules to be aware dat it ain't fair to fix a man on de ropes and hammer his face. Slogan is no friend ob mine, but I like to see fair play. Listen to me, Slogan! Did you receive fair play in de opening rounds ob dat bout?"

"No!"

"Ob course you didn't!"

"Do you mean to say he did, Johnson?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, it ain't necessary for me to tell you dat you are a liar, 'cos you know it, and eberyone in dis room knows it, only dey may not be honest enough to tell you so to your face!"

"I reckon you want wrapping up in cotton-wool when you box!" sneered Johnson.

"Should say you wanted whitewashing when you acted as referee!" retorted Pete. "Dere are only two tings about it—you eider don't know anything 'bout de rules, else you'm a shocking liar!"

"I reckon you will be sorry for those words!" cried Johnson, springing to his feet, and placing his hand on his hip. But when Pete strode up to him with clenched fist he did not draw his revolver. "I'll have you up for libel, I reckon!"

"So you can. And I'll tell a bit more in de court. Now, I don't want to quarrel wid you, old hoss; I'm merely remarking de fact dat you are a shocking liar, and if dat ain't de ending ob de matter, I am willing to make any ending ob it you like. Dere are my ten pounds, and I am prepared to make dem ten thousand, or ten hundred thousand! Jim knows dat it ain't for our side dat he makes de stakes ten pounds. He knows dat Slogan will get beaten if he meets me; but as he ain't got de slightest intention ob doing anything like dat—why, it doesn't matter. My impresion is dat dere won't be any fight to-morrow. You will find dat Slogan catches de measles, or some convenient complaint like dat. As for de referee—well, I sha'n't need his services."

"I challenge you for a second bout!" cried Burch.

"Bery well, old hoss. I accept your challenge."

"What stakes do you want?"

"Don't matter to me at all. I will box you for nuffin', or for any sum dat you can find."

"I suppose you want us to believe that you have unlimited money?"

"I don't care what you believe, but I can find all de money you can, and a bit more. Jack will find dat—won't you, Jack?"

"Certainly!" laughed Jack. "But as you can find it yourself, there is no need for me to do so."

"I'll bet you a level tenner that I knock him out of time in twenty rounds!" cried Burch.

"I shall not bet," answered Jack.

"Why not?"

"I am not in the habit of betting. Pete will be able to convince you without any betting."

"Do you mean to say I shall not box fairly with him?"

"Candidly, I don't think you will. At the same time, that will make no difference. Pete could beat you with one arm bound behind his back."

"I guess he can't beat me with two hands, let alone one!"

"Then you had better guess again!" laughed Jack.

"Listen to me!" cried Johnson. "I will bring a man against that fellow Pete, and back him for any sum you like to name!"

"You don't quite understand matters," said Jinks. "You can bring any man you like against Slogan, and if he beats him, I shall challenge Slogan, as I have done on this occasion. If your man beats Slogan, I shall immediately challenge him to meet Pete, and we shall find all the money that is required."

"Why, you surely don't claim the championship!" exclaimed Johnson.

"We don't claim anything, my dear fellow. Pete is not a professional boxer. He is taking this tour to oblige me. Now, Slogan wants to pose as the champion, and he has beaten the first man you brought against him."

"By a chance blow."

"No matter. He has beaten him. Now Pete has challenged him for to-morrow, and he certainly beat Burch. Bring the best man you have against Slogan, and if he beats him I shall challenge immediately. See? That's my arrangement, and I am not going from it. Pete does not want to fool about boxing duffers."

"I reckon your precious Pete will have a fall before long!" sneered Johnson.

"No matter, dear boy. He will get up again, you can bet on that."

"Den, again, we ain't going to worry 'bout dat fall before it happens!" exclaimed Pete, lighting his pipe. "I don't want to say dat I can beat all your best men, and I ain't saying dat I'm going to do anyting ob de sort; all de same, I am willing to try, and I will do it for nuffin'—or what stakes you like to name. If dat ain't a fair offer, you can alter it in any way you like, and I will consider de matter."

"Well," exclaimed Johnson, "all I can say is, that you are the most conceited brute I ever met in my life, and I hope Slogan gives you the thrashing you deserve to-morrow night. If he doesn't, I shall bring an American who will. You scum want some of the brag taken out of you!"

"Golly! I should scarcely tink dat America was de correct country to come to for dat purpose, my poor old hoss!"

"We will teach you a lesson that you won't forget!"

"I see, you are going to do dat by proxy, Johnson. Yah, yah, yah! Dose black looks and dat little jerky movement ob your hand towards your hip-pocket won't frighten me at all, my poor old hoss, 'cos if you were to draw dat revolver I should gib you such a smash in de face dat you wouldn't be able to shoot for some time to come. And de amusing part ob de affair is dat Sammy is keeping his eye on you, and you would find his bullet frough your right arm before you had finished levelling your weapon."

"You needn't think that three Britishers are going to frighten me!" said Johnson, glaring at Sam.

"Sammy ain't a Britisher—he's a Yank, like yourself, only he doesn't resemble you in nature, 'cos he's an honest man; and you ain't anything like dat."

"If he's an American, I wonder he associates with a blackguard like you."

"I 'spect it is because he doesn't like to associate with a blackguard like you, old hoss!"

"What's that you call me?"

"I merely called you a blackguard. I know you are a liar; and dey generally run togeder. Yah, yah, yah! Hark at de man blustering! Ain't it too funny for words! And he knows all de time he's frightened ob me, and is trembling in his shoes in case I should strike him! It's all right, Johnson, you can say what you like—I sha'n't hit you. You'm a lot too small and feeble for me to hit."

Johnson said a good deal, but as his abuse had no effect on Pete, it did not matter at all; and before Johnson had finished his harangue, Pete's eyes were half closed, and his deep breathing denoted that he was more than half asleep.

"Do you hear what I'm saying to you, fellow?" howled Johnson.

"Woo-hoo!" yelled Pete, starting up. "Oh, yes, Johnson, I'm hearing what you are saying, and I must say dat it's rader clever; but, if you don't mind, I will hear de remainder ob it to-morrow morning, 'cos I'm rader sleepy. You see, I hab had a hot supper, and you'm only had a cold one, and dat makes a difference to sleepiness. Good-night, boys! If you ain't tired, you might listen to de rest of what de silly old hoss wants to say, 'cos I tink he likes to hear himself cackle."

Then Pete left the room, and Johnson turned his fury on to Sam.

"If you think that a miserable skunk of a vagabond, who has had to flee his own country to escape being locked up, is going to insult a man like me, you are mistaken, and so I tell you! I know a bit more about you than you think for."

"Then I reckon you will have to tell these people what you know," said Sam. "Pete's temper is a bit better than mine in cases like this. Now, out with it! What do you know against me?"

"I know that you have been in prison here, for the start."

"Well, you need go no further than that," said Sam. "You can't possibly know what never happened. You can't help being stupid, Johnson, but you can help telling lies about a man who is a perfect stranger to you. I reckon I am not going to argue with a man like you, and it doesn't matter to me what these people think of me; but I don't allow a man to insult me like you have done, and so I slap your cheek."

Sam did not do it in the French style—that is, by word of mouth, or in a letter—he stepped up to the referee, and gave him a slap on the cheek that sent him reeling sideways, while it left a red mark on his cheek.

"You shall answer to me for that with your life!" cried Johnson. "I call you out! Name your weapons, the time, the place!"

"Pistols. To-morrow morning, seven o'clock. I shall want a little practice first. Place? Well, I reckon I don't care. You can choose that."

"I shall accept no apology!"

"That's certain, because I sha'n't make one, having nothing to apologise for. I would slap the cheek of any man who spoke to me like that! Suppose we turn in, Jack. I'm getting tired of the idiot. You can make what arrangements you like through my friend Jack. All I require is a quarter of an hour's practice at the spot. You can lead the way to any place you like, Johnson, and I will follow you. Only I'm not going to get up at some unearthly hour."

There was something about Sam's businesslike arrangements that was not at all pleasing to Johnson; but he was so angry that he had not the slightest intention of backing out of it, and he had not the slightest difficulty in

finding seconds. In fact, the whole company determined to witness the duel, and make a bolt of it if one of the principals got shot.

Sam went to bed, and he slept through the night as though duelling was an every-day occurrence with him.

And Pete knew nothing about it until informed the following morning.

CHAPTER 16.

How Johnson Took His Bacon.

WHEN the comrades entered the coffee-room the next morning they found Johnson there. His second introduced himself as Mr. Starkey.

"I hear you want some practice, my man!" he exclaimed, addressing Sam. "Waal, we don't object to that. And I may mention you will need it, for my man is a dead shot. I reckon you don't get much practice in England?"

"I don't get any at all. Of course you don't object to my practising. I shall practise as much as I like, without asking your permission."

"All right, my lad; don't get riled. My principal swears he will shoot you, and that's the end of it. He won't miss his mark; he's a crack shot. We are going to the ground now, so you can follow as soon as you please. It's not far from here, and there's an hour to spare yet. You can both use your own revolvers, and we will see to the loading of them. Five shots each."

"All right," answered Sam. "We are quite ready."

It was a beautifully fine morning, and Sam laughed and chatted as though he had not a care in the world. A walk of about a mile brought them to a small stream, and here Johnson and his friends stopped at an open space that was surrounded with trees.

"What's the distance to be?" inquired Sam.

"Twenty-five paces," answered Starkey. "Will that suit you?"

"I reckon so. I'm not at all particular. Just step off the distance, Jack. I'll practise a little at that tree. You see, I want to get my hand in before we commence. I reckon Johnson had better do the same. Now, Pete, just go and tell me where to aim."

Sam took up his position, and Pete walked to the tree. He guessed Sam's object, and knew perfectly well that such a marvellous shot would really require no practice.

"You see dis little lump, Sammy?" inquired Pete, touching the bark.

"I reckon there are two or three of them, you owl!"

"I mean dis one beneaf my finger. Let me see you hit dat, for a start."

"How can I hit it without going through your finger?"

"Try, Sammy. See if you can go an inch off de tip ob my finger widout hitting it. I hab got a measure here. Mind, it must be exactly an inch. If you go more you will lose, and if you go an inch less, I sha'n't like it!"

"Then keep your finger still," said Sam, taking a quick aim, and firing.

"Golly! You'm done it! Dat's as near an inch as if you please. Now den, Sammy, continue de firing until you hab made an exact circle, and I will tell you what to do next."

"How many shots may I have to make the circle?"

"De more de merrier! Make de circle 'bout six inches in diameter."

"Keep the revolvers loaded, Jack!" exclaimed Sam. "Now, Pete, I am going to put a ball six inches to the right of the first one. There you are! The next ball is going three inches above the centre of those two."

"I said a six-inch circle, Sammy. You ain't got de right to make a free-inch one."

Pete was very anxious that Sam should do the thing according to orders, because he had an idea that it would stop the duel, and he knew this was Sam's idea also. Pete, in his excitement, actually shoved his hands in the way just as Sam was about to fire.

"You silly owl!" gasped Sam, stopping in time. "Do you want me to put a bullet through your hands?"

"Nunno, Sammy! I want you to make a six-inch circle—not a free-inch one!"

"It must have a three-inch radius, stupid!"

"My circle ain't got to hab any radius. It's got to be just a plain circle widout any radiuses. I don't want you to waste your time fooling 'bout wid radiuses, or tings like dat!"

"I reckon you are hopeless, Pete!" laughed Sam. "I'm making the top of the circle now."

"Den, why can't you call it de top, and not go blaspheming foreign names at de ting!"

"Shut up! There was nothing wrong with my word! It merely means the distance from the centre of the circle to the circumference."

"Oh, is dat all! It sounded as dough it meant a lot more dan dat. All de same, Sammy, I said a six-inch circle—not a free-inch one!"

"Well, you mean six inches across, don't you?"

"M'yes!"

"Well, that's what I'm going to make it, if you will get your stupid head out of the light. I can't fire through that!"

Pete shifted a little. To the spectators, it did not appear as though he had shifted enough. But Sam's aim was wonderfully accurate.

He put in the four shots in the shape of a diamond.

"Now, those ought to be six inches apart," said Sam. "Just measure them!"

"Dat's a diamond, Sammy. It ain't a bit like a circle!"

"Will you measure the distance? The bullets ought to be six inches apart. I am going to fill in the circle presently."

"I see. Well, dat is— Yah, yah, yah! You'm all out ob it. Dey are exactly eighteen inches apart."

"What!"

"Are you deaf, Sammy?"

"I'll vow those holes are not eighteen inches apart!"

"Dey are! Exactly! Ebery one ob dem! Yah, yah, yah! You will neber hit Johnson's heart if you get all dose inches out. Oh, it's no good coming to look! You can't dispute de two-foot rule! Eighteen inches! Dere you are!"

"Why, you silly owl, you are measuring from the wrong end of the rule!"

"Eh?"

"I don't know whether you are deaf or not, but I know you are stupid!"

"What difference does de end ob de rule make, Sammy?"

"Only twelve inches. Do you suppose it makes no difference if you start measuring from twenty-four inches backwards, from measuring from one inch forwards?"

"Stop a bit, Sammy! I must work dat out."

"Then I shall have plenty of time to complete my circle," laughed Sam, walking back to his position.

And he fired, first with the revolver in his right hand, and then in the

left, while he poured in the shots at such a rate that it seemed impossible that he could aim correctly.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "I reckon that is about as near as I can get. Now, where do you want your last shot? You will find those balls about one inch apart."

"Golly! You'm right, too!" exclaimed Pete. "Yah, yah, yah! What's de betting on my man? Stop a bit! Turn your back to me! Tink you could hit Johnson's heart?"

"I reckon so."

"Well, consider de exact centre ob dat circle is his heart, and fire at it when I gib de signal. You will stand backing each oder—least, I 'spect dat's de proper way. At any rate, dat don't matter. You hab got to hit de centre ob de circle immediately de signal is giben. You see, a lot depends on a quick shot, so dat your opponent hasn't got time to take aim before he's got de bullet in his heart. I'll time you."

Pete pulled out his watch, and held his handkerchief in the air; then he dropped it, and kept his eyes fixed on the watch.

"I say, Sammy, you'm taken forty-five seconds already!" he exclaimed, at last.

"Why, you silly owl, you never gave me the signal!"

"Yes, I did, Sammy! I dropped my handkerchief!"

"How do you expect me to see that when my back is turned towards you?"

"Golly! I neber tought ob dat! Still, we will try again. When I say de word 'Fire!' you are to do it. I will count free. But you ain't to fire till I say de word. You can turn at free, and fire at 'Fire!' See? You ain't to turn till I get to free, and you may take aim between the words 'Free!' and 'Fire!' 'Nuff said! One—"

Pete waited about six seconds, then he shouted as rapidly as he possibly could:

"Two, free—fire!"

It sounded like one word, but Sam swung round and fired as Pete uttered the word.

"I reckon I am not having you for a starter, you beauty!" laughed Sam. "All the same, you won't find that last bullet so far out of the centre."

The men crowded round, and gazed in astonishment. They had never seen such marvellous firing, for not only was Sam's circle perfect, but his last bullet was exactly in the centre of it.

A murmur of surprise ran round, and Sam coolly handed his revolver to Jack to load, while he strolled up to the tree.

"Yes; I reckon I'm not far out," he said carelessly. "I sha'n't need any further practice, Johnson. If you are ready now, I am. We need not wait till eight o'clock, especially as we have ordered breakfast for half-past."

"I give you a last chance!" cried Johnson, trying to look fierce, but only succeeding in looking yellow. "You have grossly insulted me in the presence of my friends, but I am willing to spare your life!"

"I reckon you are remarkably kind."

"I shall accept your apology on this occasion!"

"But I haven't made one; and, what is more, have not the slightest intention of doing so!"

"I shall take into consideration that you acted in anger, and—"

"See here, Johnson, you are frightened, and may as well say so! You know you have no chance against me. Now, I may tell you that I purposely intended that you should know that. All the same, you are not going to sneak out of the affair by pretending I have apologised. You stated that I

had been in prison, and that I had to flee the country. Now, I demand an apology for that lie. You will now confess that it was a lie. If you don't, and are too cowardly to meet me with weapons, I shall horsewhip you in the presence of your friends! You have your choice! Which is it to be?"

"I was mistaking you for some other man!"

"I don't want to bully you in any way, but that won't do at all. Do you admit that you lied?"

"Yes."

"Well, I reckon you see that you are entirely in the wrong, so there's an end of the matter. I expect you have disappointed some of your friends, because they wanted a little excitement. However, that can't be helped."

"Well, dat's all right, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "I'm mighty hungry. Let's get back for de breakfast, else I shall be too weak to box wid Slogan to-night. I'm inclined to tink dat de second duel won't come off. Still, we shall see dat later on."

There could not be a doubt that Johnson was considerably dispirited by that affair. During the walk back to the inn his voice was scarcely heard at all, and even when he did speak he was remarkably humble.

He cheered up a little at the breakfast-table, but, as his ill-luck would have it, Pete sat next to him, and that worthy would persist in questioning him concerning the duel.

"Now den, Silas," cried Pete, just as the meal was commencing, "do hurry up wid dose eggs-and-bacon! You'm as slow as a dormouse in de winter-time! You know quite well dat you ought to attend to me; instead ob dat, you are feeding de oder people. Can't you see dat Ponder is fat enough widout eggs-and-bacon?"

"Hold your row, you greedy creature!" growled Ponder, who was getting far more attention than Pete, because Silas was leaving him till the last.

"But you'm had two lots, Ponder, and I ain't got de start yet."

"Good job, too! You eat a lot too much, and you are like some old sow that has not been fed."

"Golly! You'm more like an old sow dat has been fattened up for Christmas! Will you bring me a dose, Silas?"

"I must attend to the gentlemen first!" exclaimed Silas, making a rush round the table with a large dish of eggs-and-bacon.

But he had to pass Pete, and although he gave him a wide berth, Pete made a grab at his coat-tail, and caught it, too.

The result was disastrous. Silas swung round, and his coat-tail was ripped off; then the dish shot out of his hands, and landed on the top of Johnson's head, on which it made a melancholy shipwreck, while Johnson received more eggs-and-bacon on his head, and hot grease down his back, than he could have consumed in a week.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Dese little accidents will occur. Allow me to mop up de mess for you!"

And, using Silas's coat-tail, Pete scrubbed at Johnson's head, making the mess considerably worse instead of better.

"You villain!" yelled Johnson, leaping about, because he found that little dose most unpleasantly hot. "I'll have your life for this!"

"You ain't got to blame me for de waiter's carelessness!" observed Pete, purloining Johnson's plate, and commencing his meal. "I ain't responsible for de waiter's errors!"

"Look at the mess you have made me in!"

"I neber touched you, my dear old hoss! You ain't got de right to blame me. Why don't you blame Sammy, and make him fight anoder duel wid you? Yah, yah, yah! You did make a mess ob dat duel, didn't you?"

Rader frightened ob Sammy's aim, I tink! You should hab challenged me, 'cos I can't shoot nearly as straight as Sammy."

"I reckon you have torn my coat!" yelled Silas. "You will have to compensate me for this lot!"

"But your livery belongs to your master, Silas," said Pete. "You ain't got de right to claim damages for property dat ain't your own!"

"That dress-coat was mine!"

"Well, it looks all de better widout its tail. You see, when de customers look at you sideways, de one on de right will tink you'm wearing a dinner jacket, and de one on de left will make sure dat you'm got on a dress-coat; or, if you don't like dat, you can get de cook to stitch de tail on, and you will look sort ob all right again. Yah, yah, yah! I must say your full back view is rader striking. You look like a sailor wid two sheets in de wind, and one ob dem carried away!"

"Waiter!" roared Johnson. "Turn this ruffian out of the room! I won't sit down to breakfast with him!"

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete, as he caught a glimpse of Johnson's back view. The bacon grease was getting cold, and it was showing white. "You hab made your back in a mighty mess, old hoss. If you got a hot poker, you would be able to write your name in de grease! You'm got enough grease on de back ob your coat to fry pancakes in. Talk about a larded pig, he ain't nuffin' to you. Now den, Silas, just you trot up anoder dish ob eggs-and-bacon, 'cos I shall be ready for de next little dose in 'bout free seconds, and I don't like to be kept waiting between bites."

If Pete had been compelled to rely on Silas, he would have stood a very poor chance of getting any more breakfast; but when the waiter left the room to get another coat, Jane entered it with an enormous meat-pie, and she placed it before Pete.

"Cook has made this for you special," whispered Jane. "She says it's only for you and your friends, and that the others are not to have any, because they are only paying for eggs and bacon."

"Bery well, my dear," exclaimed Pete, carving that pie. "I'll take particular care dat dey don't get any. You tell de cook her orders will be obeyed to de letter. Here, Ponder. You ain't finished your bacon yet."

"It's salty, and I can't eat it."

"Golly! De man has eaten nearly a whole pig, and now he declares de bacon is too salt for his liking. Dis pie is hot, and hot pie ain't good for fat people."

"You stop your nonsense, Pete. I am hungry. Pass me a plateful, and don't be sparing with the crust and gravy."

Pete helped his comrades, and was about to help himself, when the remainder of the company passed up their plates.

"Look here, old hosses!" exclaimed Pete. "You got de start ob me at first, but I'm going to try to obertake you now. You ain't going to hab any pie."

"I declare I will!" cried Starkey. "I never heard such impertinence! Push it across this way, and I will help it."

"I can do all de helping dat dis pie requires, tank you, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, commencing his breakfast; for he had only had hot rolls so far. "I tell you dis pie is private property."

"You have stolen my eggs and bacon," declared Johnson, "and now I intend to have some of that pie."

"You can hab plenty more eggs and bacon; dough I must say I consider dat you'm had rader more dan are good for you, bof internally and externally. At any rate, seeing dat you'm begun so well on eggs and

bacon, it would be a pity to spoil de continuity, and hitch on to pie. Nunno, Johnson. You stick to what you know has done you good, and don't you get on to pie dat might gib you indigestion, or someting like dat."

"You stupid rascal, I have as much right to that pie as you have, and I mean to have it!"

"Keep your hands off it, Johnson!" exclaimed Pete, giving him a rap over the knuckles. "You'm only paid for eggs and bacon, and we'm paid for the pie. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we ain't going to pay for your coats as well. Still, I'm not going to boder ober dat, so long as we get de pie. Now, dis pie was made purposely for us, and we ain't going to share it. Dere would scarcely be enough to go round, and as it is only going round our party, you ain't got de right to shove your fingers in our pie."

"Stop your fooling," growled Slogan. "Pass the thing this way immediately!"

"Golly! Dere's anoder man wants pie. Ain't dis gluttony, simply shocking? You stick to eggs and bacon, Slogan. Dey are a lot better for you."

"Fellow, I tell you I will have some of that pie!"

"Nunno, you won't. Dis is a private pie. It is made specially for us, and I hab received special instructions dat it ain't for de consumption ob you ordinary cattle. Pass your plates, boys. I can plainly see dat dis pie is a great temptation to de Yankees. Ain't it mighty funny dat Yanks can't resist pie? Go on wid your bacon, Johnson, and stop your babbling. You ain't habing any pie. You'm like de little kittens dat lost deir mittens, and you shall hab no pie."

"You stupid brute!"

"I might be less brutal, but I would be a lot more stupid if I fed you on my private pie. You wouldn't let me hab any eggs and bacon, dough I gabe you plenty ob dem, so dat I ain't letting you hab any ob dis. It's mighty good, too."

Pete was quite resolved on the point, and Johnson and his friends had to finish their breakfast off eggs and bacon, a fact that caused a good deal of friction between the two parties.

CHAPTER 17.

Pete Receives Important Information.

AFTER lunch that day Jack and Sam decided to go for a walk. Jinks said he would come with them; but Ponder badly wanted them to go for a drive instead. He said he hated walking.

"De exercise will do you all de good in de world, old hoss," observed Pete, puffing at his pipe in an armchair.

"I don't want exercise," growled Ponder. "I hate it. There is nothing more abominable, to my mind, than going miles through sloppy country; and I don't consider anyone in their sane senses would do so when they can drive. What is the use of horses and carriages if you don't make use of them? Besides, we could go in a motor-car."

"De walk will do us a lot ob good," declared Pete. "Besides dat, Rory wants some exercise as well as you. A run ob about twenty miles is what would suit your constitution, Ponder. You would look as graceful as a little ladybird after dat. Now you look more like an old sow fattened up for Christmas."

"Look here, Pete. I'm not going to stand your impertinence any more, and—"

"Oh, don't blame me, Ponder! I can't help your being fat. You should eat less, and not try to blame oder people for a fault dat is entirely your own. You know, Ponder, you'm getting mighty lazy, and I'm surprised at a comparatively young man like you refusing to take a little walk."

"Well, come on. It's a stupid, rotten thing to do when we can drive, although if you have made up your mind to walk, I suppose you will. I know that you are an obstinate brute."

"Well, you see, it's dis way, Ponder. I ain't prescribing de walk for myself; I'm prescribing it for you and de oders."

"What! Do you mean to say you are not coming?"

"Why, don't you see, I shall come to meet you. I hab one or two tings to consider, and I can't fool about walking."

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Ponder. "Here he has been calling me lazy, because I don't like walking miles, and he doesn't mean to come at all. What are you going to do?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You need not ask him, Ponder," exclaimed Jack. "He is going to sleep in that armchair, and, perhaps, if he doesn't feel too tired, he will come to meet us about three minutes before we get back. Come along. We shall waste all the afternoon, and have no appetites for dinner. Pete does not have to bother about his appetite, because it is always there. It is a sort of ready-made appetite, and always fits the food, although there is not always sufficient food to fit the appetite."

Ponder hesitated for a moment, but he decided on going; and Pete lolled in his chair, but it was nearly four o'clock before he dozed off.

He was just bursting into snores when he felt his arm shaken, and, looking up, he saw Jane standing beside him.

"Are you ill, Pete?" she inquired.

"Nunno, my dear. What made you tink such a ting as dat?"

"You were making such a frightful row that I thought you were choking."

"Dat's merely a little catch in de breaif."

"Gracious! It sounded like a fog-horn blown by steam!"

"Well, run away, my dear, 'cos I'm rader busy just at present."

"I want to speak to you, Pete," said Jane, closing the door. "I expect Silas will be down presently. He is in his room now, and I have only just been able to tell you."

"Anyting wrong wid de man?"

"You are going to fight Slogan to-night?"

"Only box wid him. I sha'n't hurt de man."

"Can you beat him?"

"Should say so. I hab done it before now."

"Will he lose money if you beat him?"

"Dat's mighty certain, my dear."

"Then I believe there has been foul play between him and Silas. I was in the garden last night, and—and I didn't want him to see me, because it was rather late."

"Was de oder young man nice-looking, my dear?"

"Go along with you. I suppose I may speak to a lady friend?"

"Should say so, Jane."

"Well, we were in the summer-house, and Slogan came out, smoking, and we didn't want him to see us, so we stopped where we were, you know."

"I dunno much 'bout lub-making, my dear."

"Don't be silly, Pete. This is a serious matter."

"I'm always telling Jack dat, Jane. Dere's a mighty lot ob responsibility connected wid married life."

"Don't I keep telling you it was a lady friend?"

"M'yes! But it doesn't follow dat I hab got to believe all I hear."

"At any rate, Silas came out, and I believe Slogan had told him to do so. We—I mean I could not hear what they were talking about, because they spoke in whispers, but as they stood in the light I saw Slogan give Silas some money; and soon after that Silas went in, and Slogan went for a walk across the fields. Then I went in."

"Without saying good-night to your lady friend, my dear?"

"I wish you would listen to what I am telling you, Pete, and not keep interrupting me."

"Fire ahead, my dear. I was only rader sorry for dat lady friend if you sent him away without saying good-night to him."

"How could a lady friend be a him?"

"I dunno; but I tink de him was de lady friend."

"You know that money you gave me? Well, there was a peach of a hat, and I got leave to go out and see it. Now, that shop is exactly opposite the chemist's, and my lady friend lives there."

"Yah, yah, yah! Go on, Jane. I 'spect you wanted to see de peach ob a lady friend, as well as de peach ob a hat."

"I bought the hat, and while I was buying it I saw Silas come along the street. He seemed so mysterious that I watched him. He looked both ways, and, when he saw no one was coming, he went into the shop. Well, I wanted to know what he was buying, so I—I went in—after he had gone, you know—and asked."

"Asked your lady friend?"

"Well, I don't care. You won't tell. I know you won't. I'm engaged to be married to him. He is a chemist, and— Well, he told me that Silas bought some laudanum, and said he had a toothache. I don't believe he has got a toothache."

"I dunno, my dear. A man can generally tell weder he has or not, I believe. I hab neber had it myself. At de same time, I hab watched people wid it, and by de way dey groan and growl I should say dey would be able to tell."

"What were those two talking about last night in the garden?"

"Give it up, my dear. I would rader guess what you and your lady friend were talking about."

"This is a serious matter."

"I know it is; but if she's a nice young man, and—"

"Do be sensible. I believe Slogan has got Silas to drug you, so that you can't fight. I believe that is why he bought the laudanum, and that he will put it in your coffee after dinner. There! I don't believe he's honest."

"Neider do I, my dear, but when you come to drugging a man—why, it's rader dangerous, 'cos you might kill him."

"Don't you drink any coffee to-night, Pete."

"Eh?"

"Pretend to drink it; but don't you drink it. I'm sure Slogan has plotted something with Silas; but I'm not going to let them, after your kindness to me."

"Hab you told anyone 'bout dis yet?"

"No."

"Den don't mention a word 'bout de matter. You are a smart friend, Jane, and I tink your lady friend is a bery lucky man. Pr'aps I may be able to gib your lady friend a lift up in life. But we shall be able to see about dat later on. Now, you leabe mé to deal wid dat coffee. I will make a point ob asking for it to-night, and anoder point ob not drinking it. Still, I shall be able to tell pretty well by de faces ob Slogan and Silas

weder you are right; and if you are, Jane, dey will be wrong. Slogan will find dat out to his cost to-night—so will Silas later on. 'Nuff said!"

Pete went out shortly after, and purchased a riding-whip, which he placed under the sofa; then he waited for his comrades' return, and got chaffed a good deal for not having gone to meet them; but he did not tell them a word of Jane's suspicions.

She had taken it for granted that, if foul play were intended, Silas would put the drug in the coffee; in fact, it would have been impossible for him to have put it in anything else, for it was very seldom that Pete drank anything but water with his dinner.

The meal was served rather early to suit the parties, and Pete chatted amiably with all, chaffing Slogan a little from time to time; while Johnson came in for a share of that chaff—but then so did all the others.

"I tink we will hab a little coffee to gib us strength for de fight," observed Pete, when the meal was finished. "You see, I don't want Slogan to beat me, and p'raps de coffee will stop him doing anyting like dat."

All the company ordered coffee, and Pete remained seated at the table, pretending to sip his coffee, although he never did so. He believed that he could detect a strange odour to it, and, although his manner was perfectly natural, he was furtively watching Slogan's face.

From the expression on it he became convinced that Jane's suspicions were well founded. Slogan seldom took his eyes off him; while when Silas entered the room he kept glancing at Pete's untouched cup.

"Dis coffee is too mighty hot," growled Pete. "Still, I 'spect it will get cool if I only gib it time."

"We have got plenty, I reckon," said Sam.

"Well, dat's all right, Sammy, 'cos——"

"Hallo, you! Hi!"

The shout appeared to come from the doorway, and in an instant every eye was turned in that direction. In that instant Pete slopped his cup of coffee on the carpet, and when Slogan looked at him again, he appeared to be drinking the contents of that cup.

"What was it, Silas?" inquired Pete, with the empty cup still in his hand.

"I think it must have been someone outside," answered Silas, glancing at Pete, and then at Slogan, for he saw the cup was now empty.

"Well, dat's all right!" exclaimed Pete. "Now, I'm going to hab a pipe, so as to fit me for de fight. I fancy dis easy-chair will be de most comfortable place to smoke it in. You see, Slogan, I hab to take a lot ob care ob Pete when he's going to box. 'Nuff said."

Pete lay back in the chair, and went on talking, but presently his voice grew drowsy, then his eyes closed.

"Here, wake up!" cried Sam. "If you are going to box you will have to be moving."

"I know I shall, Sammy, and dat's why I'm keeping still now. You see, it's no good keep moving all de time. I tink we will make de start now."

Pete rose, but his eyes were half closed. Jinks was seriously alarmed, but they started from the place, and when Slogan started ten minutes later they were no longer in sight, while when he reached the hall Pete was in the dressing-room, a separate one from Slogan's.

Slogan was the first in the ring, and the referee stood waiting for Pete, who at last made his appearance.

There was a very sleepy expression in his eyes, and his gloved hands hung listlessly at his sides. Slogan looked by far the likeliest man; for Pete appeared to be in a half-dazed state, although he made no complaint.

They commenced to spar, and Slogan scored several points, but he was not hitting hard. He did not want that bout to end too quickly. At the end of the round, however, he tried to get in a knockdown blow, but in this he failed, while Pete landed several blows in his face.

The first half-dozen rounds did not give much satisfaction to the spectators. The scoring of marks was fairly equal, but Pete confined himself entirely to face blows, while those he received were nearly all body-blows. Time after time Slogan tried to land on the point, but he never once succeeded, and before long his face showed signs of pretty severe punishment, while Pete had not a mark.

It became evident to all that Pete was the better boxer, although on the present occasion there appeared to be very little power in his blows.

Slogan, on the other hand, was hitting with all his strength, and although Pete's bodyguard appeared to be somewhat faulty, he never allowed a blow to land in his face, while it was very seldom that Slogan succeeded in stopping one when Pete led off.

The bout was half-way through before the fight became at all fast, and then Slogan rushed in time after time, but the blows he received in the face were becoming heavier now, and towards the end of one of the rounds Pete lashed out with his left, and, catching Slogan between the eyes, sent him to the floor.

When Slogan came up for the next round he showed signs of a pair of black eyes, but beyond his marked face, he appeared as fresh as when he started, and as Pete kept scoring points by hitting him in the face, he soon began to look like a beaten man.

What maddened him was that he knew Pete was scoring at least three points to his one, and he also knew that Pete was not hitting with anything like his full strength.

Slogan knew now that his only chance was to knock Pete out of time, and this he tried to do time after time, and got punished severely as a result. It was he who made the attacks, but Pete defended himself with marvellous skill, and the spectators saw some really good boxing.

"Last round. Four minutes. Time!"

Now Pete made the attack, and, landing in his adversary's face, sent him to the floor. Slogan was up again in an instant, and rushed in wildly; then Pete landed on his mouth, and he went down again, making no attempt to rise, although there is no doubt he could have done so. But he knew that he had not the slightest chance of pulling the fight out of the fire now, and he lay where he had fallen while he was being counted out.

"Well, dat's all right!" exclaimed Pete, when the verdict was awarded to him. "We ain't wasting any more time here, 'cos I hab ordered anoder hot supper, and I'm inclined to tink dat I am getting hungry. Sappose we get back to de inn, boys."

"Look here, Pete," exclaimed Jinks, as they made their way back to the inn, "you are not in form to-night."

"Golly! Didn't you want me to beat de man?"

"Certainly, and you have done so; but you did not box in your best style."

"How many bests are dere, Jinks?"

"One, naturally, my dear fellow. Why?"

"Well, I can't box in my best style ebery time, don't you see. If I used my best style ebery time, dere would be a lot ob bests."

"You can see that there is something wrong with him, can't you, boys?"

"I reckon so," answered Sam. "He seemed to be half asleep."

"That's good enough for me," exclaimed Jinks. "You have got to meet a big man before long."

"Here, you'm going de wrong way, Jinks."

"It's a near cut. I suppose you don't want to walk farther than is necessary after all your exertions?"

"Suttinly not!"

"Then come this way, my dear fellow. The fact of the matter is that I want to make a call. I want to make a little arrangement about another meeting, and I shall want you to help settle matters. Here, the chap lives in this large house. Hurry up, or he may be going out."

They went up a short carriage-drive, then Jinks went a little ahead, and stood at the side of the door as he rang the bell.

The door was opened by a page-boy, and Jinks whispered something to him, then they were shown into a handsomely-furnished sitting-room, while Jinks followed the page-boy into the hall, and, having closed the door, waited there until an elderly gentleman made his appearance.

"Dr. Parks, I believe?" inquired Jinks, in a low voice.

"That is my name."

"I noticed it on your name-plate as I passed your house this afternoon. I have brought you a peculiar patient. His name is Pete, and I have induced him to accompany me on a boxing tour. Something has gone wrong with him, but if I were to ask him to see a medical man I happen to know that he would absolutely refuse to do so. He has just gone through a twelve-round bout to-night, and it was as much as he could manage; whereas, as a rule, he is as strong as a lion. Now, will you allow me to hand you a couple of guineas as a preliminary fee, and I shall be glad if you will attend him. We are stopping at the Railway Inn, but it will be better not to let him know you are going to call. I want you to humour him."

"There's no difficulty there, Mr. Jinks," said the doctor, glancing at the card Jinks had sent in. "I dare say we shall soon be able to set him to-rights."

Dr. Parks entered the room, and he guessed at once which was Pete.

"Ah, my friend," he exclaimed, "I'm glad to meet you! Been a beautiful day, hasn't it?"

"Grand, old hoss," answered Pete.

"Been boxing, I hear?"

"M'yes, but I didn't know dat Jinks had any friends in dis part."

"Well, I have a good many friends. You are not quite the thing, are you?"

"Nunno! I'm just a common man, but Jack is a real swell. He's an Oxford man, and all dat. You won't care for me as a friend, my dear old hoss."

"You misunderstand me a little. I mean, when I say you are not quite the thing, that you are not feeling so well as usual."

"Yes I am. Dere's nuffin' de matter wid me."

"Well, I'm delighted to hear that. But you must remember that frequently a patient is not well, and does not know it."

"In dat case, dose are de sort ob illnesses dat I would prefer."

"Quite so. He does not know he is ill at first, but he gradually gets worse until he is laid up. Now, allow me to feel your pulse."

"Poor old hoss!" murmured Pete, sticking out his right hand.

"The other arm, if you please."

"Golly! I tought I had a pulse in bof ob dem. But, look here, old hoss, suppose you feel Jinks's pulse. Seems a little bit balmy on de crumpet. Take him away, Jinks. I don't like maniacs. Dey always frighten me."

"My dear sir," gasped the doctor, "you are in error. I assure you that I am perfectly sane. I am Dr. Parks."

"Golly! Are you a medicated man?"

"Certainly—a medical man—and as you are not very well, your friend has brought you here for treatment, a very wise precaution."

"M'yes! You would tink dat all de time. If I was a medicated man I would always advise all my friends to bring deir friends for treatment. But, don't you see, dere ain't anyting de matter wid me."

"Mr. Jinks thinks that there is."

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared Pete. "Golly! I can see plainly how de little mistake has happened now. All right, old hoss. You fire away. Yah, yah, yah! I dunno weder you will discover dat I'm suffering from an attack ob de measles, or weder it is only Asiatic cholera. Yah, yah, yah! How's dat pulse going? Fifteen to de minute. Golly! I know dere will be some laughter 'bout dis little matter before so long, and I know one ob de parties who will laugh—and one ob dem who won't. Yah, yah, yah!"

"Let me look at your tongue, my friend."

"Dere's 'bout half a yard ob it!" exclaimed Pete, sticking it out. "If dat ain't enough to go on wid just you tell me, and I will frow out anoder yard or so."

"Now, how is your appetite?"

"Mighty bad, old hoss. I hab scarcely eaten a mou'full to-day. Beyond two-free rashers ob bacon, wid a few eggs, and, say, a dozen hot rolls, and half a big veal-and-ham pie for breakfast; a cold fowl, some ham, and a few mutton chops for lunch, and a six-course dinner, I hab only had a little brem-cheese. But I'm going to make up for it at supper to-night, den I don't 'spect I shall hab anoder mou'full till breakfast de following morning, 'cos it ain't often dat I get hungry after supper."

"I should think not," gasped the doctor. "Do you smoke much?"

"Nunno! Not what you might call much."

"How much tobacco do you smoke a week, for instance?"

"Well, you see, I generally borrow from Jack and Sammy, so it's impossible to tell, but I neber start smoking before 'bout free in de summer, and I seldom smoke more dan free pipes after I'm in bed—only one sometimes, when I fall asleep."

"Do you mean three in the afternoon?"

"Nunno, in de morning, old hoss! You see, I am an early riser, and I always start de day wid a pipe, but I leabe off smoking in de day at short intervals—while I'm at my meals, f'rinstance."

"It is obvious that you smoke too much."

"Well, dat's all de better for de doctor, de undertaker, and de tobacco-nist."

"I don't see how you can keep in training."

"Dat's nuffin' to what some men smoke. Did I eber tell you 'bout dat man who smoked all his life, from morning to night, and after he was dead he kept on smoking for nearly half an hour."

"Oh, he could not possibly do that!"

"But, you see, de poor man was burnt to death, and dat's how he kept on smoking. Now, let's be off, boys, 'cos I feel eber so much better. I tink it is habing had my pulse felt."

"I will make you up a little strengthening medicine, Pete."

"Bery well, old hoss. Just you send it round. Should say Slogan needed it more dan dis child, but I can easy force it down his froat. Jinks, you are a stupid owl. Don't I tell you dere's nuffin' de matter wid me. I was only shamming to let Slogan tink I was bad. But you come along, and you

will learn all about de matter later on. Good-night, old hoss. I dunno weder Jinks has paid you——”

“Yes. That is all settled. I will call to see you in the morning.”
 “Golly! You'm landed me wid a nice little lot dis time, Jinks. I wouldn't mind de medicated man if I was really ill; but, seeing dat I'm perfectly well, and neber felt better in my life, I don't see de slightest use in putting my tongue out at him. Good-night, old hoss.”

CHAPTER 13.

Bowled Out!

PETE was rather merry on his way back. He gave his comrades no information, because he wanted to surprise them that night, but he kept bursting into roars of laughter, and Jinks felt quite happy again. He had feared that Pete was really ill, but knew by those roars of laughter that there could not be much the matter with him; and he could put up with being laughed at so long as Pete was all right.

Ponder's chief concern appeared to be what they were going to have for supper, and he kept questioning Pete as to the matter, but that worthy only burst into roars of laughter.

It was not until they reached the inn that Pete showed signs of illness again. They were the first to arrive there, and Silas was in the room.

“Defeat is an awful ting!” murmured Pete, sinking into a chair. “Well, it's no use crying ober spilt milk. Where is Jane, Silas?”

“I'm the waiter in this room!”

“I know dat, old hoss; only I'm bery pleased wid de way Jane waits. I 'spect she's waiting for a husband. Now, I'm going to gib dat girl de sum ob five hundred pounds on her marriage day. I hab got de money here. I shall gib it now, and she can get married afterwards. Send de girl to me, Silas!”

Pete pulled out a bundle of notes, and gravely counted out five hundred pounds. That was enough for Silas. Jane was a remarkably pretty girl, and, being a very good one as regards her household duties, Silas had intentions in that direction.

He wanted an inn of his own, only he had not the money to buy it with. Here was the money, and there was Jane. He promptly made his way to the kitchen. He was a man of prompt action.

Jane was alone, and, to her surprise, Silas clasped her in his arms, and told her that he loved her a few hundred times better than his life, and asked her to be his wife in the prettiest language he could think of.

Then Jane struggled from his embrace, and laughed. It was a hearty laugh. She was really amused at the sudden declaration, and could not understand it at all.

“Say ‘Yes!’ Jane, and make me happy!” he cried.

“I am not going to do anything of the sort!”

“Is there some other man?” demanded Silas, almost weeping as he thought of his double loss.

Jane considered a little. She knew perfectly well that there was another man in the shape of the young chemist, but she did not feel called upon to say so.

“Does another love you?”

“I shouldn't be at all surprised,” said Jane, tossing her head. “There might be a lot.”

“I'll strike him lifeless!”

That made Jane laugh again. The particular one she had in her mind was certainly not a fighter, but he was a good deal bigger than Silas, and Jane's impression was that Silas had no more chance in a fight with him than he had in love matters.

At that critical moment Pete's voice was heard bawling down the stairs, and when Jane entered the room, followed by Silas, she was astounded to see the lucky young chemist there.

"Dis man's name is Jim, my dear!" exclaimed Pete. "I just rushed round to fetch him under false pretences, 'cos I wanted a few words wid him, and now he's going to stop to supper. You see, Jane, I'm rader pleased wid de manner in which you hab acted while we hab been here, and so it is my intention to gib you in marriage to Jim——"

"Look here," cried Jim, stepping forwards, "if you think this is a subject to play practical jokes about, I don't; and, what's more——"

"Steady, Jim, my dear old hoss! I ain't joking at all. It is my intention to gib Jane a marriage present, and I now hab pleasure in handing her five hundred pounds for saving my life. I dunno dat de life is worf five hundred pounds, at de same time we will put it down at dat little lot. Catch hold ob de notes, my dear! Dey are perfectly good. Gib us your hand, Jim! You'm chosen well, and I believe I can say de same ob Jane. Now, not a word! You'm got to obey my orders!"

"Can you explain this to me, sir?" inquired Jim, gazing in wonder at Jack.

"Not I, my dear fellow," answered Jack. "Pete is just about the kindest-hearted man on the face of this earth, and as he is very wealthy, that money is nothing to him. I expect he will explain presently."

"Sit down, Jim; and you sit next to him, Jane."

"But I must not, Pete."

"Golly! You must, if I say so!"

"Did you tell him we were engaged, Jane?" inquired her intended, smiling at her.

"He guessed it. He is very clever."

"Yah, yah, yah! I was neber accused ob dat before. You'm my guests, so sit down, and Silas shall wait on us. Here, comes Slogan! Golly! You'm damaged your face above a bit, Slogan! Still, you can't help dat at boxing. How are you feeling now?"

"Better than you will be, if I have any of your impertinence!"

"Den you sha'n't hab it, 'cos I feel quite all right at de present moment, and wouldn't like to feel any worse. Serve up supper, Silas! Supper is ordered for our party, so you know exactly what to bring up. We will hab a bottle ob de best champagne to drink de healths ob de future bride and bridegroom."

"I really don't think that I may stay, Pete!" exclaimed Jane.

"Well, I'll soon settle dat matter. I'll just go and see de proprietor ob de inn, and if he won't gib permission I shall hab to pull his nose till he does; but I tink he will, 'cos he considers us in de light ob good customers. 'Nuff said!"

Pete had to say very little more. His wishes were law with the landlord, who readily gave his consent. It maddened Silas to have to wait on his rival, and he treated him with scant ceremony.

The little party had a table to themselves, and the supper was excellent. Pete caused some amusement by keeping up a conversation with Slogan, who was seated at an adjoining table.

"Dat face feels rader stiff, doesn't it, old hoss? Should say, you will hab

to nurse it for a day or so; but, wid care, it will get all right. I wouldn't be impatient wid it, if I was you."

"You stupid villain!"

"It seems to me dat you were stupid to put your face in de way ob de blows. You should hab guarded dem in a scientific manner. Still, it is no good worrying 'bout dat now. Look here, Jim, do you tink dere's anything you could improve dat face wid? I don't mean a hatchet or a coke-hammer, but someting in de medicated line."

"Oh, yes! I could mix a lotion."

"Tink you would like a lotion, Slogan?"

"Mind your own business, you stupid beast!"

"Well, it is my business, 'cos I made de face like dat, and I wouldn't like measles or blue fever to intervene. You see, you can't go frough de remainder ob your life wid a face like dat. I tink you had better hab a lotion; or, p'r'aps, a couple ob dem would be better, considering de extra special damage to de face. Do you tink a little laudanum would do it good, Jim?"

"Laudanum!" gasped Jim. "Why, it would poison it!"

"You had better not use dat laudanum for it, in dat case, Slogan."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I tought you told Silas to buy some laudanum?"

"Certainly not!"

"Not when you were in de garden last night?"

"Absurd!"

"Well, you couldn't require all dat laudanum for drugging me, Slogan, and I 'spected you would use de rest for your face!"

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"I'm talking 'bout laudanum!"

"What has it got to do with me?"

"Well, when you gabe Silas money for de purpose ob buying it in de garden, and told him to put some ob it in my coffee, I didn't 'spect you meant to hab it all put in, 'cos dat might hab sent me to sleep for eber."

"You are telling a pack of stupid lies!"

"Judging by de expression ob your face, I don't tink oder people will imagine dey are lies. Now, you see here, Slogan. I knew you told Silas to drug me, and I knew de reason ob it was dat you were afraid ob me. Dere was no cause to be afraid, 'cos I was only going to box for points, and I was going to let you get nearly as many as dis child. But when I found dat you had tried to drug me—why, I naturally considered dat you ought to be punished, so I punished you rader severely. You will notice dat if you look in de glass. You see, knowing de coffee was drugged, I made a yowl appear to come from outside de door, and when all ob you looked up, I slopped my cup ob drugged coffee on de floor. After dat, when you looked at me again, I was pretending to drink what was on de floor.

"Bery well, I tink all dat is clear to de comprehension ob all. After dat, I pretended to be drugged. Sec? I did it so well dat I'm quite proud ob it, and I so deceived Jinks dat he took me to a doctor, tinkin I was ill. Yah, yah, yah!"

"Who told you all this?" cried Slogan, springing to his feet.

"Not me!" cried Silas. "I never said a word!"

"You certainly came into my shop and purchased laudanum!" exclaimed Jim. "You said you had the toothache, and I told you to be careful how you used it, as you were buying a considerable quantity."

"Then have you been concocting this story?" demanded Slogan.

"It is the first I have heard of it," answered Jim. "I know you were in the garden with Silas, because I was there, speaking to this young lady."

"Did you dare to tell——"

"Dat will do, Slogan!" cried Pete, motioning to Jim to sit down. "You'm a professional boxer, and I ain't got a doubt dat Jim would go for you if you insulted his future wife; but I'm going to deal wid dis matter, and if you dare to insult dat young lady I'll horsewhip you!"

"That is more than you could do, fellow, and you know it!"

"You will know dat it isn't, if you are not careful! Now, Silas, dere is one pound ten for a new coat. Your old one wasn't worf dat, but, as I spoilt it, dere is de money for a new one. I don't blame you as much as Slogan, 'cos he incited you to drug me; but I am going to punish you for your villainy, 'cos, don't you see, I must make an example ob you!"

"I never did it!"

"Den I shall compensate you for de flogging. But as I'm mighty certain dat you did do it—why, you'm going to hab de flogging first!"

Then Pete got Silas and the whip, and the waiter's yells burst forth. At first he swore he was innocent, then he incriminated his accomplice, and declared that it was all Slogan's fault, but Pete formed his own conclusions as to who was to blame, and Silas got a flogging that he was likely to remember.

"Dere you are, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, releasing him. "Now, wid dat slight interruption, we will go on wid de supper, and you will go on serving it. I ain't going to flog you, Slogan, because I consider dat I hab punished you sufficiently. You ought to be ashamed ob yourself for de trick you tried to play; but, you see, it didn't come off!"

"Oh, I'm hurt!" howled Silas.

"M'yes! You would be, after a flogging like dat, old hoss. Just you bear it in mind for future reference. Bring up de rest ob de supper!"

"I sha'n't!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Pete, going for the whip again.

"I say I sha'n't be long bringing it up!" growled Silas, hurrying from the room.

Pete followed him into the kitchen, and saw there was no foul play with the food, for he did not feel at all inclined to trust Silas after what had happened.

The company broke up fairly early, but Slogan and his trainer sat there sullenly. Jim appeared to be disgusted, although whether or not he had been a party to the infamous affair the comrades were doubtful.

"I suppose you think you have been very smart!" exclaimed Slogan, at last, for he felt very uncomfortable under Pete's gaze.

"I don't consider you hab been, old hoss!" retorted Pete.

"It is an absurd lie from beginning to end! I never told that scoundrel to do anything of the sort."

"Well, we'm going to leabe it as it is. We know dat you are guilty, and I'm mighty certain Jim, your trainer, knows it, too."

"I don't admit anything of the sort!" growled Jim. "I'll swear I knew nothing about it, that's all! I wouldn't be a party to a trick like that!"

"Dere's nuffin' to connect you wid de affair, old hoss, and I don't believe for a moment dat you knew anything about it. I wouldn't like to believe a ting like dat ob any man, unless I had clear proof."

"You have not the slightest proof that I had anything to do with it, provided it is not all humbug from beginning to end!" declared Slogan.

"Do you admit you were in de garden wid Silas?"

"I certainly went for a stroll that evening, and as I crossed the garden I met him, and exchanged a few words with him."

"You were talking together for some time?"

"Certainly not for many minutes."

"You gave him money?"

"A tip."

"How much did you give him?"

"A few coppers."

"What do you suppose he wanted to drug me for?"

"How should I know? I don't know that he did so."

"You heard him admit it while I was flogging him, and he laid all de blame on you. You did not dare to deny it den, but now de man is out ob de room you pretend you had nuffin' to do wid de matter. At any rate, I ain't flogged you, so you'm got no cause to grumble."

"You have accused me of a crime!"

"Suttingly! If you want me to do so, I can easy gib you in custody for attempting to drug me, and den I can call Silas as a witness; but I dunno dat it will do you any good. Of course, if you prefer it, you can bring an action against me for damages."

"Of course I am not going to that trouble and expense. You have tried to disgrace me."

"Seems to me dat you hab tried to disgrace yourself, old hoss, and dat you hab succeeded pretty well. I dunno weder you will be able to get anyone to meet you in de ring after what has occurred, but I'm mighty certain dat person won't be me. We hab had our last bout, Slogan. I am not going to box wid a scoundrel like you!"

"You had better be careful what you are calling me, you demon!"

"Why, you surely can't tink dat I'm afraid ob you! De best ting for you to do is to get back to your own country, 'cos you'm certainly disgraced yourself in dis one. I'm going to turn in, boys, and mind you dis, Jinks, if dat medicated man calls to-morrow, like he threatens, you will hab to show him your tongue, 'cos I ain't being medicated any more. 'Nuff said!"

Then Pete went to his room, and Slogan was in such a state of rage that Jim did not care to speak to him.

"Hang the fellow!" cried Slogan at last. "I'll be level with him yet. He has ruined our tour—at least that scoundrel Jinks has! He said he would when we got at his man. It was a bad day's work, Jim."

"It was; for he found this Pete, and you are no good against him."

"I am when I am in form."

"Well, that's all my eye, and you know it, Slogan! It's no good disguising the fact that Pete is too many for you. He's a better boxer, and he's quicker—and what is more, he is a lot stronger. You haven't a chance against him, and the sooner you realise that fact, the better it will be for you."

"I suppose you are going to take sides against me now?"

"Not me! What should I do that for? I don't care what you do to Pete. I'd like to see you maul him so that he would never be able to enter the ring again. Only we have got to look things in the face, Slogan. We haven't got the money to go fooling around this country losing matches!"

"Pete has upset all our plans."

"I know that, and that's why I hate the brute! But what are we to do with him. It wouldn't be much use your licking a man, if Pete took you on and thrashed you afterwards; and I don't see how we are going to get out of accepting his challenges. I wish we had never interfered with Jinks's man, but I thought he was going to beat you. As a matter of fact, he would not have had half as much chance against you as Pete had."

"I wasn't anything like done in that last bout."

"I know that. He was merely playing with you. He could have knocked

you out almost any round if he had chosen, but he wanted to damage your face, and he has succeeded a treat."

"I am not in the humour to listen to that rot!" snarled Slogan. "I tell you, Jim, I will have vengeance on that man; I will have it, even if I have to wait for years."

"Well, I don't mind that; only you will be wise to take care he does not bowl you out. He appears to be rather smart, and you see how he has caught you this time."

"Fury! I tell you I had nothing to do with it. I expect it was that fool Silas who wanted to have vengeance on him!"

"Well, he has had it on himself instead," said Jim. "It matters very little whether you had anything to do with it or not; the fact remains that they suspect you, and I do not see how you are going to clear yourself in their eyes."

"I am not going to attempt anything of the sort. I don't care what they think about the matter."

"But you seem to overlook the fact that they will disgrace you every time you try to get a match on. I tell you, Slogan, we are completely done in this country, and the sooner we leave it the better it will be for our healths."

"I am not going to leave it until I have had vengeance on the demon who has tried to ruin and disgrace me! It is a serious matter to me, but he will find it a lot more serious to him before I have done with him."

"All right! I'm in no hurry to leave; but you have got to consider that we shall soon run short of money if we cannot get matches on, and then we shall have to leave whether we like it or not."

The two men sat talking until late. Slogan was in hopes that Silas would enter the room, and that he might have an opportunity of questioning him concerning the matter; but Silas shunned that room, and had no intention of entering it that night if he could possibly avoid it.

At last the pair separated, and went to their rooms, but by that time Pete was snoring loudly.

Slogan could hear him, and his face turned purple with fury as he gazed at it in the glass.

Pete had punished him far more severely than he had imagined, and he knew perfectly well that the marks would remain for weeks.

"I'd like to take his life!" muttered Slogan. "He is not fit to live. But I will have vengeance yet!"

And that night Johnson, the referee, was speeding away to the south in the hope of finding Pete's master.

CHAPTER 19.

The Ripped Clothes.

THE following morning Pete left a note for his comrades stating that he had gone into New York. It had suddenly occurred to him that he would like to buy Jane a wedding present; and he drove some of the shopkeepers nearly mad by making them turn over their stock.

It was not until late in the afternoon that he secured what he required, then he went to have dinner, and he found that his next train was not until nine o'clock.

He was at the station about ten minutes before time, and took a seat in a first-class compartment; then he lighted a clay pipe, and commenced to smoke.

Presently the carriage door was opened, and two men, dressed in tremendous style, gazed at Pete.

One of them was a young man of two or three-and-twenty, and he was a regular young giant. Pete, being a great admirer of a strong man, and there could be no doubt this was one, was inclined to admire him at the first glance, but when he saw his face all his admiration left him. It was a coarse, brutal-looking face, and at the first glance Pete felt the fellow was a bully. His first words confirmed this opinion.

"Waal, what do you make of that, Mowlem?" drawled the elder man, gazing at Pete contemptuously.

The young man addressed as Mowlem glared fiercely at Pete.

"You leave me to settle the hound, Picton," he said. "I guess I'll fix his flint. Here, you there, what are you doing in this carriage?"

"I'm smoking, and waiting for de train to start, my dear old hoss!"

"Waal, come out of it. This is a first-class carriage. You will find a cattle-truck on the luggage train. Out you come! We want this carriage."

"Den you will find plenty ob room dat oder side."

"I reckon this is a bit too much!" exclaimed Mowlem. "Are you coming out, or are you not?"

"I'm working on de lines ob de not, old hoss!"

"If I don't——"

"Stop a bit, Mowlem!" exclaimed Picton. "Here comes the guard. I guess we will let him do the dirty work. Here, guard, what's this fellow doing in this carriage?"

The guard glanced at Pete, and noticed that he was well dressed. He was not going to make any mistake.

"Do you know this is a first-class compartment?" he demanded.

"M'yes!"

"Have you a first-class ticket?"

"Suttingly!"

"Well, these gentlemen want the carriage. I'll find you another one."

"Look here, old hoss, just you go and find dem anoder one! I don't want deir company, I can assure you."

"Show me your ticket!" cried the guard.

Now this was never an easy matter with Pete. He frequently lost his tickets, and invariably mislaid them. He had mislaid it on the present occasion, and commenced rummaging in all his pockets, while Mowlem made remarks that must have convinced the guard he was anything but a gentleman.

"I know I hab got dat ticket somewhere," observed Pete, "but I can't quite recollect de spot where I placed it."

"Here, I'll soon have him out!" cried Mowlem, springing into the carriage, and gripping Pete by the collar.

Mowlem soon discovered that he had undertaken a big order. He could not shift Pete, but he shifted some of his clothing. He ripped the collar off his coat, for the start, then tore all the buttons off his waistcoat, and then he got a grip on the back of Pete's coat, and literally ripped it off his back;

but, in doing so, he got close to the open door, and Pete suddenly charged at him, sending him flying on the top of Picton, and they both fell to the platform.

"Why, here's my ticket on de floor," observed Pete, calmly. "Funny ting, I knew dat ticket was somewhere. You'm broken my pipe, Mowlem, but I 'spect I hab got a few more here. M'yes! Here's one."

"Well, the fellow has had a lesson," growled Mowlem. "Let's get into another carriage."

"Are you going to take their names and addresses?" demanded the guard, as they hurried away.

"Nunno! I don't want to know dem."

"I'd say not. But look at the damage they have done to your suit!"

"Dat doesn't matter, old hoss!"

"Waal, I call it a thundering shame, that's all about it! I reckon if I was you I'd make them pay for it. You've scarcely got a rag to your back."

"I don't mind, guard. Put dat sovereign into your pocket. I like a man who takes de part ob de weak against de strong. Mowlem ain't de best-behaved man I hab eber met, still we will suppose he doesn't know any better. I ain't going to boder about him now."

"You are a good sort, young chap. A downright good sort! If you change your mind, and want their names and addresses, I'll get them for you before we have finished this journey."

Then the guard hurried away well pleased with the little adventure, while Pete looked perfectly content, and puffed at his pipe as calmly as though nothing had happened.

In a very few minutes he was fast asleep, and if the guard had not remembered his destination, by having examined the ticket, he would certainly have gone past it. He came to the door, and woke him up just in time; then they kept the train back a little to have another search for Pete's ticket, which he found he had lost again.

"It doesn't matter, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "I 'spect I hab got it in some ob my pockets. Good-night!"

The ticket-collector was not so pleasant as the guard about it, and he told Pete he would have to pay again.

"Bery well, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete, cheerfully. "I suppose you will return de money if I find de ticket later on."

"You can apply for it. I will give you a receipt."

He made it out, and when Pete dived his hand into his pocket for the necessary coins, he brought out the ticket first dive.

"Why, dere it is! I knew I had put it somewhere. Dat saves us a lot ob trouble."

Pete handed the money and the ticket to the collector.

"Well, you may keep dat, and de ticket as well. Good-night, my dear old hoss! Funny ting I always lose my tickets, ain't it, old hoss!"

The ticket-collector had a good lot to say, but Pete did not wait to hear it. He proceeded to the inn, and met Jane at the door.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and trying not to laugh,

although she did not succeed, for Pete looked like some old scarecrow. "What ever have you been doing, Pete?"

"Buying you a brooch, my dear. You will find it in dat little case. It's for your birfday present—I mean your wedding present. Are Jack and Sammy in de room?"

"Oh, you are kind, Pete. Yes; and there's two more gentlemen come. One of them is a regular giant, but he's got a horrid face."

"Golly! Is his name Mowlem, and de oder one Picton?"

"Yes! Those are the names they have given. They are having supper—so are your friends. They must have come by the same train as you, and were just in time for supper."

"Well, you see, Jane, I lost de ticket, and dat caused a little delay. Are you waiting in de supper-room?"

"Yes. It is Silas's night out."

"Stop a bit! I will gib dem a surprise. At which table is Mowlem?"

"The one by the door. He is at the further end of it, and his friend is next to him."

"Nuffin' could be better. You take in someting, and I will crawl in after you on my hands and knees, and get under de table. Do you tink he will see me?"

"He can't see you unless he happens to stand up. Neither of them can. The table is too long."

"All right, Jane! You just walk into de room slowly, den leabe de rest to me."

"He is big enough to kill you, Pete; and by the look of his face, I don't believe he would be very particular. He had the impudence to say that I was a pretty girl. He's not so pretty."

"De man has ebidently got good taste, de same as Jim. But lead de way, my dear. I'll do de crawling."

"Hadn't you better change your clothes before you enter the room, Pete? They are sure to laugh at you if they see you like that."

"I don't mind being laughed at a bit, my dear."

"But you are torn to pieces, Pete."

"I hab got some more clothes upstairs, so I shall be able to change dem later on. Only, I am going to hab supper first. Now, lead the way, and we will see if we can manage dis little matter widout being seen. I particularly want to get under de table widout being seen."

"Are you going to tip it on to the top of them?" inquired Jane dubiously. She knew that Pete was partial to practical jokes, and she was really afraid of what Mowlem would do to him.

"Nunno, my dear! You stop in de room, and de chances are you will see a little fun."

Pete did not experience the slightest difficulty in getting beneath the table without detection. No one in the room saw him, and Jane was too anxious concerning his fate if he offended the great man to laugh, and, beyond being rather nervous as to the consequences, her manner was perfectly natural.

Pete knew which were Mowlem's legs, both by their length and the pattern of his suit. There was no mistaking a check like that.

He suddenly caught hold of the right trouser-leg, then, uttering a furious growl and a lot of snarls, which sounded exactly like a large dog would make, Pete ripped that trouser-leg right up. After that he gave Mowlem such a violent wrench that he came beneath the table, so did the tablecloth, and all the plates and dishes.

Pete now got hold of the great man's coat, and he ripped that down; then he tore off his waistcoat.

It was done in a very few moments, and Pete broke away, and stood in the middle of the room, gazing at Mowlem as he struggled to his feet.

A few moments before, he had been seated at the head of the table, dressed to the nines. Now he stood at the head of that table, torn to shreds, while his ripped trouser-leg gave him such a funny appearance that Jane shrieked with laughter.

Blank amazement was the predominant expression on the faces of all—especially on Mowlem's. He did not seem to realise how it had happened, and he gazed at his ruined garments with an expression of wonder that caused Pete to howl with laughter.

"Yah, yah, yah!" roared that worthy. "Ain't you damaged your suit dis time, old hoss? He reminds you ob one ob dose goddesses dat come on de stage wid deir starboard leg showing, doesn't he, Jane? Oh, don't laugh at de man! He can't help his untidy appearance. You might lend him a clothes-brush; and I dunno dat he won't want a needle and fread."

It seemed to slowly dawn on Mowlem how it had all happened. He could easily recognise Pete by his torn clothes.

"Stop a bit, Mowlem!" exclaimed Picton, stepping in front of him; for he was looking dangerous, and there could not be a doubt that he intended to go for Pete. "Is your name Pete?"

"You'm guessed first time."

"You boxed with a man named Burch, and beat him?"

"You'm guessed de second time."

"Will you box Mowlem?"

"You'm guessed de third time, old hoss; and I must say you'm one ob de best guessers I hab eber met."

"Don't touch him now, Mowlem!" exclaimed Picton. "It would spoil business, you know. Are you prepared to make the stakes a thousand pounds a side?"

"That is so, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Jinks, stepping forward. "Jinks is my name."

"Mine is Picton. We can soon settle matters. I heard of Pete through Johnson, who acted as referee, and I brought my man here on chance. Funny thing, but they met in the train. You can see that if you look at Pete; and you can see they met a second time if you look at Mowlem. Now, the third time is never like the rest, so we shall see what happens when they meet again. When will your man be ready?"

"Any night you like, dear boy. We can stake the cash at a moment's notice."

"Good! I can see you are a business man, and I reckon I'm the same. Now, those two hot-headed beauties will need our special care, Jinks."

"My dear fellow, Pete is as gentle as a lamb!"

"I reckon I can see he is not rough," laughed Picton. "We don't want them treating each other gently, however. What we want is a proper bout, and each hopes his own man will prove the best. That's natural. Now, suppose we arrange matters. What do you say to twenty three-minute rounds, minute between, last round four minutes?"

"Agreed!" exclaimed Jinks.

"Can you stake the money?"

"M'yes, old hoss!" answered Pete. "We'm got de Bank ob England notes here. Ten ob a hundred will do for one thousand. Here dey are."

"Right!" exclaimed Picton, pulling out a cheque-book, and drawing a cheque for a thousand pounds. "There are my dollars."

"Why, don't you see, dear boy, I would rather have Government money," said Jinks calmly. "Your cheque may be all right, but then, again, it may be all wrong."

"Sir! Do you doubt my honour?"

"I'm not considering your honour at all, my dear fellow," said Jinks calmly; "but my man is not going to stake good notes against a worthless cheque."

"Who says my cheque is worthless?"

"No one; but don't you see it might be?"

"Here, I reckon this is rather too ridiculous! All the same, Johnson will be here directly, and he will guarantee my cheque."

"But who is going to guarantee Johnson?"

"Are you frightened of your money?"

"No, my dear fellow, but I'm frightened of your cheque. It may be all right, but I have my doubts about it, and I'm not going to stake hard cash against it. Look here, we are in no such desperate hurry. Just you get that cheque cashed to-morrow—if you can—and then we will go ahead."

This arrangement did not suit Picton at all. He knew perfectly well that he could not get that cheque cashed, neither could anyone else, for he had had some shocking luck lately, and his balance of three hundred pounds at his banker's was on the wrong side. They had let him go as far as they intended to, and he was powerless to raise the money.

"I call this downright insulting!" he exclaimed. "I have a good mind not to let my man meet yours."

"You named the sum," said Jinks. "You must not think that because you are an American and because I am an Englishman you can rush me, my dear fellow. I know you Yankees are very smart, especially in your own estimation, and I also know that we British may be a little too confiding with you; but you will find there are a good many of us who are

quite as competent in business matters as you are. Would you take my cheque for a thousand pounds?"

"Yes, I will take it as stakes against mine."

"Well, I should have to give you Pete's cheque, or Jack's cheque, because my account does not run into three figures, let alone four."

"I reckon I will take any of their cheques. There! Now, who tries to best the other?"

"Well, you won't do anything of the sort. You see, I know that my friend's cheque is as good as gold, and I don't believe yours is any better than paper. No, the businesslike way is to stake notes; and that is what is going to be done."

"Look here, Picton," exclaimed Pete, "if you can't raise de money, I am quite willing to make de amount less. In fact, I will box de man for nuffin'."

"Do you happen to know that he is the champion of the world?"

"Nunno, I didn't know dat, and I don't 'spect for a moment you know it. Still, dere you are. I ain't at all particular. You can make de stakes nuffin', or any amount you like, and we will put down de money. You see, I am merely going to box for de fun ob de ting, and don't intend to take your man's money. If he loses, and I win money from him, I should gib it away to de poor people in dis town."

"Yes, I reckon so! You are not at all likely to do that, for two reasons, and one of them is that you won't win. I must say that I have been treated in a most insulting manner by your backer!"

"Well, I'm not a professional, so you see he ain't my backer in dat sense."

"Well, seeing that there is a difficulty about the money, I will——"

"Dere ain't de slightest difficulty on our side. If dere's any difficulty, it is on yours. Howeber, dere need be none, 'cos I am prepared to make what arrangements you like. You hab only got to name dem, and I will accept."

"I tell you what we will do, seeing you refuse my cheque. We will arrange that the winner takes all the gate-money."

"I agree to that," said Jinks.

"Then consider it is settled that way. The loser ought to have something."

"You can be certain dat man is going to get it," said Pete. "Still, as you appear to be rader hard up, I will gib Mowlem five pounds if I beat him, and dat will buy him a new suit ob clothes. You see, I tore dose clothes 'cos he tore mine, but if I had known de silly brute was poor, I wouldn't hab done it. Here, Mowlem, you may as well take de five pounds now, and you can buy your clothes weder I beat you or not. I don't like seeing you go about like some old scarecrow, 'cos you don't look at all respectable, and if you wear dose slashed trousers you will make de people laugh at you. 'Nuff said!"

"I shall certainly take the money for the damage you have done, because I consider that you deserve punishment. And as for your impertinence—

why, I shall punish you in the ring to-morrow night for that. You will, of course, have to pay for the damage you have done to that crockery."

"M'yes, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "You can bet dat de landlord will be quite competent to look after dat, and he is far more likely to charge it to my account dan yours, especially if he learns dat you are short ob money."

"I reckon we can find more money than you can!" cried Mowlem. "We don't happen to have ready money with us, because we have been travelling about, and——"

"Rader rough on de proprietors ob de hotels, dat, I should say. But neber mind, old hoss, dere is bound to be a big gate, so you will hab plenty ob money in your possession after you hab beaten me."

"Well, it's like your cheek to offer to meet a man like me!" said Mowlem. "But that is your business. Mine is to punish your presumption; and you will find that is exactly what I am going to do to-morrow night."

Picton was rather afraid the two men would quarrel. But he need not have had the slightest fear on that point, for Mowlem was too anxious concerning the gate-money on the morrow to risk meeting Pete now. He firmly believed that he had an easy victory before him, and would have plenty of opportunities during the bout of punishing Pete; whereas if they came to blows now, Mowlem fondly imagined that he would frighten Pete away from the boxing bout.

Thus matters passed off all right that evening, and the following day Jinks and Picton were busy making their final arrangements, while the latter took particular care that Mowlem did not leave his company.

CHAPTER 20.

The Last Great Fight.

PICTON had another try to induce Jinks to stake notes against his cheque; but, finding this quite impossible, he suggested doubling the prices, and he got several sporting gentlemen who were coming to see the bout to find some money on Mowlem's behalf, although they would only deposit a hundred pounds.

Pete found a similar sum, and gave notice that if he won he would distribute the money amongst the poor of the town, while he would leave the gate-money to Jinks and Ponder.

"You see, boys," he explained, as they were seated at lunch, "I am only boxing for de fun ob de ting, and because I consider Mowlem deserves a thrashing, to teach him better manners."

"It is you who will get the thrashing," snarled Mowlem, "and I shall not make it a light one!"

"Well, we'm got to see dat, old hoss!" exclaimed Pete. "Ob course, we can't tell till we begin—in fact, we sha'n't be able to tell till we finish, but I 'spect dere will be some boxing worf seeing, 'specially if you are anything like de champion ob de world."

"Well, you are very kind to promise to give the money away," sneered Mowlem; "but as there is not the slightest chance of your ever winning it, your liberality is not so great as it sounds."

"Well, all I mean to say is, dat I ain't taking money from de boxing; I'm doing it for sport, and not for betting."

"Would you like to have a bet with me? I will give you two to one."

"Nunno, Mowlem! If you want to bet, you will find dat Jinks will oblige you, provided you are prepared to deposit your money. Jinks would bet on weder a fly's whiskers were going to curl in his old age, or any mortal ting, but he likes to make sure ob his money in case he wins. You see, he doesn't care to trust a stranger."

Pete was the only one who refused to go out after lunch. He declared that it was essential he should take care of his strength for the fight that night, and that the only way to do that was to smoke, and think. Jinks knew that he would smoke a good deal too much for boxing requirements, but, as he also knew that nothing would stop him, he gave no advice.

At the appointed hour Pete and his friends entered the hall, which was densely thronged; for Mowlem was a very well-known man.

Every one of the spectators was absolutely confident that he would win easily; and as Jinks was the only one who would back Pete, he got as many bets as he required, and he always got good odds.

Mowlem was the first to enter the ring, and he was greeted with deafening cheers. He was indeed a man of magnificent physique, and he stood quite six feet high, while the girth of his chest was enormous.

His muscles stood out in great knotted cords all over his body, and as he was rather fond of playing to the gallery, he kept moving about to reveal those muscles to their full advantage.

A few cheers burst forth as Pete followed him into the ring, and it looked a foregone conclusion. Slogan, who was amongst the spectators, was delighted at the contrast between the two men, and Burch, who was another spectator, also felt joyful; but he was not quite so sanguine as the remainder of the company, for he had not forgotten that terrific blow that Pete had dealt him.

Time was called, and the two men shook hands, after bowing to the audience, then they commenced to spar.

Jinks felt somewhat anxious, because Mowlem was so much bigger and heavier, but Jinks had great confidence in his man, and he knew that he would require a tremendous lot of beating.

It was Pete's rule to allow his adversary to open the fight, so that he could gauge him, but on this occasion he was the first to lead off, and although Mowlem both ducked and tried to guard that blow, it was delivered with such rapidity that it caught him in the face. Pete had fully expected him to duck, and had delivered the blow accordingly, while he got away before Mowlem could get in his counter.

Mowlem was far too experienced a fighter to lose his temper at the adverse start. Pete had merely gained a point, but Mowlem considered

that he could afford to lose a good many if he chose. His chief hit was the upper-cut, which invariably knocked his opponent out, but it was far too early in the fight to deliver a blow like that, and so he continued to spar, and tried now and then to get in a body blow; but ere that round ended, he had come to the conclusion that Pete was an extraordinarily good boxer, while the rapidity of his blows was simply marvellous.

The round was not nearly as spirited as the spectators had expected, but they were hopeful for better things, nor were they to be disappointed.

Pete had an idea that, although his opponent was undoubtedly possessed of abnormal strength, his staying powers were not quite up to the mark, while, like most heavy weights, he was not very quick; and, for these reasons, Pete gave his adversary no breathing-time. There was some hard fighting during that round. Mowlem's blows were very heavy, but he wasn't anything like as quick as Pete, and, although the latter gained more points, Johnson was the referee, and Pete knew that he could not rely on getting all those marks scored in his favour.

"Dere's only one ting to be done, Jinks," exclaimed Pete, as he went to his corner. "I shall hab to knock dat man out ob time, if I want to win dis bout, and I do want to do dat."

"He's a mighty hard hitter, my dear fellow."

"Dat's so, but he ain't as quick as lightning. I can easy get in two blows to his one, only I hab de idea dat Johnson aint gibing me de benefit ob dem."

Possibly, Mowlem received some instructions from his second, for he changed his tactics the next round, and made a rushing fight of it from start to finish.

Nothing could have suited Pete better, for he had wonderful staying powers, and he knew that long before the twenty rounds were up both combatants must be tired at the rate the fight was going.

Pete now confined himself to body blows, and he got in one or two on the mark, for Mowlem had a very bad practice of raising his elbow a trifle too high, and Pete was on the watch all the time.

Johnson glanced at the judges several times, but as those worthies were friends of his, and as he happened to know both of them had made private bets on Mowlem, Johnson felt pretty confident that Mowlem would get the benefit of any doubts.

So far there was little to choose between the pair. Pete was the prettier boxer, and he had certainly scored more points, but, as they had not been scored to him, he did not get the benefit of them.

Five rushing rounds were fought, and when Mowlem came up for the sixth he showed signs of distress, and now he commenced to spar, instead of opening the round with a rush, as had been his previous practice.

But Pete was not going to allow that. He commenced to force the fighting. He was determined to give his adversary no rest now.

Three or four times he landed body-blows, and, although they were not delivered with his full strength, there could be little doubt that Mowlem found them quite hard enough.

"It will be a case of bellows to mend before long," murmured Jinks, as Pete went to his corner.

"You tink I'm breaking up, den?"

"Not a bit of it, my dear fellow. You look as fresh as when you started. I'm talking of him."

"Well, I ain't going to let him hab matters all his own road," said Pete. "You see, de man has been rushing me from de start, and now he wants a little time to get his breaf. So do I, but we ain't going to hab it. He's asked for a rushing fight, and dat is what he is going to hab until de end, unless, ob course, I find dat I cannot keep it up. Howeber, I ain't anything like dat just at present."

Again Mowlem tried sparring, but again Pete forced the fight, and he got in some very heavy body-blows; then Mowlem lost his temper, and, rushing in, he got to close quarters.

The referee took no heed of the struggle. He wanted Mowlem to win, and was fully determined that he should, for he had no doubt that he would be able to stand up to Pete for the twenty rounds. Several times he exchanged glances with the judges, but he need not have had the slightest fear in that direction. They had got as much money on Mowlem as he had, as they felt absolutely certain that he would win; at least, they had felt so before the fight began.

Now matters were rather different, for they must have seen that Pete was the better boxer, even if he had not as much strength; but what they could not understand was that Mowlem showed signs of distress, while Pete looked perfectly fresh, and what made it more curious was that Mowlem was in perfect training, while Pete had never trained at all.

But then Pete always kept fit. There is no doubt that he smoked rather too much, but his constitution was as hard as iron, and smoking did not have the slightest effect on him.

The fact of the matter was that Mowlem was feeling the effect of the heavy blows Pete was delivering from time to time. He became more cautious in guarding with his right, and directly Pete saw this he paid more attention to his face.

Mowlem knew that he was not shaping at all well. He had relied on his great strength to settle matters before this. His custom was to get in a blow on the mark or on the point that practically settled the fight, and then punish his adversary during the remaining rounds; but on this occasion he found it quite impossible to get in his favourite blows, and each time he tried he suffered considerably—for, although Pete did not appear to be hitting hard, there was a tremendous lot of power in his swift blows.

As the bout progressed matters became so bad for Mowlem that Johnson became seriously alarmed. There was only one thing that could save him, and that was to get in a knock-out blow, and this Mowlem intended to do by fair means or foul.

They were going up for the fifteenth round, the seconds having been

ordered out of the ring, and just at the call of time Mowlem's second uttered a cry of pain.

Pete turned to see what was the matter, and in a second Mowlem was on him. He delivered a terrific blow beneath Pete's jaw, and a second one on the mark. Then he got in three more blows beneath the jaw, and Pete swung on the ropes, where Mowlem held him fixed, and struck at his face with brutal fury.

Jinks had his knife out in a few seconds, and slashed at the ropes, then Pete dropped to the ground.

Jinks dashed a bucket of water into his face, but before five seconds had been counted Pete was on his feet, and faced his adversary smiling.

Jinks hesitated for a moment. He knew that he could claim the fight on the foul, but he also knew that judges and referee would rule against him, and, as he felt confident that Pete would not get justice, he determined to allow the fight to go on, and he joined the ropes as the round was proceeding.

Mowlem knew that the blows he had delivered when Pete was off his guard must have had a very great effect, and so he rushed in, determined to give him no rest; but although Pete had suffered so severely, he showed no signs of it. It is true that he fought now entirely on the defensive, but he was able to keep Mowlem out, and he scored quite as many points.

The round was drawing to a close, when suddenly Pete sprang forward, and with all his strength delivered his left in Mowlem's face, and his right on the mark, and the big man went down with a thud.

Pete glanced at the timekeeper, for he knew the round was near its close, and now, as Mowlem slowly rose, time was called.

"Has he injured you much, Pete?" inquired Jinks.

"Well, he ain't exactly improved my feelings, Jinks," answered Pete. "At de same time I ain't gibing in just yet."

"Of course, it was a foul."

"M'yes; but you were quite right not to claim it. Dere won't be anoder one. Dat second can yowl as much as he likes, but I sha'n't turn to see what ain't de matter wid him. I don't like dose tricks, Jinks, and I hope to be able to prove my displeasure to Mowlem. You see, I am going to try to win dis fight now. Dere goes time."

Mowlem was cautious now. That knock-down blow had taken a lot out of him, and he did not dare to give a chance away. He sparred for an opening, and, although Pete did not give him one, he did not force the fight until nearly the finish of the round, and then he sprang in, and the three terrific blows he delivered caused a murmur of awe to run round the throng of spectators.

Again Mowlem went down, and when he came up for the next round he looked like a beaten man. As a matter of fact, he was a beaten man, but Pete had not any intention of relying on marks. He knew perfectly well that he would not get his fair share assigned, and so he determined on following his adversary's tactics, and to knock him out of time.

In the next round Mowlem tried a rushing fight once more, although

he was far from fit for it, and he quickly found that it was an error of judgment, for Pete retaliated, and, having forced him backwards towards the ropes, got in a terrific blow in the face that drove Mowlem clean over them.

Pete ended the eighteenth and nineteenth rounds by knock-down blows, and now Mowlem only had the one chance of knocking Pete out of time.

"Seconds out of the ring! Last round—four minutes! Time!"

Mowlem sprang in with blind fury, and Pete cross-countered with his right. All his remaining strength was in that blow, while eight seconds were counted off before Mowlem rose.

Pete was satisfied now, and would have let matters rest as they were, for he knew that even Johnson would not dare to award the verdict to Mowlem.

But, although Mowlem must have known that he had met his master in the ring, he still had the chance of getting in that knock-out blow.

Again he rushed in, then Pete's right landed on the mark, and Mowlem fell heavily, while the ten seconds were counted off without his showing the slightest sign of rising. The fight was at an end, and Johnson was compelled to award the verdict to Pete.

But as he did so Mowlem struggled to his feet.

"I claim the fight on a foul!" he roared. "He struck me below the belt!"

"You are an ass!" laughed Jinks. "It is true that there was a foul, but it was on your side, when I cut the ropes. I did not claim it because I knew that my man would not get fair play."

"Go for him, boys!" roared one of Mowlem's partisans; and a rush was made for the ring.

"Come on, Sam!" cried Jack. "There's going to be a row!"

"Yah, yah, yah! Dey want a free fight, do dey? Bery well, dey shall hab it!" shouted Pete, lashing out right and left, and bowling over a man at every blow, while Jack, Sam, and Jinks backed him up so well that the mob were disheartened in no time.

"Come on, old hosses!" roared Pete. "You ain't made much ob a show ob it so far. Try your luck for de second round. It would be a mighty pity to gib in just at de start. Some ob you hab got nasty black eyes to take home to your wives and families. Don't you tink you ought to avenge dem? Wouldn't you like a few more rounds, Mowlem? You ain't shown up so mighty well during de fight, but you'm shown up a lot worse after it."

"I will meet you any day you like to name."

"Bery well. Suppose we meet now, and den again to-morrow, and so on each day till one ob us gets tired. If you find a difficulty about de money I will fight you widout it."

"I will make arrangements later on."

"Yah, yah, yah! All right, only I rader 'spect it will be sort ob deferred arrangements. Now den, you sportsmen! Yah, yah, yah! 'Scuse me laughing at you; but if you want to fight, come on dis platform six at a time. Come on de lot ob you, and I will fight you single-handed!"

Pete pulled off his gloves, and he really meant what he said.

"Now, den, come on! You can't surely be frightened ob one man. I'll take de lot ob you. You'm bound to beat; but I'll mark some ob you first. Come on, you cowards! You'm worse dan Mowlem, and dat's saying a good deal, 'cos he's a mighty liar to declare dat I hit him below de belt."

"Be careful what you are saying, fellow!" snarled Mowlem.

"I am, old hoss. I'm considering ebery word. I merely mention dat you are a cowardly liar. And see here, Mowlem. I ain't in de habit ob hitting below de belt. Nunno! You ain't going yet. If you don't acknowledge dat you told a lie in saying I hit you below the belt, I'll horsehip you in de presence ob all dis company. Now you know my intentions to de letter."

"Unhand me, fellow, or I will hurl you off the platform!"

"Golly! Will you?" cried Pete, grappling with him. "Den let me see you do it. Now, den! Where does de frowing come in? I could hurl you amongst dose people, so dat you wouldn't get up again for a time."

As Pete spoke he raised Mowlem from the floor, and held him in his arms absolutely helpless, for he had placed a grip round him that choked his breath, and seemed to be crushing his ribs in, and if his life had depended on it he would have been unable to use his fists.

"Did I hit you below de belt, Mowlem?"

"No!"

"Louder dan dat. All de people in de place-hab got to hear you. Did I hit you below de belt?"

"No!"

"Den you can go, and if you want to send anoder challenge to me, you can do so any time you like; but I don't tink I shall get one. 'Nuff said! As for you people—well, it is quite right to want your own countryman to win; but it ain't at all right to accuse de victor ob foul play. And you know as well as I do dat all de foul play was on de side ob Mowlem. If you want to smash up de ring, you are at perfect liberty to try it on, and I'll smash up some ob you while you are trying."

Some of the spectators slunk away. Possibly they thought that there might be some firing; but there was not, and the hall was cleared without any further disturbance.

Then the comrades returned to the inn, and Mowlem and his backers followed.

CHAPTER 21.

The Midnight Plot.

"**N**OW, look here, Jinks!" exclaimed Pete, as they were all seated at supper that night. "You ain't done at all badly out ob dis little tour."

"My dear fellow, Ponder and I have made a small fortune."

"We shall make more," growled Ponder. "Of course, we ought to take

more. We will take Pete all over the country, and let him pay his expenses, while we take the gate-money and bets on him. You see, he doesn't mind spending money, and as we don't mind making it—there you are."

"Yah, yah, yah! I rader like your cheek, Ponder; but it ain't coming off dis time. Jinks's idea was to show Slogan dat he can't play dirty tricks with impunity. Well, he has seen dat, ain't you, Slogan?"

"I'll have nothing more to do with you, you beast!" snarled Slogan.

"I'm rader glad to hear dat, old hoss. Still, as I was about to say, it is time we returned home. I ain't going to box any more, unless Mowlem challenges me again."

"I intend to challenge you!" cried Slogan.

"Nunno, you don't. You'm had more dan enough ob it; and de same remarks apply to Mowlem. At any rate, we are going to return to England. Now, de question is, when shall we return? When do you say, boys?"

Jack and Sam said that they were ready to go at any moment. Ponder suggested returning in a year's time, and Jinks thought six months would be a good time.

"I can plainly see dat I shall hab to settle dis matter," observed Pete.

"We will take de average. Considering dat Jack and Sammy want to return in, say, a week, and Ponder wants to return in a year, de average is one day, so we will start to-morrow. 'Nuff said! If any ob you want to fight me, it will hab to be to-morrow morning, 'cos we'm going to start in de afternoon. 'Nuff said!"

"You silly brute," growled Ponder, "you are going to do nothing of the sort! I tell you I won't return to-morrow. I mean to go through with the tour."

"Den you will hab to tour alone, old hoss, 'cos I am going to start to-morrow, and you won't be able to alter dat fact, howeber hard you try. You don't object to dat, boys?"

"Not a bit," answered Jack.

"It's all the same to me when we return," declared Sam.

"Dat settles it," cried Pete. "Ponder will hab anoder chance ob showing us what a splendid sailor he is."

"Listen to reason, Pete."

"If I hab got to do dat, old hoss, it ain't de slightest good my listening to you, 'cos I sha'n't get any reason out ob you."

"We can't return so suddenly. It is quite out of the question. I tell you that—"

"It doesn't matter what you tell us, Ponder. We'm going to return to-morrow, and all your obstinacy won't alter dat fact. If you don't want to return, you can stop here, or you can go somewhere else. It won't make any difference to us. It ain't at all impossible dat we shall be able to return by de Stella, and as she seemed a nice, steady vessel, and suitable to Ponder's seafaring nature, why I should say we may as well go back on her. Dat would please de skipper, and I'm mighty certain dat it would please Bill."

Ponder protested. He did not want to go to sea again, and when he found that Pete was quite obdurate, he even suggested to Jinks that they should remain in America.

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Jinks, "you ought to be satisfied with our tour. It is true that it has been short, but we have made a pot of money—a lot more than Slogan, for instance."

"You stupid brute, I have lost money!" snarled Slogan.

"Well, that proves that we have made more than you, my dear fellow, because we have made it. There was an excellent audience last night, and as everyone was willing to give three to one on Mowlem, and as I took all the bets I could get—why, it stands to reason that we made a bit. Ha, ha, ha! Just a trifle, you know. Well, if you won't box any more, Pete, I suppose we may as well return with you. The Stella is certain to be a week or so taking in cargo, and I don't see why we shouldn't go by her. We know the skipper is a decent sort, and we remember that Poi or thoroughly enjoyed the rolling of the vessel coming over."

"Sometimes, Jinks, I have my doubts whether you are all there," snarled Ponder.

"You would, Ponder, taking into consideration what a mutton-headed idiot you are. But you can't help that, my dear fellow. You ought to be very thankful that you have succeeded in keeping out of a lunatic asylum for so long."

"You are an empty-headed ass, Jinks!" cried Ponder.

"And you are the stupidest idiot I ever met, dear boy, only you can't help it."

"Now, look here, old hosses. You are bof perfectly right in your remarks, so dere ain't de slightest need to quarrel 'bout de matter. I am only pleased to tink dat you hab succeeded in forming such a correct estimate ob your natures. Dere's a train at free o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and dat is de one we will go by."

"How do you know that there is a train at three, Pete?" inquired Jack. He had experience that Pete was not always correct about trains.

"'Cos I asked dem in de city, and dey said dere was a train at dat time. It was too early for me to catch, so I came by a later one."

"Well, because there is a train from there to here at three, it does not follow that there is one from here to there at the same time."

"Say dat again, Jack, while I'm tinkin' it out. You seem to hab got it rader mixed."

"It's all right, Pete," laughed Jack. "You are working your train the wrong way; but if you leave it to me, I will find out the trains. You want to start after lunch?"

"Dat's it, Jack."

"All right Leave it to me, and I will find out the time of the trains."

"In dat case, I'll get to bed, 'cos I need some rest. Ob course, Mowlem does not require anyting like dat; but den he's such a big man, and a little boxing doesn't affect him at all."

Pete was merely sleepy; but that was generally the case with him after supper. Being a very early riser, he liked to get to bed early.

In about a quarter of an hour's time he was fast asleep, and soon after he had retired Slogan and his backer followed his example. They shared a double-bedded room, and both seated themselves on chairs by the open window, and appeared to be in very despondent frames of mind.

"The demon has about ruined us," muttered Slogan, at last.

"That's about the truth," growled Jim. "I really thought you would have shaped better with him."

"Oh, go and hang yourself! What's the good of harping on that? The question is, what are we going to do?"

"I don't know. Mowlem will challenge you, and I tell you straight I believe he will beat you."

"No, he wouldn't. At the same time, I'm not going to accept his challenge."

"Then what are you going to do? We haven't enough money to get back. I don't believe I've got enough to pay our bill here."

"It's all the fault of that brute Pete. He has spoilt our tour."

"Well, Jinks has, at any rate; and the worst of it is we can't say much to him, because, in his beastly polite way, he will remind us that we got at his man, and did our best to smash him."

"Who cares what the silly brute says? Now, look here, Jim. We are both in the same boat, and it stands to reason that we must stick together. There's only one way out of the difficulty. Pete has robbed us. He has spoilt our tour, and that's the same as robbing us. We should have made thousands. Very well, he will have to make good some of that money that we have lost. You can see that it is fair enough."

"Fair be hanged! What does it matter whether it is fair or not? If you can show me how we can make the fellow shell out, I'm game. But there is no way. We might get him to lend us a few pounds, but——"

"I would starve first!"

"Ever tried starving?"

"No."

"Well, I have, and it's jolly unpleasant. All the same, how can we make him shell out?"

"Take it."

"What!"

"Can't you see he has stopped us getting money, so we have a right——"

"Never mind that, Slogan. You won't convince me that we have the right to sneak his money."

"Our money!"

"Rats! All the same, I am willing to run some risk; but how could it be done?"

"Suppose I say that I will take all the risk?"

"You can't do that very well. The risk we should run would not be to imprisonment. If I know anything of the fellow, he would not go to that"

length; but, don't you see, if you were caught in the act, I should have to bear my share of the blame."

"And do you really care?"

"Well, it depends on the blame. If he started blaming us with a horsewhip, I should care, and that's the likeliest thing imaginable."

"Just as though we would allow him to do anything of the sort! However, that has nothing to do with the question. We know that he has a large amount of money in his possession. He has bragged that he can find thousands. Well, suppose I relieve him of some of it? Of course, the money would be in bank-notes; but he is a careless brute, and probably does not know the numbers. At any rate, we should be able to deal with the notes over here. We could lie low for a month or so, and he would never bother about following us up. See, we could go for a tour into Canada, or anywhere we liked, and have a good time of it. He really owes us——"

"Humbug! We don't want to talk that foolery. The question is, dare you make the attempt, and, if so, when would you do it?"

"To-night, most certainly, and then we could make a bolt for it. Leave our luggage here, and the bill. The one should about square the other; besides, we can't help that. It would not do to stop here, because he would accuse us straight away. No; if I succeeded, and I shall, we must leave the place at once, and we can start walking into the country at once. The wilder the country, the better it would be. See? If you take train, you can be traced; while if you walk through the country it is a more difficult matter. Now, are you game?"

"Yes. Mind, I don't like it—neither, I suppose, do you; at the same time, we are in such an awful hole that I really don't see what we are to do."

"All right," exclaimed Slogan. "Then all we have to do is to wait till all are asleep, and then I will go to Pete's room. Nothing will wake him up."

"Suppose he has locked his door?"

"In that case, I shall have to think of some other plan; but I don't believe for a moment he will have done so. There will be sufficient light for my purpose. Now, put the candle out, and we will wait till all are in bed."

They did not keep very late hours at the inn, and when all sound had ceased Slogan crept from his room, while Jim stood at the door, listening and trembling. He did not like the plan at all, but he saw no other way out of their difficulty.

Slogan knew which was Pete's room, and even if he had not known he would have found it by the snoring. Inch by inch he opened the door, then crept into the room.

Everything appeared to be in his favour. There was sufficient light in the apartment to enable him to see Pete's coat hanging on the foot of the bed. Rory was sleeping in Jack's room, so that the miscreant ran no danger of being detected by Rory giving the alarm.

For some moments Slogan fixed his eyes on the sleeper, and there was a

look of deadly hatred in those eyes; then the miscreant crept nearer to the bed.

A board creaked slightly with his weight, and he stopped and watched the sleeper, scarcely daring to breathe.

Again Pete's snoring burst forth. It would have taken a lot more than a creaking board to awake him that night, but Slogan was not accustomed to such vile work, and he was trembling in every limb.

His hand was in the pocket of the coat now. He had seen Pete take notes from his pocket-book, and, as Slogan now secured it, he knew by its bulk that he had gained a rich prize.

He was about to turn from the room when a door slammed loudly, and the next moment he heard Rory barking.

For some moments Slogan was so terrified that he scarcely knew what he was doing. He did not dare to rush from the room, because he knew that Pete would see him if he should wake.

The guilty wretch crouched down on his hands and knees, and waited in abject terror.

Pete's snoring ceased, and by the sound Slogan knew that Pete had turned in bed. Probably he was sitting up to listen.

Again the door slammed, and Rory's barking recommenced.

"Why doesn't Jack go down and shut dat door?" mumbled Pete. "He's getting mighty lazy."

Then, apparently, Pete lay down again, and Slogan passed some very anxious moments.

At last, to his relief, the snoring commenced once more, and, still keeping on his hands and knees, Slogan crept from the room, closing the door after him.

In a few moments he was back in his own room, and the two ruffians went to the window to examine the contents of the pocket-book.

There was a very large sum of money in it in bank-notes—so large, indeed, that they did not dare to count it, fearing that someone should come into the room.

"We must get off at once!" murmured Slogan.

"That beastly banging door may have awoke someone," said Jim.

"Probably it has," answered Slogan, "but you have got to recollect that it will be an excuse for us if anyone sees us. We can pretend that we have gone down to close the door. Come along. It is not safe to lose a moment. We ought to get clear away long before morning. We can be twenty miles from here by daylight."

"Yes. And in wild country. I believe we are all right, Slogan. I really do, and, if so, it will be a lot off my mind. Suppose we come at once?"

"I wish we had our hats here. We might get out of the window. It is not so very high from the ground. However, we will chance it, and if we meet anyone we can tell them that we are going to stop that door banging. Come. Is there anything particular you want to take from your portmanteau?"

"No. I've got all I require."

The two crept from the room, Slogan leading the way.

Having got their hats, they made for the back door, and were soon standing in the garden.

"Now, I know our best way," exclaimed Slogan. "I went for a walk across the country one evening. There is a small gate through the fence."

The sky was somewhat clouded, but the moon was to be seen, and there was quite as much light as the miscreants required.

They hurried on, walking at first, but when they had got clear of the garden, they commenced to run, and they kept it up for at least a couple of hours, after that they walked at the greatest pace they could command.

So terrified were they of being overtaken that even when it was daylight, and they were dead tired, they did not dare to stop.

They had now reached such wild country that there was very small chance of meeting anyone, and, with the shortest rests possible, they continued their flight.

They got some food that day at a small cottage, but they only stopped a short time there, then on they went once more, and all the time they had the haunting fear that they would be overtaken.

Presently they took a short rest in a small coppice, and here they divided the plunder, and flung Pete's pocket-book away; then again they continued their journey, until at last they reached a small village where there was a little station.

There was a miserable inn at the place, and they determined to get some food there, and make inquiries as to the trains.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and the two miscreants hoped to be able to get away that night by train. They had sufficient gold for their present requirements, and so they made no attempt to change any of the notes.

The landlord informed them that there was no train till nine o'clock that night, and so they ordered the best dinner that could be served, determining to take that train, and get as far from that part as the railway would take them.

They had to put up with cold salt mutton for their dinner; but they found it not nearly so nasty as they had anticipated.

"It's the first time I have ever tasted salt mutton," observed Slogan; "but I must say I prefer it to salt beef. Will you have some more, Jim?"

"Thanks, I will——"

"And I tink I will join you as well!" cried a voice that caused them to leap to their feet, while Pete entered the room, followed by Jack and Sam.

"Go on wid your meal, old hosses!" exclaimed Pete, seating himself at the table. "Don't let us disturb you in any way. Sit down, boys. I'm sure you must be mighty hungry after your long journey, and we ain't had many halts."

"What brings you here?" gasped Slogan. His face had turned livid, and he had quite lost his appetite.

"Well, we thought we would come for a little walk de same as you hab

done. I say, old hosses, were you going to walk back again, 'cos you hab come rader a long way, and you hab got to recollect dat you hab forgotten to pay your hotel bill?"

"Of course, we were going back. What made you follow us?"

"Well, don't you see, we tought we might as well come de same way. Nunno, sit down. You ain't going yet. Do get on wid your dinner. We hab tasted salt mutton before dis, and it ain't at all bad. Help yourselves, boys. I don't 'spect dese two will be able to eat all dis fat mutton."

"How did you follow us?" gasped Jim, looking helplessly at Pete's smiling face.

"It ain't at all a hard ting for Sammy to follow a trail," observed Pete. "He has followed an Indian's trail before now, when de creature took ebery care to conceal it. Now, you took no pains to conceal your trail, and when we happened to strike it across de garden, from the back door, which you left unbolted, after you left widout paying your bill, why we came de same way, 'cos we had an idea dat something would happen when we obertook you."

"What did you expect was going to happen?" demanded Slogan sullenly, as he watched Pete carve the meat. To have eaten another mouthful would have been an impossibility to him just then.

"When you are going to gib a child a toy, part ob dat child's pleasure lies in wondering what dat toy will be like. And de same remarks apply when you are going to punish a child. If it don't know what sort ob punishment it will receive, it is all de more frightened, and dat does it good, 'cos it makes up its mind not to be naughty again. Do sit down, Slogan. Don't I keep telling you dat you ain't going to leabe de room just yet. If you look closely at de door, you will notice dat Jack has locked it and taken de key out ob de lock. You see, we hab already explained to de landlord dat we want a little private conversation wid you, and so we are going to hab it. You can't get out ob de window, 'cos dere wouldn't be time before I caught you. Pass me some bread, Sammy. You can just watch my plate, and notice what else I require, den pass it to me, to save me de trouble ob asking."

"Would you like me to get a spoon and feed you, you beauty?" inquired Sam.

"Should say you'm got your hands pretty full feeding yourself, seeing de rate you are going at, Sammy. Now, den, old hosses, don't let us spoil your appetites. You hab a lot to go frough yet, and will need some nourishment to keep up your strength. Better hab some more, Slogan."

"I don't require any more."

"Feel rader sick—eh?"

"Why should I feel sick?"

"I don't see any reason. Should tink you ought to feel mighty happy, seeing dat you'm got plenty ob money for your requirements, and all dat sort ob ting."

"Well, stop this fooling, and let us hear what you have got to say?"

"I dunno dat I want to say anyting. It's a sort ob case where nought could be done, nought could be said. Seems to me dat it is for you to do

all de saying part ob de business, and I really don't know what I would advise you to say or to do under de circumstances. My impression ob de affair is dat you'm in a mighty awkward position. Dere's only one remark dat I would like to make, and dat is dat I brought my riding-whip wid me. I dunno weder you will be able to guess why I brought dat."

"Well, you open that door!" cried Slogan. "We are not going to stand any more of your nonsense!"

"De door shall be opened presently, old hoss. Would you hab any objection to walking back to de inn? We'm going dat way, and we would rader like your company, and den you will be able to explain to de landlord how it is you left de place in de dead ob night widout paying your bill."

"We were coming back again. That is why we left our luggage there."

"In dat case, you won't mind coming back wid us," observed Pete, helping himself to some more mutton.

"We shall do nothing of the sort!" declared Slogan.

"More bread, Sammy; you don't seem to notice when my plate is empty!"

"Perhaps that is because you are keeping it so full."

"Maybe. Still, dere must be an end to eberyting. I 'spect if you wait long enough, dere will be an end to dis dinner; but I ain't so stupid as to make dat ending so close to de beginning. I like a little space in between."

The comrades were hungry, and the amount that Pete consumed was really astonishing. Jack and Sam did pretty well, but they could not keep level with Pete.

When at last he had finished he filled his pipe, and commenced to smoke, and all the time he watched Slogan, who appeared to be remarkably uncomfortable beneath the steadfast gaze.

"I really don't know what to do wid you, Slogan. You see, I blame you principally in dis matter, 'cos I feel mighty certain dat you suggested de robbery. In de same way, I knew it was you who suggested to Silas to drug me. Jim is a rascal, ob course; but I'm inclined to tink dat he ain't de sort ob man to plan out a villainy. I tink he would be more inclined to follow in your footsteps, and I must say you would lead him frough de worst mire dat it would be possible to find. You see, when I woke up in de morning, and found dat someone had been in my room in de night and stolen my pocket-book, I did not need to be told who it was, 'cos I sort ob knew at once. Well, I called Jack and Sammy, and, bringing Rory wid us, we struck your trail, and followed it up pretty closely. You travelled pretty fast, but we travelled faster, and we caught you up considerably, considering dat you had got some hours' start. When we reached dis village we made inquiries at de station, and found dat no one answering your description had gone by train, and so we took it for granted dat dere hadn't been a train to go by, and dat you had decided to wait till dere was one.

"Bery well, we naturally tought dat de likeliest place for you to wait would be at de inn, and we came here, and made a few more inquiries. From de landlord we learnt dat you were in dis room, and, habing informed him dat you were dangerous criminals, and dat we were tracking you down, we entered de room. Ob course, you know what we require you to do."

"We don't admit anything," said Slogan. "You can do your worst, and prove anything you like to suspect—if you can!"

"Well, we ain't going to act in dat way. You see, if we gabe you in custody, it would cause us a lot ob trouble. Nunno! We are going to search you, and to take all de money you hab stolen from me. After dat, I am going to make you come back to de oder inn; and after dat, you will be punished for your crime in a manner we shall decide upon. De reason ob habing brought de whip is so dat we may keep you at de proper pace on de homeward journey. We don't want to waste too much time, else we might miss de Stella, and we are rader anxious to sail in dat vessel, 'cos we like de skipper."

"You say you will dare to search us against our will?" demanded Slogan.

"Well, I don't suppose dat you will gib your consent. Still, dat won't matter at all. You will be searched all de same, and I shall take all de money belonging to me."

"We have no money of yours!"

"Oh, I tought you took my pocket-book full ob banknotes! You see, Rory found dis pocket-book close to one ob de places where you stopped, and where I 'spect you divided your plunder. Now, if I can find de banknotes on you two, I shall be quite satisfied; and after dat, all you will hab to do is to come back and receibe de punishment dat we shall decide upon. It will be rader a long walk for you, after de distance you hab already come. Still, we can't help dat. As dat walk will be just as long for us, we shall know when you are tired. It happens dat, I can identify all de notes, 'cos dey hab got my patent mark on dem. Are you going to hand dem ober ob your own free will, or do you want me to bind your hands behind your backs, and den to search you in a thorough manner. I see dere's going to be resistance here, so we will take you first, Slogan."

"Listen to me—"

"Golly! What's de good ob listening to you when you neber speak de troof, except by accident? Now, if you want to resist, I don't mind a bit, 'cos I want to flog you, and I may as well do it now as later on. Oh, you are not going to resist! Well, dat's sensible. Here we are! Plenty ob notes here! I always mark my notes wid a pin-prick frough dem, close to de amount. You know where to find it, Jack. Besides, I rader 'spect dose notes will hab consecutive numbers, seeing dat dey came from our bankers all togeder."

Pete got his property back. Neither of the two men offered the slightest resistance, and directly Pete had finished his search, he fastened their wrists together with a piece of rope, and, having settled with the landlord, drove them from the place.

Sometimes he had trouble with them, and then he used his whip, and that soon brought them to their senses. They did not like that forced march back at all; neither did Jack and Sam, for that matter. Pete only took short rests, and by the time they reached the inn the two prisoners were thoroughly tired out.

"Now den, old hosses," exclaimed Pete, "I ain't habing anyting more to

do wid you! You will hab to settle wid de landlord de best way you can. I 'spect you hab got enough money to pay him, and what you are going to do after dat, I dunno, and I don't care! You are a couple of scoundrels, and deserve a lot more dan you hab got! Howeber, on dis occasion I am going to let you off de rest."

"I reckon we shall just have time to catch our train," said Sam.

"Den, come 'long, boys!" exclaimed Pete. "I hope we shall just hab time to catch de Stella, 'cos we know de skipper, and I shall be able to arrange wid him 'bout landing Rory. Dere would be some trouble wid a strange captain."

They did catch the Stella; in fact, they had a week to spare. The skipper was only too pleased to have them as passengers again, while Bill was simply delighted.

The voyage home was almost devoid of incident, and they all returned home quite satisfied with Pete's Boxing Tour.

THE END.

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