

Supplement  
to the  
WORLD'S  
COMIC.

# Larks!

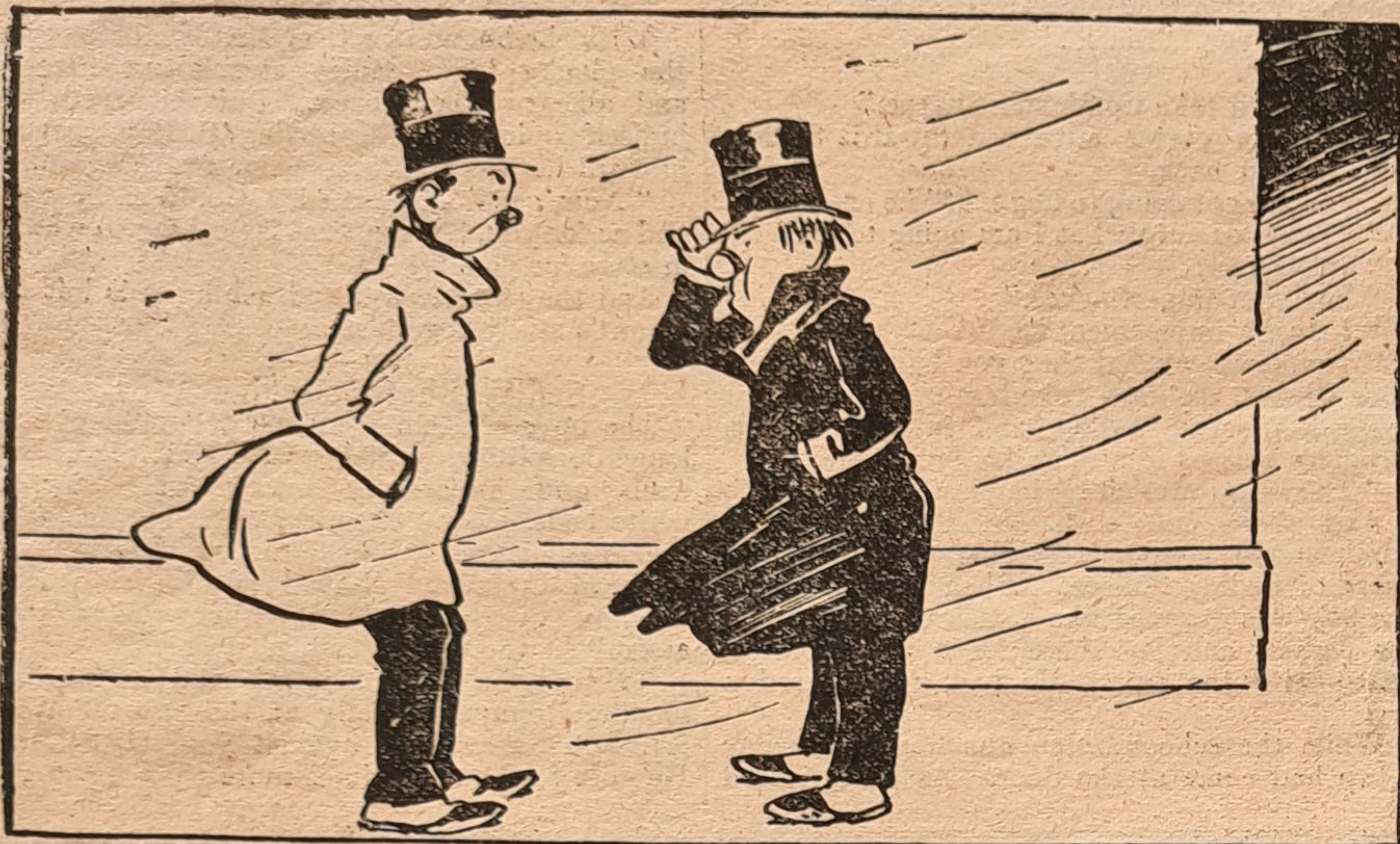
24  
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3 PAPERS IN 1

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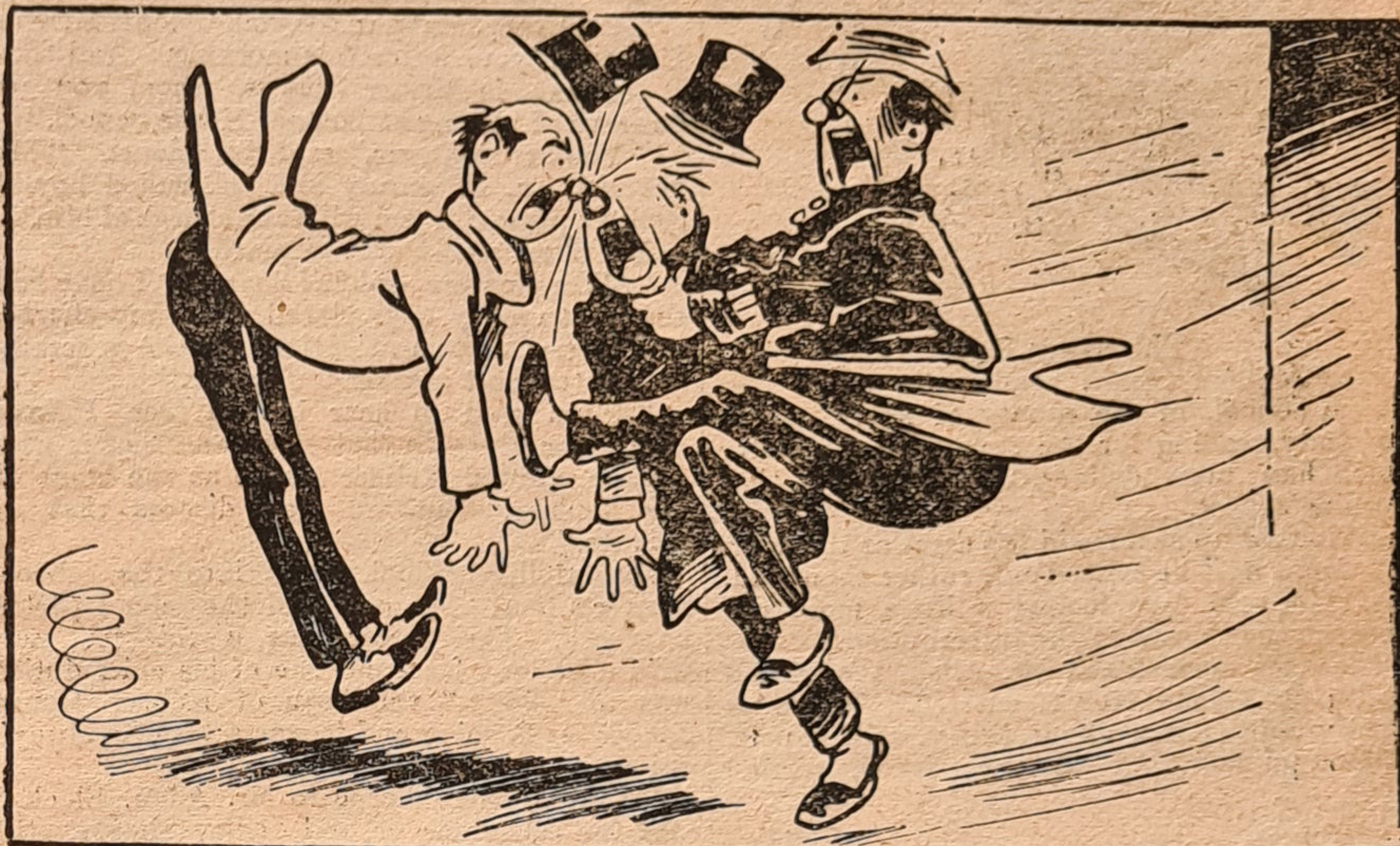
SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1905.

[ONE PENNY.]

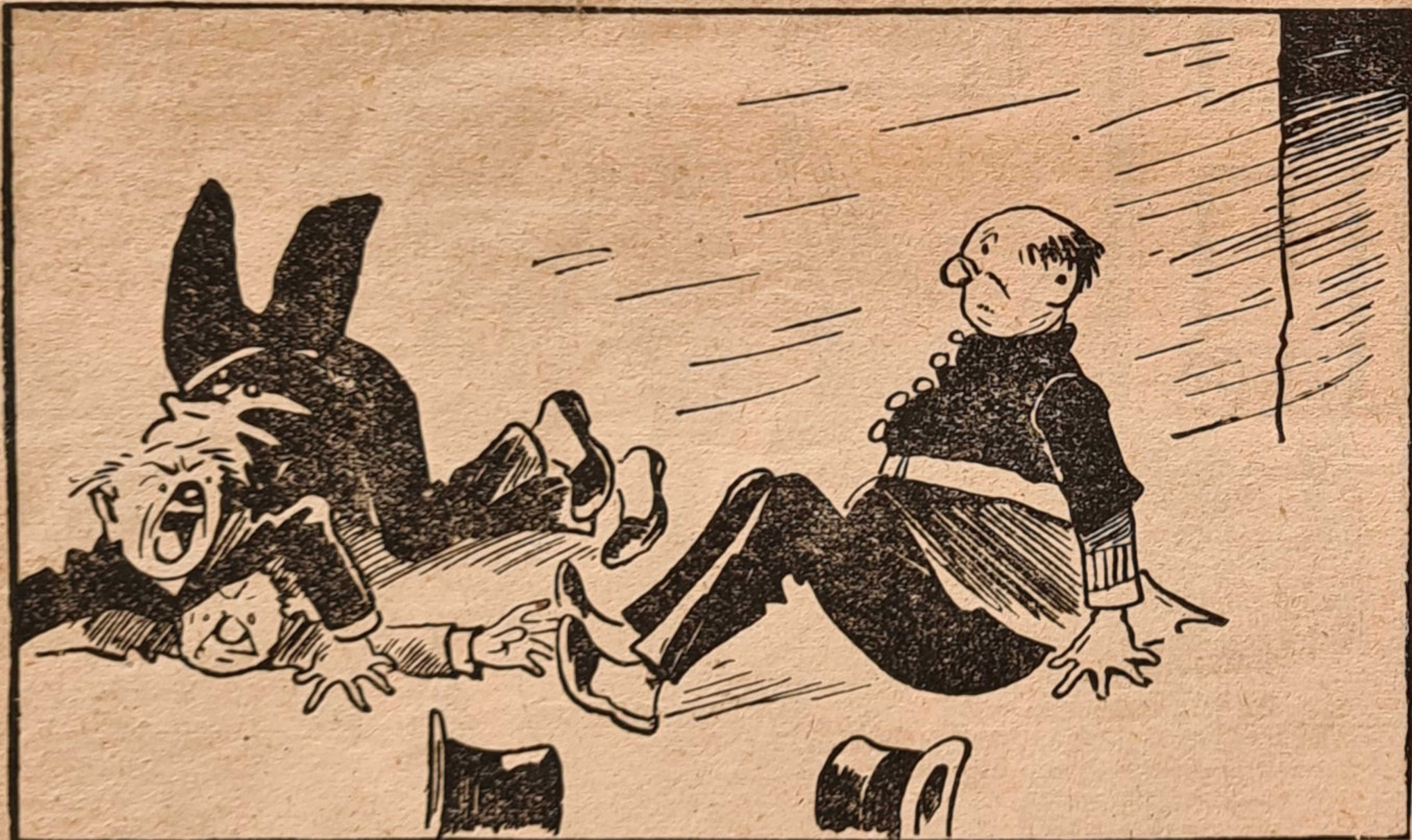
## MR. BUMCHOWDER BUMPED IN A MARCH WIND.



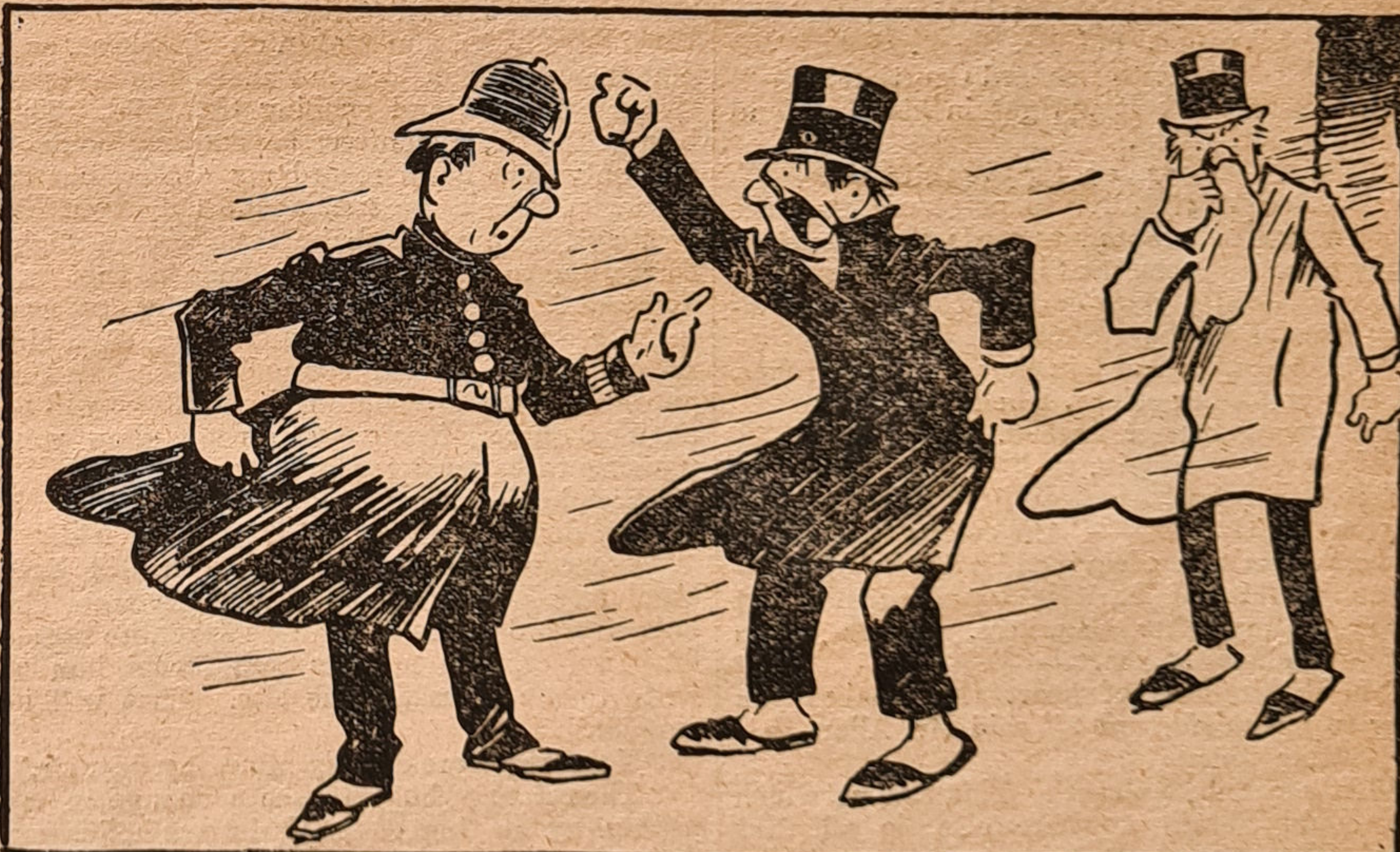
1.—MR. BUMCHOWDER, dear reader, is conversing with a friend of his about the high winds. "Now, some people are very unfortunate, but I've never been struck by anything in a March wind in all my life," Mr. B. was just saying.



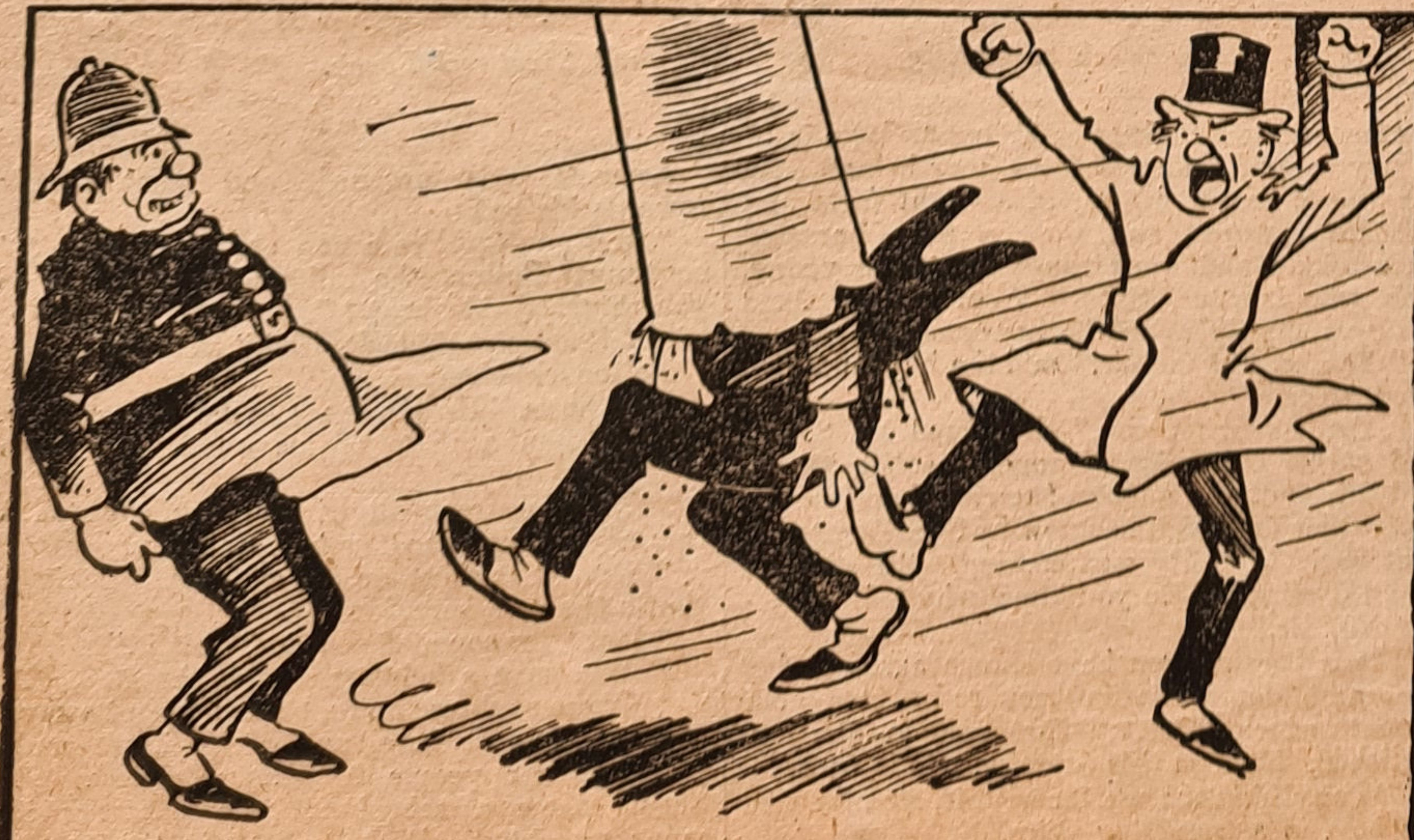
2.—But hardly had he got the words out of his mouth, when an extra two hundred horse-power gust of wind swished round the corner, and, scooping up a fat cop, banged him flop up agin Mr. B. (See picture for details.)



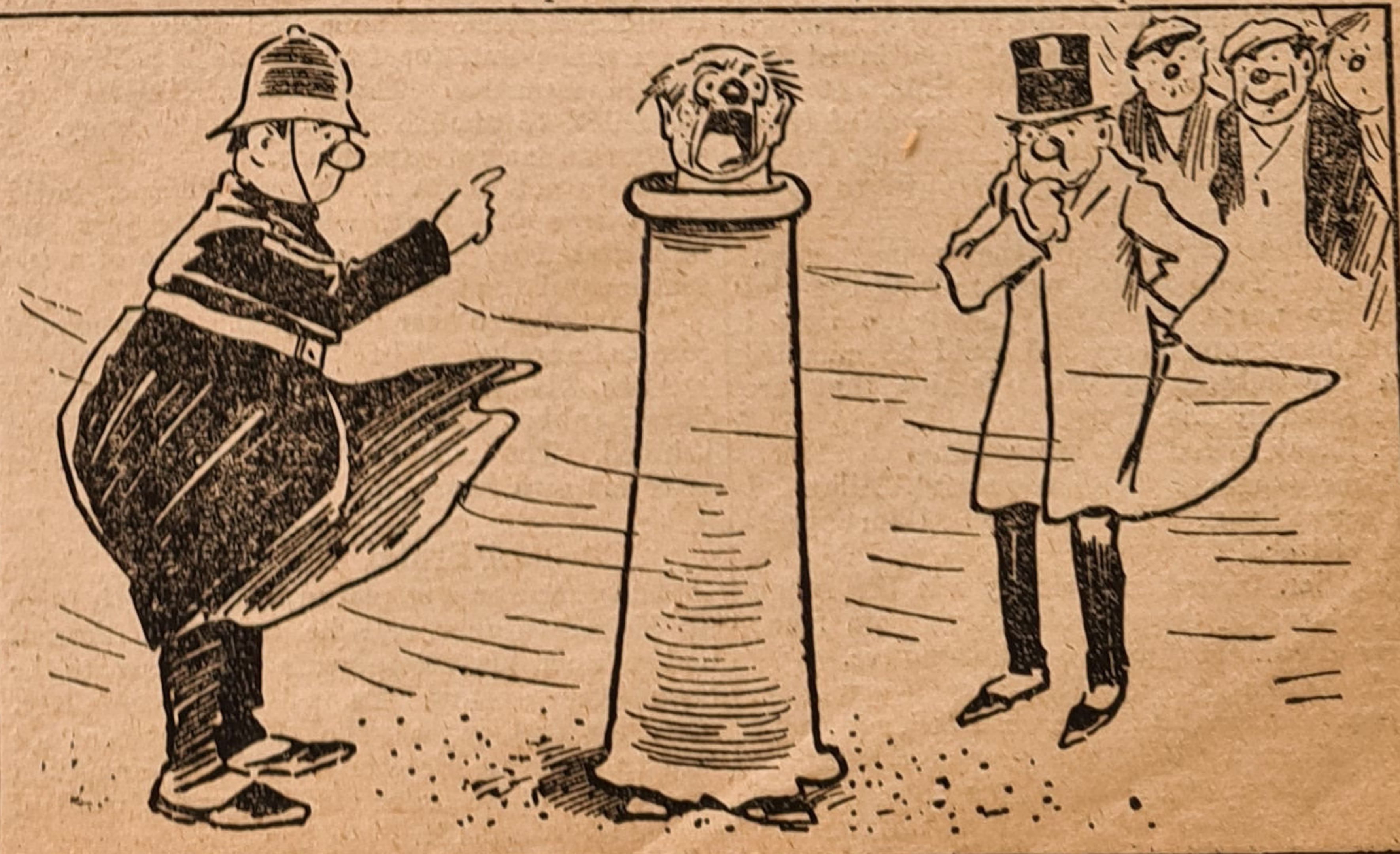
3.—"Well, I never!" observed the police officer. "I've been fifteen years in the force, and this has never happened to me before." "No, and it ought not to have happened now," snapped Mr. B., for you may guess he was very much upset, and 'twas enough to make him.



4.—"What's your number? I'll report you for this. What right have you to come banging into peaceful citizens, without any provocation?" bawled old Mr. B. "Nar, look 'ere, guv'nor! none of yer impertinence, or I'll run yer in for disorderly conduct. Can't yer see it was a haccident? I can't help wot the wind does," hollered the cop.



5.—"Accident, be blown! Policemen ain't supposed to go floating about in the air like balloons," yelled Mr. B. But just at that moment his speech was cut short, for a chimney came flying down from an adjacent roof; and, marvellous to relate, copped Mr. B. jost right, and extinguished him proper.



6.—"It's a good job for you this 'ere chibley has come down and quieted you, or I'm sure to have locked you up for disorderly conduct," bellowed the P.C., as he sauntered off smiling. Mr. B. is now beginning to believe in people being struck by things in March winds. Well, enough to make him think so, too, ain't it?

OUR LONG COMPLETE STORY.



# A VILLAIN'S "VICTIM."

A STORY OF SEDLEY SHARPE  
THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE.

By Charles Hamilton

## The New Boy.

Mr. Topham Skeat, headmaster of Kelmer House School, in the county of Essex, sat in his study, reading for the second time a letter which had been delivered to him by that morning's post.

He looked up as a timid tap came at the door. "Come in!" he rapped out, rather than said. His thin, cold face looked a little more unpleasant than usual at the interruption.

The door opened and Mr. Allan, the second master at Kelmer House, entered. He was a slightly-built man of about thirty, with a pale, intellectual face, and an overworked, worried look.

"Well?"

Mr. Topham Skeat shot that monosyllable at his second master as if it were a bullet.

"I should like to point out to you, Mr. Skeat, if you will allow me—" began Mr. Allan, with a slight, apologetic cough.

"Well?" rapped out Mr. Skeat, again. "With reference to Leonard Courtland—"

Mr. Skeat sat bolt upright in his chair and glared at Mr. Allan.

"Well?" he snarled, for the third time. "I think it my duty to point out that the present course adopted towards that youth is likely to cause permanent injury to his health."

A cold, deadly glare came into the greenish-grey eyes of Topham Skeat.

"Mr. Allan," he said, in slow, emphatic tones. "I pay you a fair salary, I believe."

The young master flushed.

"I do not complain, sir."

"But, owing to a certain little misadventure of yours at Oxford—" the colour faded from Robert Allan's face, leaving him deadly white—"you would not be able to command that salary, or any other, elsewhere. I took you in out of kindness of heart—"

"Is it kindness of heart that makes you refer to my misfortune?" said Mr. Allan, in a low, bitter tone.

"Let me finish, please! This salary, which you could obtain nowhere else, is all that stands between your widowed mother and starvation. Kelmer House School is all that stands between you and the workhouse."

The young master bit his lips and remained silent.

"You have mentioned this matter of Leonard Courtland to me once before," continued Mr. Skeat. "This is the second time. It will also, I hope, be the last. For the third time, Mr. Robert Allan, Master of Arts and forger, will be kicked out of Kelmer House, to go to the devil his own way."

"I understand," said the young man, quietly. "You engaged me, knowing the blot upon my name, with the knowledge that I should be at your mercy and could be muzzled upon the subject of the infamies that are perpetrated in this house."

Mr. Skeat waved his skinny hand. "Your language is disrespectful, Allan. I have warned you. You may go! I am expecting a visitor."

Mr. Allan turned and slowly left the room. A sneer crossed the schoolmaster's thin face; a sneer of contempt and conscious power.

A few minutes later Mr. Skeat's expected visitor was announced. He was a tall, squarely-built gentleman with something of a military look. He was accompanied by a boy of about fifteen, whose face expressed a mixture of nervousness and sullenness. But for this expression, the boy would have been considered handsome. His features were clear set, his eyes deep dark blue.

Mr. Skeat rose to greet his visitor. "I am very happy to see you, Colonel Sharpe. I received your letter this morning. And this, I presume, is Master Sharpe, whom you are desirous of placing at Kelmer House School."

"You are right, sir," said the colonel. "My nephew, sir, an unruly and self-willed boy, I shall be pleased if you will take charge of him."

Mr. Skeat's cold eyes gleamed. "With pleasure, Colonel Sharpe. I have had the most unruly boys placed under my charge, but a term or two at Kelmer House generally eradicates most of their unruliness."

"I am glad to hear it. In fact, I have heard something to that effect and that is why I have selected Kelmer House as the home of my nephew. But we may discuss that in private."

An intelligent look came into the schoolmaster's face. He rang and the school porter appeared. The porter was a thickset man with a bulldog face, and one of his chief duties was to "hoist" the boys of Kelmer House School for flogging and it was a task he always enjoyed.

"Take Master Sharpe to Mr. Allan, Black," said the schoolmaster, and Sedley Sharpe, still with the look of sullen indifference, was led away.

"Now, my dear sir," said Mr. Skeat, in his smoothest tones, as the door was closed and the colonel sat down facing him.

"I have heard you spoken of, Mr. Skeat, as a schoolmaster who does not make the error of sparing the rod and spoiling the child. This boy Sedley is, I confess, beyond my control. Not only does he disregard my wishes, but he has even struck my son, a fine lad about his own age, who was administering some slight correction to him. I have decided that my home shall be no longer his and as my deceased brother was inconsiderate enough to leave him to my charge, I am compelled to find him another. I believe that Kelmer House will be an ideal place, if only you do not allow your patience to be mastered by his wilfulness."

The schoolmaster smiled grimly. "My dear sir, that is not likely," he said.

"I accept your assurance. You will have absolutely a free hand. Any complaints the boy may address to me will be taken no notice of. In fact, you may as well forbid him to write to me or to anyone else. That will be simpler."

"Your views are exactly mine, my dear sir."

"Then I may hope to see a change in my nephew by the time of the Christmas holidays," the colonel remarked. "I leave the matter entirely to you, relying upon you to correct the boy as much as he requires. The ridiculous modern prejudice against flogging is not shared by me, I assure you. I was flogged at Eton and it did me good. I hope you agree with me upon this point, for I am a great believer in drastic measures. They were imbeciles, sir, imbeciles, to abolish flogging in the army. I speak as a man of experience."

"I do not doubt it, Colonel Sharpe, and I can assure you that, while strictly just and impartial, I do not err upon the side of a too sentimental tenderness."

"I am glad to hear you say so." The colonel rose as he spoke. "I rely upon you entirely."

After his visitor was gone, Mr. Topham Skeat rubbed his thin hands together and grinned. The colonel seemed to be a man after his own heart.

**A Brutal Tyrant.**

Sedley Sharpe was placed in the fourth form at Kelmer House, and he acquitted himself pretty well, his attainments appearing to be about the average for a fourth-form boy. After the first day's school Mr. Skeat sent for him to come to his study. It was Mr. Allan who brought the order and he gave a word of advice along with it.

"I am afraid, my boy, that your uncle has given you a rather bad character to Mr. Skeat," he said. "You must try and be very respectful or Mr. Skeat may be hard upon you."

"Thank you, sir!" said Sedley. And he repaired to the headmaster's study. Mr. Topham Skeat fixed a cold glance upon him.

"I am told, Sharpe," he said, in an unpleasant voice, "that you are addicted to impudence and a rebellious temper."

"Yes, sir."

"I want to warn you that such conduct will not answer at Kelmer House. It will not answer, sir!" repeated Mr. Skeat, more warmly.

"No, sir."

"I have a sharp and short way with the unruly. At the first sign of insubordination I administer a flogging. And remember, Sharpe, that I do not allow sullenness, which is a sign of an unruly temper. You are looking sullen now."

"I hope I am not, sir."

"Do you mean to say that I cannot believe my own eyes, or that I am making a false statement?" demanded Mr. Skeat. "I see that your good uncle was perfectly right; you are incorrigible, and only drastic measures will avail with you. Black!"

"Sir."

"You will take up Master Sharpe." The burly porter advanced towards Sedley, who started back.

"You are not going to flog me?" he exclaimed. "That is exactly what I am going to do."

"What for?"

"For your impertinence."

"I wasn't impertinent."

"That is the second time you have given me, your master, the lie. Take him up, Black!"

Black grasped Sedley, and in spite of his struggles hoisted him upon his broad back.

"There you are, sir!" he panted. And there and then Mr. Topham Skeat administered a sound flogging to the nether parts of Sedley Sharpe. When he was done, the boy was dropped like a sack of wheat upon the carpet, and lay there for a few minutes, dazed with the pain. He had not uttered a cry.

While the schoolmaster was flogging Sedley a tap had come at the door. As he delivered

entirely your own."

"Mr. Allan said my writing was very good, sir."

"Don't bandy words with me. Black!"

"Are you going to flog me again?" said Courtland, in a curiously low and contained voice.

"Certainly."

"Why don't you kill me at once? What's the good of dragging it out?" exclaimed the boy, with reckless bitterness.

"How dare you!" panted Mr. Skeat. "Oh! I know what I was sent here for. You may as well kill me and have done with it."

"Black!" said Mr. Skeat, with a brow like thunder.

In a twinkling Leonard Courtland was hoisted, and the infuriated schoolmaster rained blows upon him.

"You brute! you coward!"

It was Sedley Sharpe's voice. He had sprung to his feet, his eyes blazing. In sheer amazement the schoolmaster held his hand.

"You brute! You cowardly brute!"

With the bound of a tiger Mr. Skeat was upon the plucky boy. Sedley struck out fiercely, and Skeat reeled back. But he recovered himself quickly, and, seizing Sedley, flogged him till he was too fatigued to strike again.

"Now go!" he panted. "Go, both of you; and as for you, Sharpe, that is nothing to what is in store for you."

And the two bruised and aching lads left the tyrant's study together.

## Sedley Sharpe Begins Work.

The boys of Kelmer House School slept in a long dormitory, which, with its high, bare walls and apparently interminable row of white beds, looked cheerless and depressing to the last degree. When Sedley Sharpe and Leonard Courtland limped painfully to their sleeping quarters, about twenty boys were assembled there, undressing.

"Have you caught it?" said a tall lad, looking sympathetically at the two. "What is it old Skeat's got against you, Courtland? He goes for you ten times more than for any of



Sedley struck out fiercely.

and Skeat reeled back.

the last stroke Mr. Skeat called out "Come in!" A boy entered and closed the door behind him. He was a lad of fifteen, of a slight form and delicate features, and wore a pale, harassed expression which was strange in one so young. The schoolmaster, turning from Sedley, fixed his eyes sternly upon the newcomer.

"You sent for me, sir," said the boy, in a low, tired voice.

"Yes, I sent for you," thundered Mr. Skeat, and at his bull-voice of anger the lad winced and shivered, and a look of terrible hopelessness crossed his face, as if he knew by Skeat's manner that some brutality was coming. "I sent for you, Courtland. Do you know why?"

"No, sir."

"It is because you have shown again to-day the same determination not to master your lessons, which I have before seen in you and punished. Look at this exercise. It is yours!"

"Is anything the matter with it, sir?" asked the boy, in a trembling voice.

"Is anything the matter with it?" sneered Mr. Skeat. "Only that the calligraphy resembles the prints of spiders' legs dipped in ink, and the orthography is constructed upon a system

us others."

Leonard only groaned, and went slowly towards his bed.

"And you—you're a new chap, ain't you?" continued Bolton, the tall youth. "What do you think of old Skeat?"

"A beast and a blackguard," said Sharpe. Bolton chuckled.

"So he is. He always goes for a new chap, to give him a taste of his quality to begin with."

"Does he treat all of you like this, as a rule?" Sedley asked, as he began to undress.

"Yes, it's short grub and long lickings, that's the rule here."

"I wonder some of you don't cut it."

Bolton gave a helpless sort of shrug.

"Where could we go to, even if we got away? We wouldn't be here, any of us, if we could persuade our people to take us away. Old Skeat keeps a school for the not wanted, you understand. When a kid's in the way at home he's sent here. I was packed off here two years ago by my stepfather, and I've never been home even on a holiday since. He's arranged that with old Skeat. There's Langley; he's

here because his father's in India and can't be bothered with him. And Courtland—"

Sedley Sharpe's face showed a new interest.

"What about Courtland?"

"He was sent here by his cousin, who is also his guardian. He's going to be awfully rich when he's twenty-one, if he lives till then. My idea is that he won't, unless he's taken away from this place. Old Skeat's killing him by inches."

Mr. Allan put in his head at the door.

"Lights out, boys!"

The boys tumbled into bed.

"Allan's a good sort," Bolton said to Sedley, after the young master was gone. "He protects us as much as he can, but he can't do much. He seems to live in mortal terror of old Skeat."

Sedley did not sleep much that night. He was in constant pain from the flogging he had received, and his thoughts were very busy.

He was up with the earliest when the rising-bell rang the next morning. Before they went down to breakfast Leonard Courtland found an opportunity of speaking with him aside.

"Thanks for taking my part last night," he said. "It was awfully plucky of you. But I'm afraid old Skeat will have his knife into you for it. He'll never forgive you for striking him. Are you compelled to remain at Kelmer House, like the rest of us?"

"Not exactly."

"If you can get away, you'll be wise to do so."

"Perhaps if I remain I may be able to help you."

Courtland shook his head.

"I don't think that's very likely, Sharpe."

"I should like to have a talk with you, Courtland, sometime when we shan't be interrupted. I really think I may be able to help you."

Courtland looked surprised, but he gave a nod.

"All right. We'll go for a walk after afternoon school, if you like."

"That will be all."

Breakfast at Kelmer House was not a cheerful meal, with Mr. Skeat's spiteful countenance lowering at the head of the table. Nor was the food excessive in either quantity or quality. The boys ate their wedges of what Bolton facetiously called "bread-and-scrape," and drank their watery tea, in almost a dead silence.

School was equally depressing. The dread personality of Topham Skeat seemed to brood over everything. And the occasional howl of a youngster smarting under the cane alone broke the monotonous dullness.

Sedley Sharpe felt as if he were in a convict prison. He saw that the same feeling was upon all the others, and the expression of it was set upon their faces by long custom.

In the hours of play, however, their boyish spirits had a chance of freedom. The repression of school hours made them enjoy with great zest the time when they were not under their master's eye.

When work for the day was over, Sedley Sharpe and Leonard Courtland walked away into the meadows which bordered the playground on one side, and which were within bounds. They sat down on a stile out of sight of the school.

Courtland was in a dull, depressed mood. He had been flogged three times, and Sedley had been punished twice, but though his palms still smarted, he did not allow that to depress his spirits. Poor Courtland had been broken in by long suffering.

"What has Skeat got against you, Courtland?" Sedley asked, abruptly. "He seems to pick on you. You didn't do anything to be licked for, did you?"

"No. He found fault with my Latin, which Mr. Allan had praised, first. Then he said I spoke in class. The third time he blamed me for idleness. I suppose he thinks it necessary to make excuses to keep up appearances."

"But why should he persecute you like this?"

Courtland was silent.

"I am asking for your confidence," Sedley continued, "because I think that I may be able to help you. I cannot explain exactly how, at present. But you can trust me, can't you?"

"Yes, certainly. I don't see how you can help me, though. Only my guardian can do that, and he won't."

"Your guardian?"

"Yes, my cousin, Herbert Blane. He's fifteen years older than I am, you know, and when my father was killed at the battle of the Tugela, he was appointed my guardian. Six months after my father's death, I was sent here, and I've been here ever since."

"Your cousin and guardian doesn't like you, then?"

"He detests me."

"Why?"

"There was never any love lost between us. When my father, Captain Courtland, was alive, he used to fawn upon him, and more

than once made mischief between dad and me. He was poor, and he lived on an allowance made him by my father. He hated me because, until my father's marriage late in life, he had looked upon himself as heir of Courtland Grange. The marriage, and my birth, disappointed him. I always knew that he regarded me as standing in his shoes, and hated me for it. But he succeeded in making my father trust him completely, and everything was left in his hands when dad went to the war."

"But your mother?"

"I cannot remember her. She died soon after my birth."

"Then Herbert Blane is still heir to the property if you die unmarried?"

"Yes."

"And, from what you said last night, I gather that you suspect him—"

"I believe he sent me here hoping that I should sink under Mr. Skeat's ill treatment. I am of a delicate constitution, and I suppose he knows that it won't take much more of this life to finish me," said Courtland bitterly.

"Do you think that he has made any kind of arrangement to that effect with Skeat?"

"It looks like it."

"Because Skeat picks you out for ill-usage?"

"Yes."

Sedley Sharpe appeared to reflect.

"Does Mr. Blane ever visit you at Kelmer House?" he asked.

"Yes, he comes here at the end of every term."

"To see you?"

"No, to see Skeat, but he speaks to me."

don't see how you can help me, but if you can I shall be more grateful than I can say."

A little later they separated. Sedley Sharpe strolled away, and presently sat down under a tree and began to write in his pocket-book with a fountain-pen. He covered several pages with his close, neat writing, and when he was finished, he tore out the leaves, pinned them together, and wrapped them in a little leather pouch. His next proceeding was still more mysterious. After making sure that he was not observed, he excavated a hole at the foot of the tree, placed the pouch in it, covered it up and stamped the earth down. Then, immediately over the spot, he cut a little cross in the bark with his pocket-knife.

This done, he walked back to the school, which he reached as the bell rang for tea.

### In Mr. Skeat's Study.

Sedley Sharpe, during the next week or two, seemed to be the mark of peculiar animosity upon the part of Mr. Topham Skeat, sharing this distinction with poor Courtland. Courtland bore the master's studied cruelty with passive submission; and Sedley, with only a flash or two of temper, appeared to have accepted the inevitable. The end of the term approached, a period usually bringing joy to the schoolboy heart, but which brought little joy to the hearts of the boys of Kelmer House. For, with the exception of two or three, they were destined to remain at the school during the holidays. Kelmer House, as Bolton had caustically remarked, was a home for the "not-wanted."

One Friday evening, towards bedtime,



"Curse you! Curse you!" he hissed. "How did you know all this?"

"Don't you ever appeal to him to take you away?"

"I used to, till I found that it was no good."

"He refused to do it?"

"Yes."

"Though he knows how Skeat treated you?"

"On the first occasion I showed him the marks on my back."

"What did he say?"

"That no doubt I deserved all I got," said Courtland, gritting his teeth.

Sedley nodded thoughtfully.

"It's pretty clear that he's hand in glove with old Skeat."

"Clear enough."

"When does he come again to Kelmer House?"

"Next Wednesday week, unless he makes a change in his usual date of coming."

"Ah! If the truth of this matter were made known to the proper authorities, you could be removed from the guardianship of Herbert Blane."

Courtland made a hopeless gesture.

"Who would listen to me? I do not even know whom to address. Besides, I am not allowed to write letters to anyone."

"True. They have you completely in their power. But I repeat that I can help you. I can't explain now; but I can do it. Only keep mum; and perhaps we had better not be seen together too much, either."

"I don't quite understand you, Sharpe, but there's something about you that makes me inclined to believe you," said Courtland, frankly; "I can see that you're very different to the usual cut of boys who come here. I

Sedley Sharpe took Bolton and Courtland aside and spoke to them earnestly. Courtland had heard for certain that his guardian was coming that evening, and as the hour of Mr. Blane's coming was late, he had been told to remain after the rest of the boys went to bed.

"Bolton, will you help me?" Sedley asked.

"How?" queried Bolton.

"I am going to play a little trick on old Skeat."

Both boys gasped at Sedley's words. Such an idea had never occurred before to any inmate of Kelmer House School.

"Better not," said Bolton.

"He'll cut you to pieces," declared Courtland.

"He'll never know. But anyway I've made up my mind. The question is, will you help me? You won't get into a row."

"Oh, yes, I'll help you. But how?" said Bolton.

"I want you to put a dummy in my bed to-night, so that when Mr. Allan sees lights out he won't know I'm missing—which I shall be."

"You're not going to run away?"

"Oh, no," Sedley laughed. "I have a little game on, which I will explain to you afterwards."

"All right; I'll do it."

"You'll see that all the other fellows keep mum."

"Oh, yes. I'm biggest in the dormitory, and they know I'd wallop 'em if they split."

"All right then; I rely upon you."

And when at bedtime the boys trooped upstairs, Sedley Sharpe was not among them. As Mr. Skeat's economy allowed only one gas jet in the dormitory, and none on the stairs, his absence was not likely to be noted. And

Bolton lost no time in stuffing a pillow and bolster and a bundle of clothes in Sharpe's bed to imitate a reposing figure. When Mr. Allan put in his head, he glanced as usual along the long row of beds. Only Courtland's appeared to be unoccupied. Mr. Allan turned off the gas.

"Good-night, boys!"

"Good night, sir!"

And the young master went away in ignorance of the fact that Sedley Sharpe was not in the dormitory.

But where was he?

When Mr. Topham Skeat entered his study and pulled up a comfortable arm-chair to the cheerful fire, he little dreamed that the slim, lithe figure of Sedley Sharpe was concealed in that very room.

Long ago, with an eye to future investigations, the Schoolboy Detective had reconnoitred every corner of the study, and now that the time had come to act he was at no loss.

In one corner a massive bookcase stood across the angle, leaving a three-cornered space between it and the walls. The space was small, but Sedley Sharpe had lowered himself into it from the top of the bookcase, and now he stood there almost as still as a statue. A little thrill ran over him as the schoolmaster entered. But he had little fear of being discovered. Long since he had learned to remain still for any length of time without uttering a sound.

Mr. Topham Skeat looked impatiently at the clock. Presently he rang.

"Send Master Courtland here, Black!"

In a few minutes Leonard Courtland entered. He had his usual look of dull patience.

"Courtland, you may sit down. I am expecting your kind guardian. He will see you as usual."

"Yes, sir."

Five minutes later the visitor was announced. He entered; a tall, slimly-built man, with clear-cut features, and eyes that seemed to be of flint. The narrow space between the side of the bookcase and the wall enabled the hidden Boy Detective to catch a glimpse of Mr. Herbert Blane as he entered.

"My dear Mr. Blane—"

"How d'ye do, Skeat?" said Blane, indifferently. "Ah! my ward is here I see. Progressing satisfactorily, I hope?"

Mr. Skeat shook his head.

"I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Blane, that Master Courtland's progress is far from satisfactory."

"Ah! Lazy, I suppose."

"Extremely."

"And careless?"

"Excessively so."

"That's very bad, Leonard, very bad," said Mr. Blane, with a shake of the head. "What have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing, except that it is not true."

"I forgot to add, sir, that your ward's impertinence equals his idleness and carelessness," said Mr. Skeat, with a malignant look.

"Ah! well, you must try and cure him. I hope to hear that you are improved the next time I come to Kelmer House, Leonard."

"You hope to hear that I am dead, you mean," said Courtland, with the recklessness of one who despaired.

Mr. Blane started and changed colour.

"What do you mean, you brat?" he snarled.

"Oh, I know very well what I am here for."

"I see very clearly that Mr. Skeat's description of you is correct. You had better go to bed, or I shall be tempted to give you a thrashing myself."

Leonard walked out of the room without a word. As the door closed Blane fixed a look of alarmed inquiry upon the schoolmaster.

"What the devil does this mean, Skeat? Has the brat discovered anything?"

"That is impossible."

"Then what did he mean? He must guess at the facts of the case."

"I'm afraid he does."

"Has he said anything like that before?"

"Once or twice."

"But, confound it, man, don't you know that that means danger? If it should get about—"

"Yes, I wanted to speak to you about that. Mr. Blane. Please sit down."

Blane threw himself upon a chair. He was gnawing his under lip uneasily.

"There is not much likelihood of any words that are uttered within the walls of Kelmer House ever getting abroad," the schoolmaster continued. "Few of my boys ever leave the school. Still, there is, as you have said, danger."

"Look here, Skeat! this dilly-dallying will have to come to an end."

"I think that would be best."

"Glad you agree with me. The question is, are you prepared to take the necessary steps?"

"You mean—"

"I mean that—you're sure we cannot be heard—"

"Certain. I'll lock the door if you like. Now, you mean—"

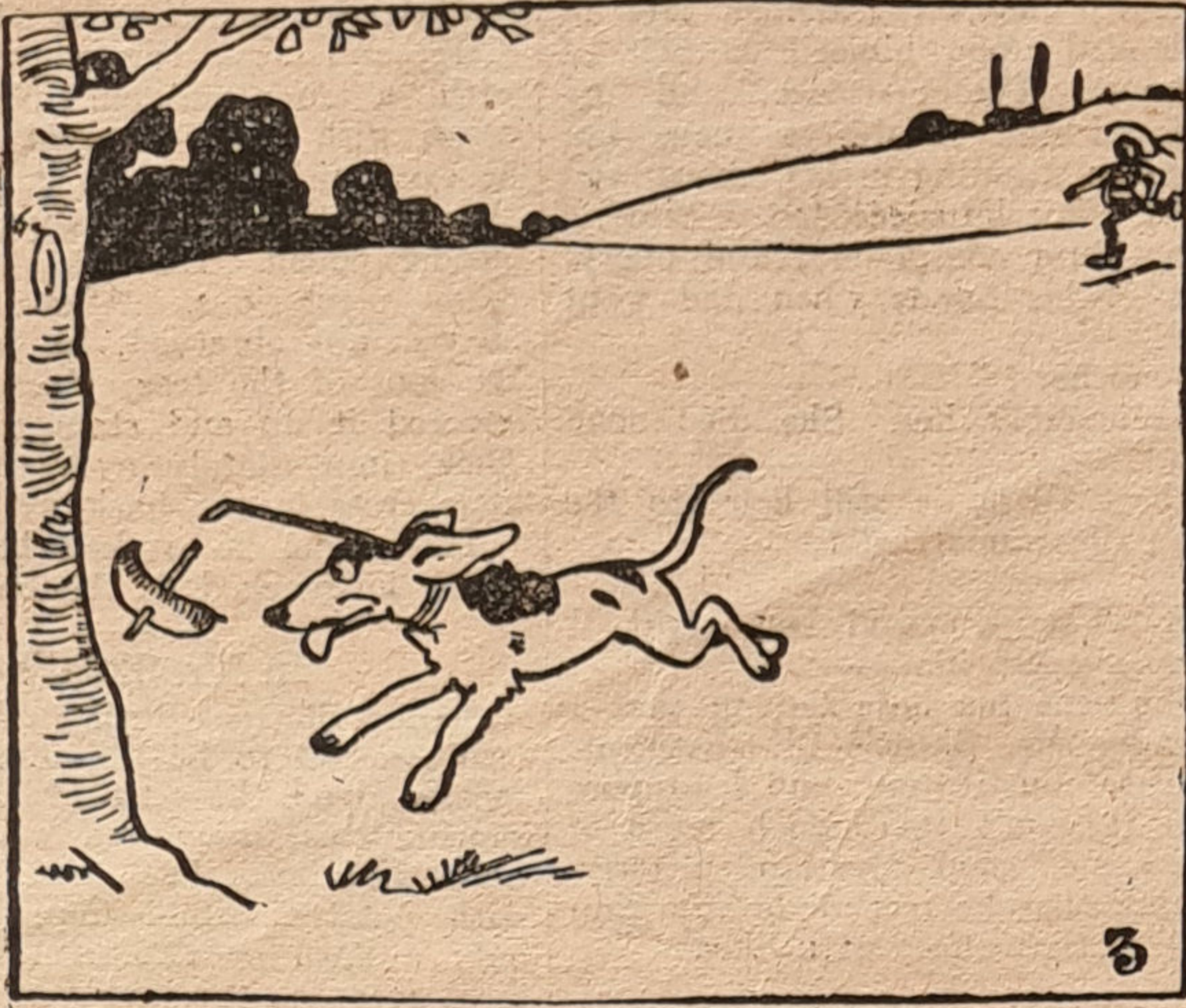
(Continued on page 94.)

# LARKS!

## HOW FIDO GOT THE POLONEY.



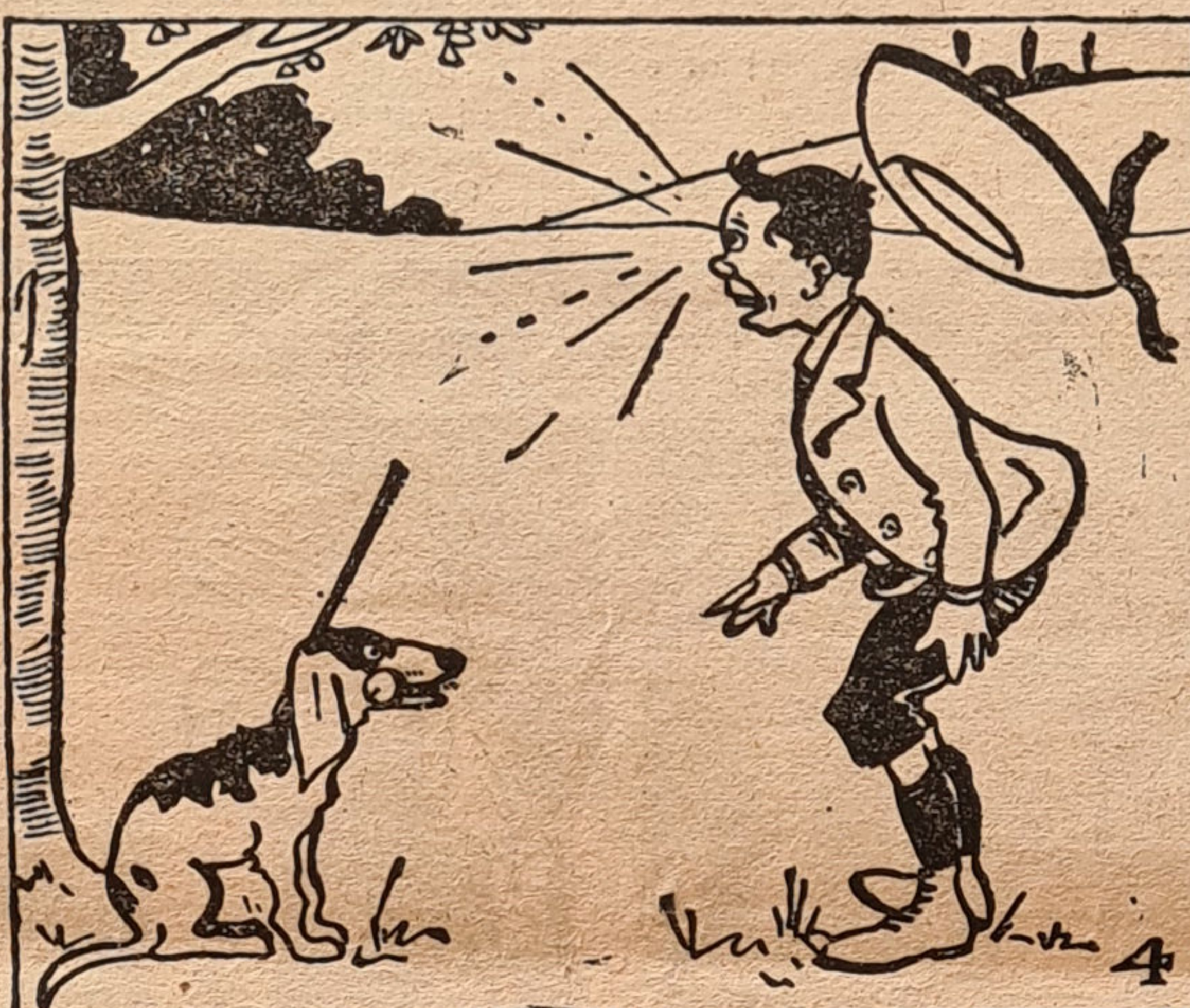
1.—When little Bertie tied a sausage on a stick to poor old Fido's neck——



3.—But Fido ran right away trying to catch up to that sausage, which always kept about a yard in front, until he went wollop into a tree.

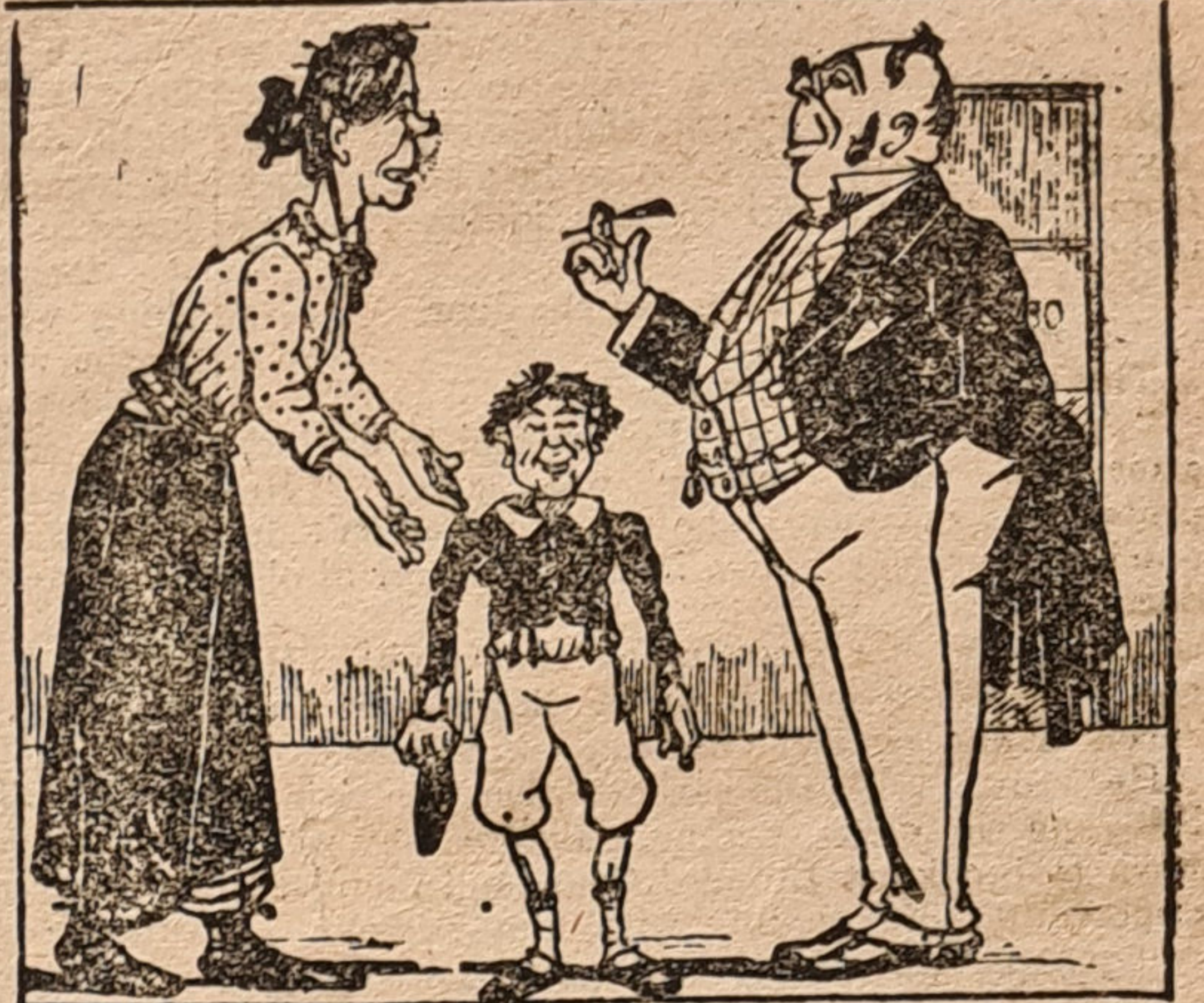


2.—He did not think that "tripe-hound" would have any chance of getting it.

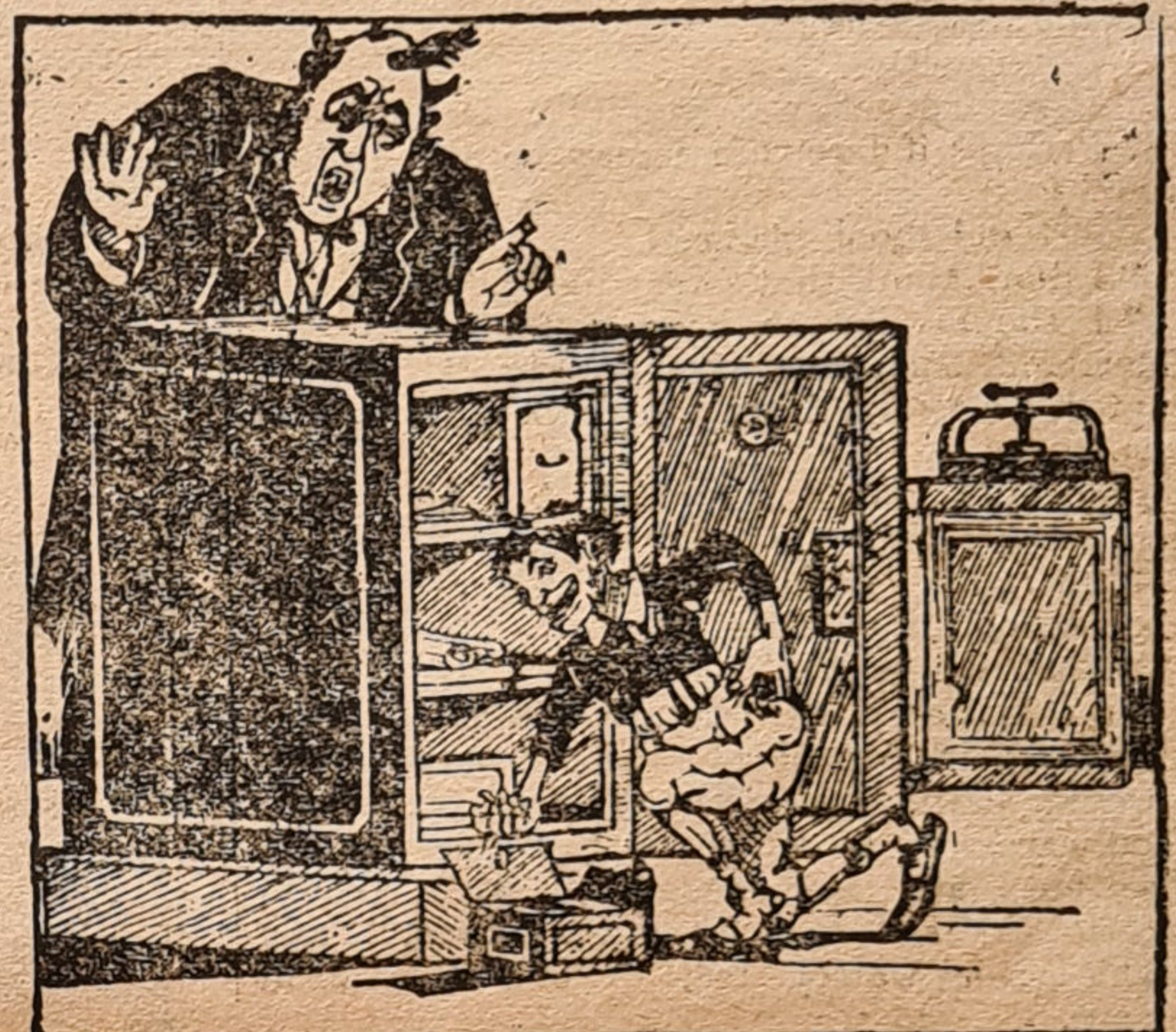


4.—Then the stick broke, and by the time Bertie had caught him up, that sausage had nearly all disappeared into Fido's "little Mary."

## A TAKING SITUATION.



1.—Mrs. FLINIGAN (anxious to get her "darlint" a job): "Shure, yer honour, you can't hilp likin' the choild. A more taking boy niver lived."



2.—Little Tommy (left in temporary charge): "You bet yer boots wot my mother says is orl right. I takes all I can get."



3.—Police-constable Murphy (after hearing old Flimsy's tale of woe): "You come along o' me, me son. I likes doing a bit of taking meself."

## SERVED HIM RIGHT.



1.—"HA!" said Bill Sneaker, as he made free with Ickstein's sponges, "guess I shall raise a drink or two on these," and he filled all his pockets. 2.—But it came on to rain before long, and those sponges began to swell. 3.—And swelled to such an extent that Constable Coppem, who had been on the look out for the thief, had no difficulty at all identifying him. 4.—And now Billiam finds ample time to reflect on the wickedness of his ways, that is, after he's picked the regulation quantity of oakum.

## There are Writers and Writers.



SHE: Who is your favourite writer?  
He: "My guardian. He writes all my cheques, dontcherknow."

## RIVAL QUACKING. (THEY BOTH SPOKE THE TRUTH.)



QUACK DOCTOR: "Yus, gentlemen, why, you ask, don't the medical faculty recommend my pills? I'll tell yer. It's becos, if everybody took 'em, there 'ud be no work for the doctors."

Rival over the way: "An' ten times more for the undertakers."

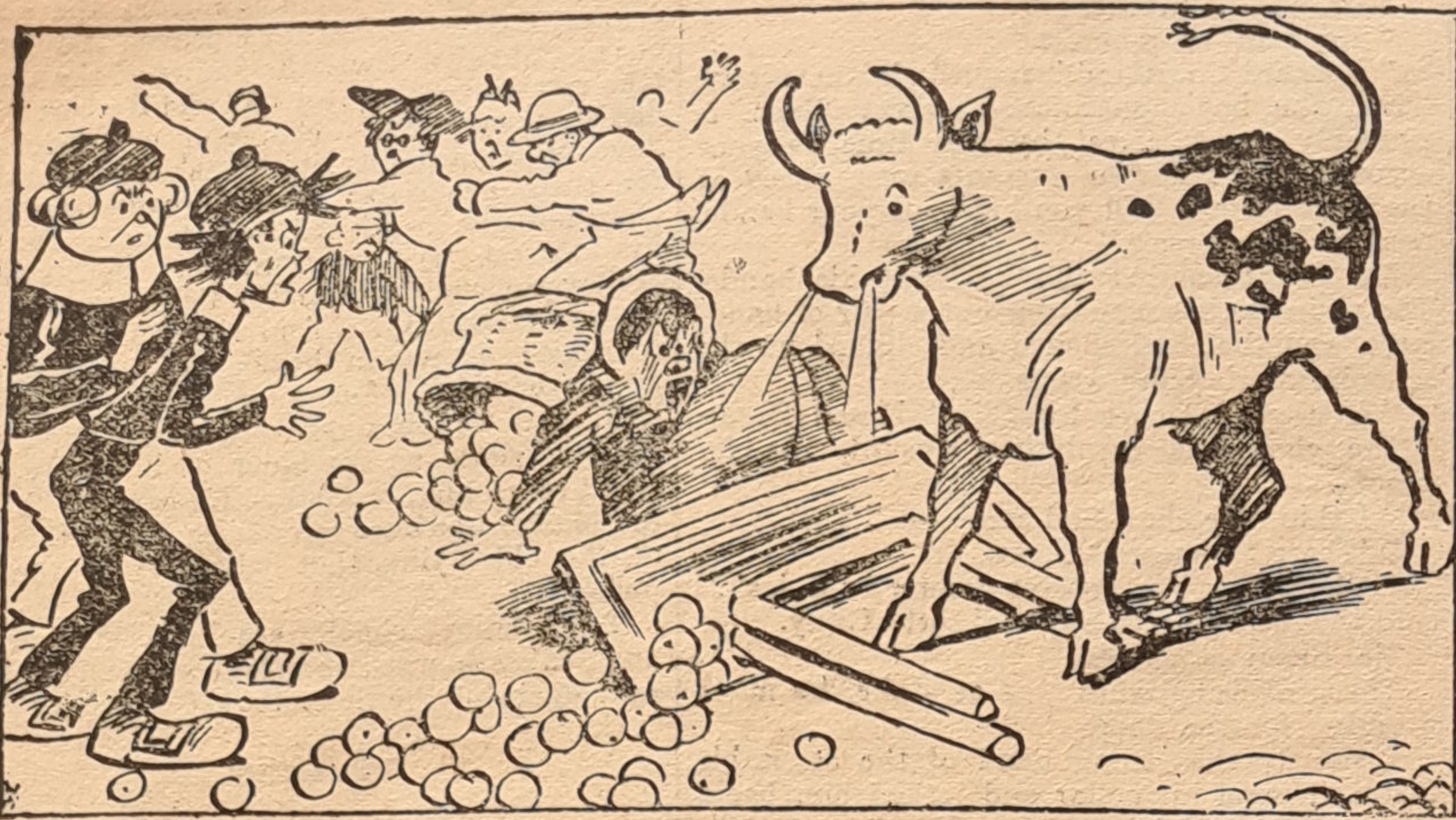


A QUAD WRANGLE.

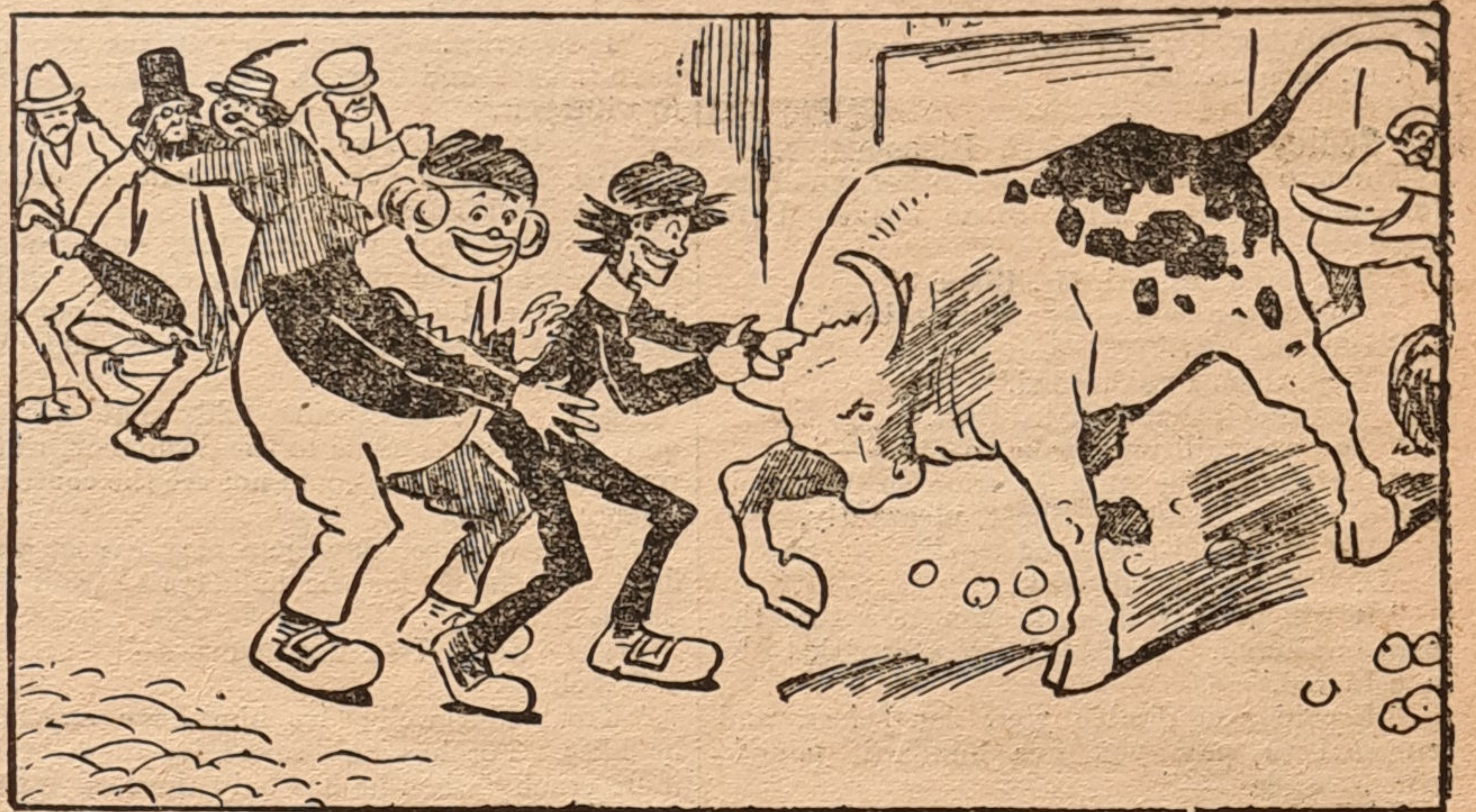


Mrs. WANTUN: "Yes, it is correct, I am in want of a nurse-maid; but you don't mean to say that you understand children?"  
Sally Nipper: "Well, mum, I oughter, for I've been amongst 'em all my life."

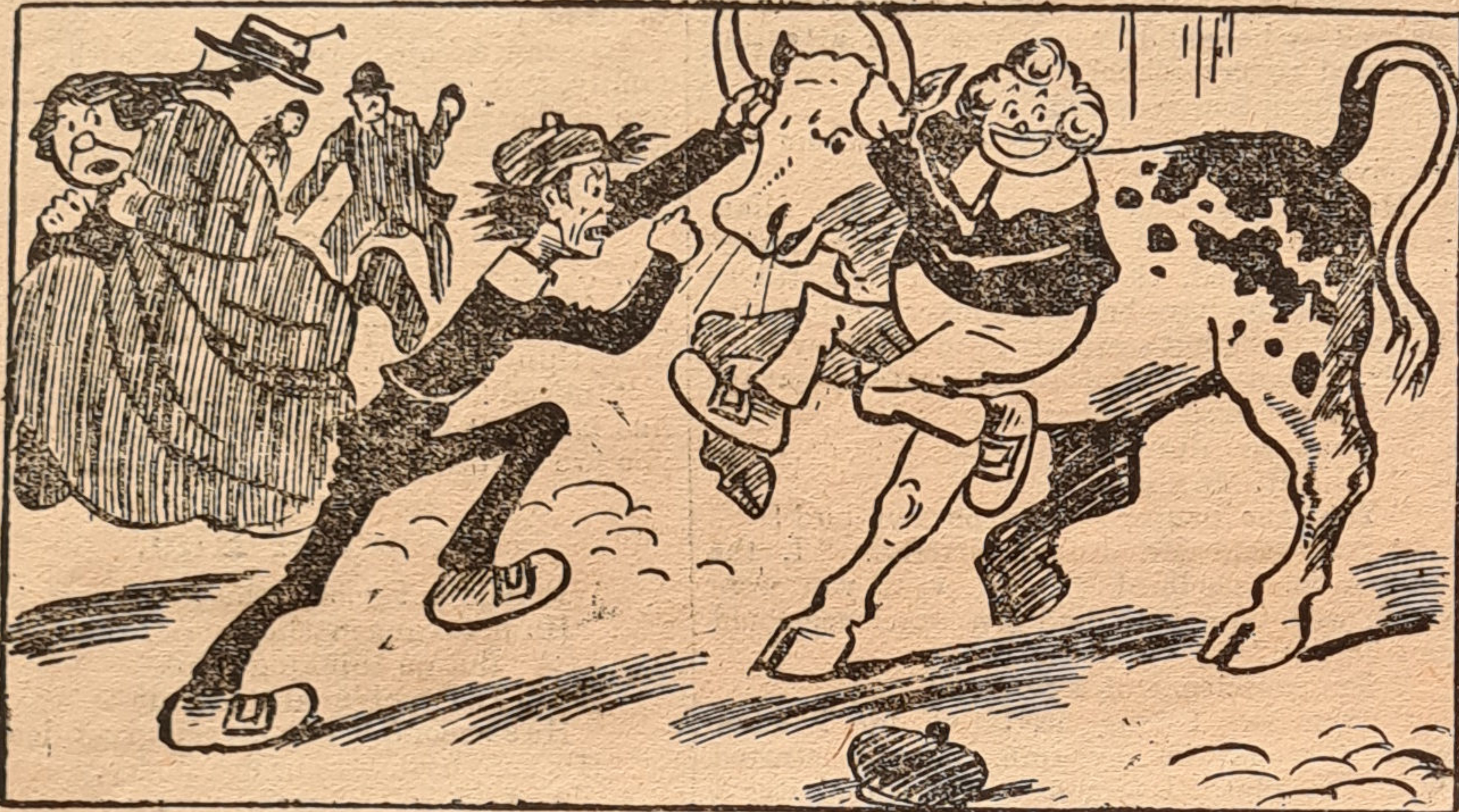
THOSE TERRIBLE TWINS AND THE BULL AND THE CHINA SHOP.



1.—“DEER REEDERS.—There was a fine old rumpus going on in the high street as we were going to school yesterday. A mad bull was bunking erbout orl over the place, upsetting everything and everybody.



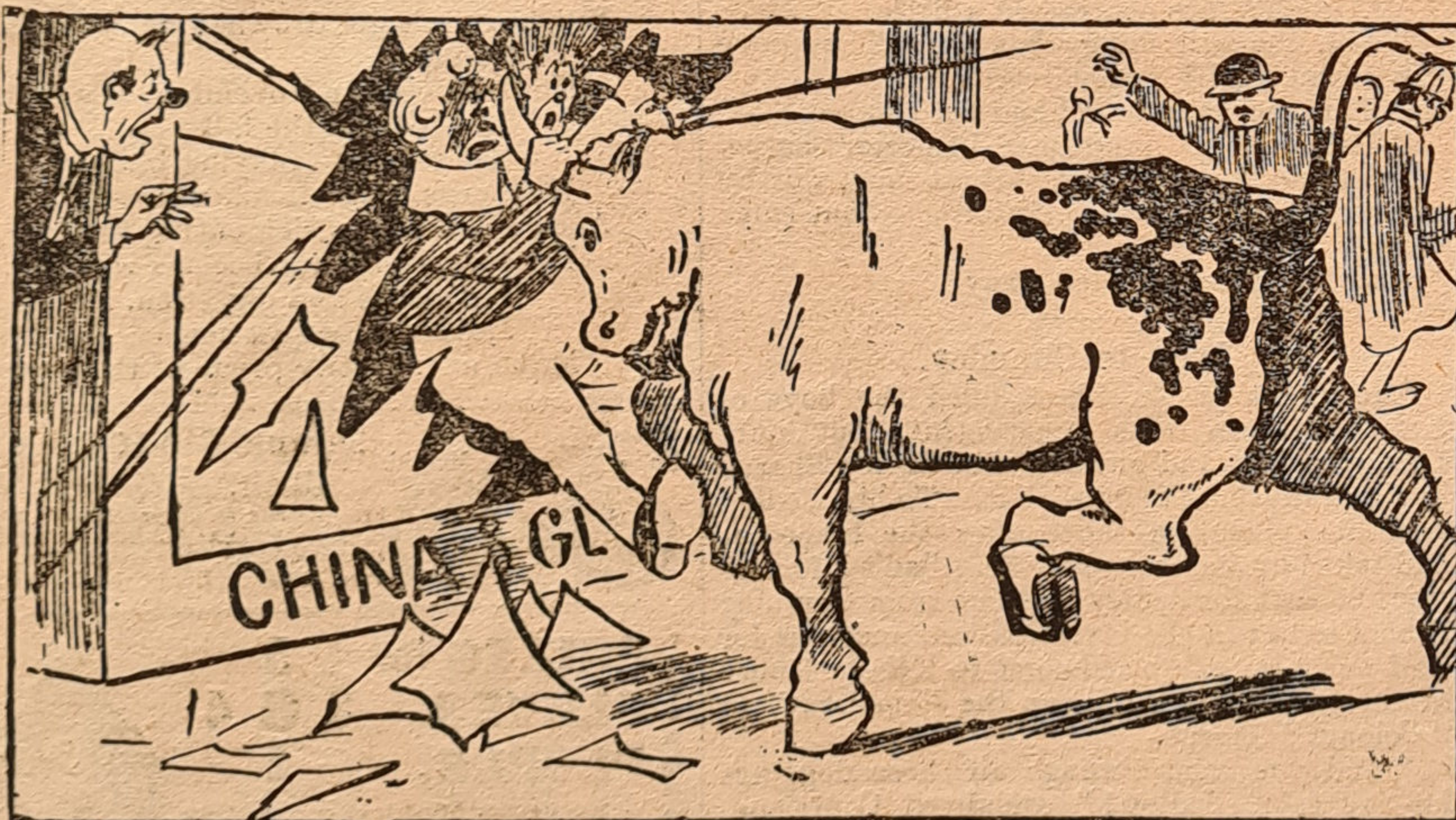
2.—“Of course, we knew that if you take a bull by the horns, you can do what you like wiv him; in fact, he's as helpless as a bird wiv salt on its tail. So we watched our opportunity and made a sudden rush at the bull, and caught him fair by the horns.



3.—“The bull looked surprised at first, and didn't seem to know what to make of us. Then he tried to shake us orf, but we held on like grim deth.



4.—“Well, panted Willie, 'now we've got him, what are we going to do wiv him?' And before I cood answer, the bull nodded in a haughty sort of way, and the next moment we were soaring towards the clouds.

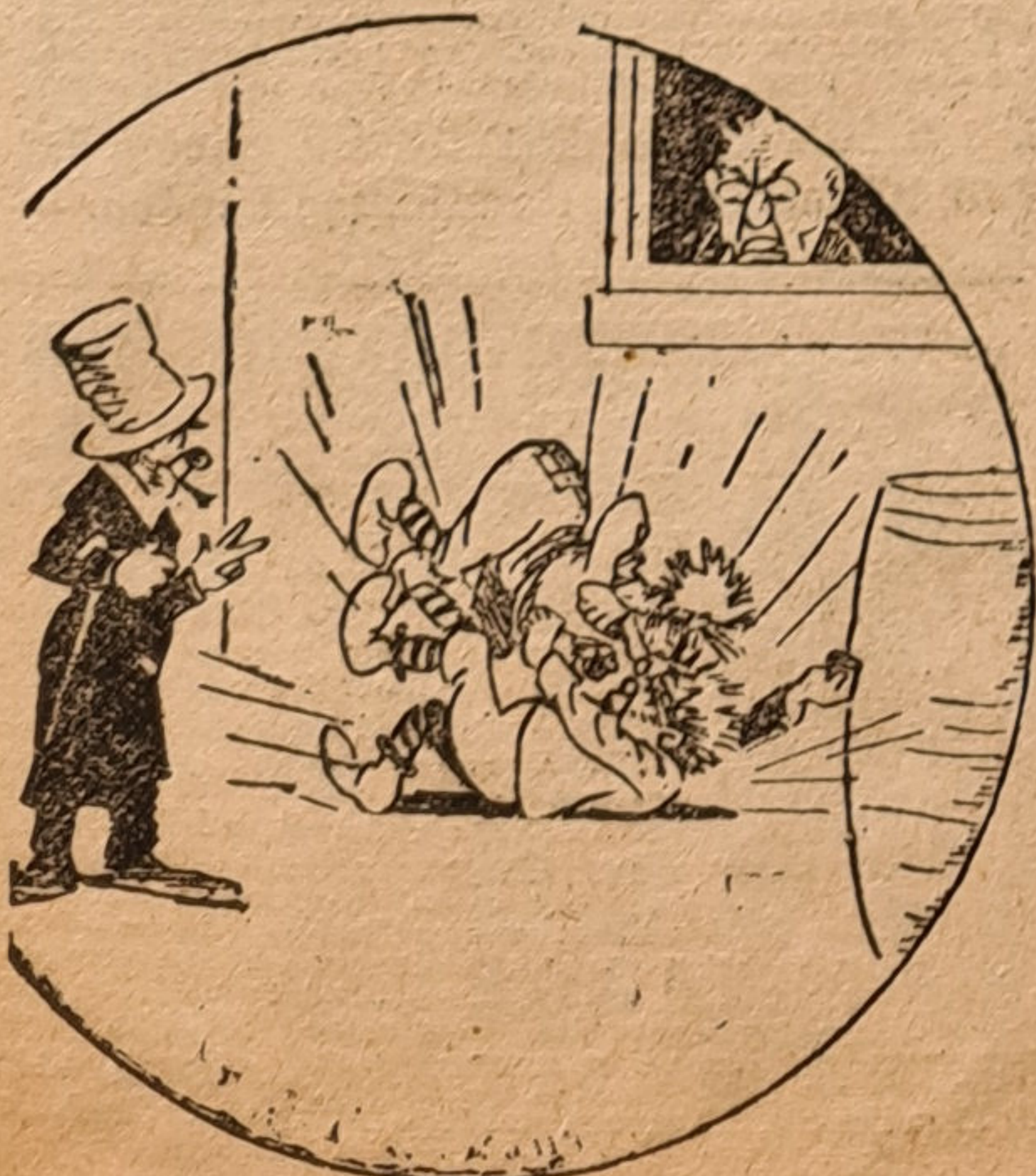


5.—“Nuthing daunted, we again seized the bull by the horns as before, and tried to back him up against a post, so that we cood tie him up wiv string. But instead of that he butted us right into a shop window, and there was an orful smash, 'cos it was a china shop.



6.—“Arfter that, we thort we'd better let him go, and give sum one else a turn. And the shopkeeper ackshally had the cheek to say we broke his window, and we were very neerly being carted orf to durance vial (wherever that is), only we gave the copper the slip and bunked orf.—BERTIE BANKS.”

THEY WERE BOTH DRESSED ALIKE.



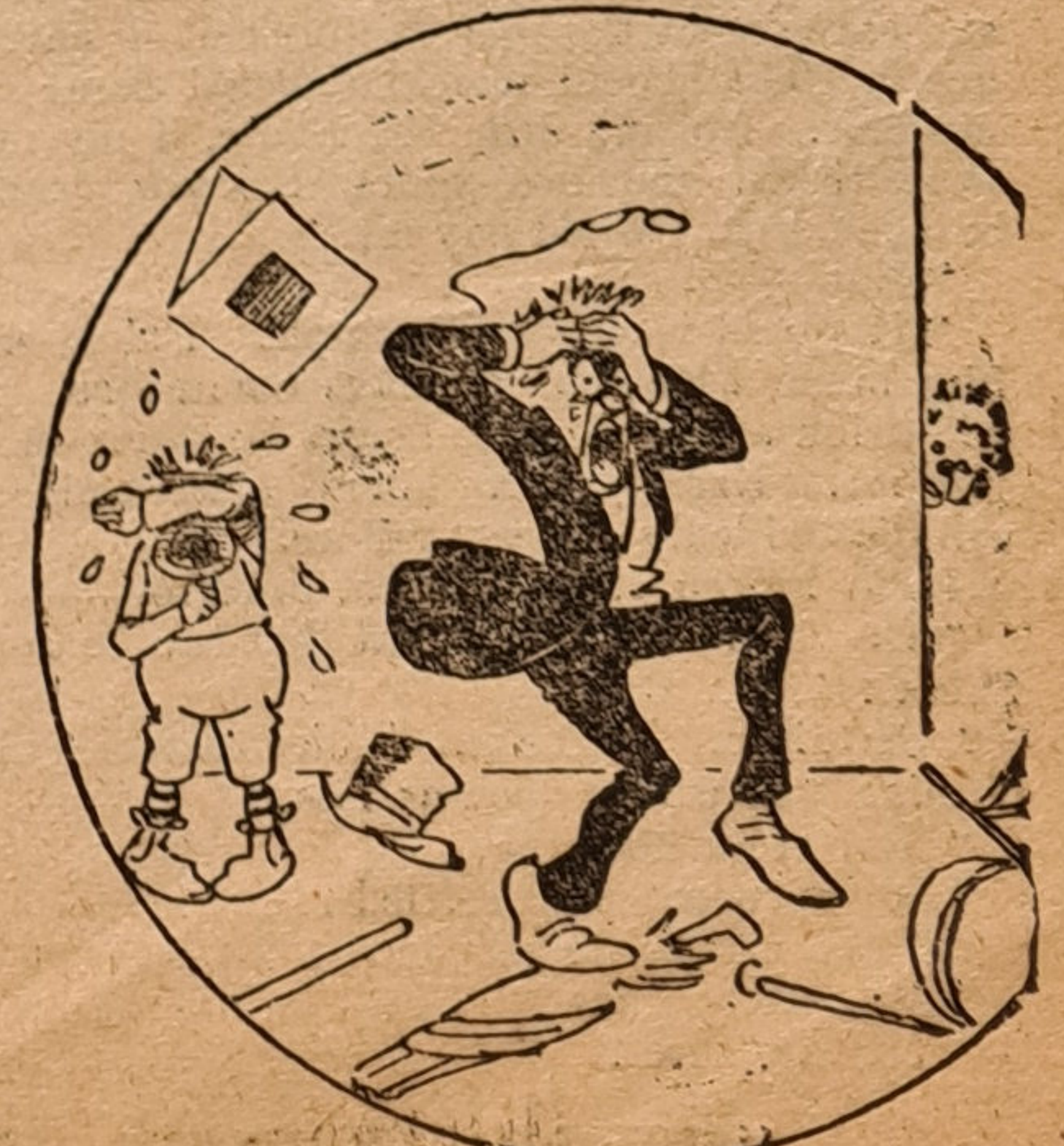
1.—GRANDPA: “There's that boy fighting again.”



2.—“Come in here, you little wretch.”



3.—“I'll teach you to fight right under my very nose” (twist).



4.—“Great Pip! I've been hitting the boy next door.”

(Continued from page 91).

"That Leonard Courtland must die, and the sooner the better," said Blane, in a low, harsh voice.

And Sedley Sharpe, hearing those words, drew a long, deep breath.

### Sedley Sharpe Makes Discoveries.

The two men looked at each other in silence for some minutes after Blane spoke. Both were rather pale.

"You have decided, Mr. Blane?"

"Isn't it the only course to be taken?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, then, I've decided."

"Very good, that's settled then."

"And you will undertake to—to—"

"Certainly. The only question to discuss is one of terms," said Mr. Skeat, pleasantly.

"We discussed that long ago."

Mr. Skeat coughed drily.

"It will need fresh discussion, now that the plan is altered. There's the greater risk to be considered."

"I paid you double your usual fees, and engaged to pay you five hundred pounds when—when—"

"When—when," sneered Skeat. "Exactly. But now I shall want more than that—much more."

"Make it a thousand."

"Multiplied by five," said Skeat, calmly.

"Impossible."

"Quite possible, I think—and unavoidable."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Blane rose. "If you are so unreasonable I can find another to do the work."

"Not secretly."

"Why not?"

"Because I should expose the whole business."

"You would!"

"Decidedly, unless my price is paid."

Blane scowled blackly.

"Take care, Skeat! I imagine that there are a good many circumstances about Kelmer House School which would scarcely bear investigation. Take care!"

"You need to take more care than I, my dear sir. Your administration of the late Captain Courtland's estate—"

Blane started.

"What do you mean?"

"I will be frank with you. I know perfectly well that you have embezzled a great deal of Leonard Courtland's money; and that, if he lives to the age of twenty-one, you will stand exposed to the world as a cheat and a swindler."

"Curse you!" hissed Blane. "I could—"

"Nonsense. There's no need for us to quarrel. You stand to gain at least fifty thousand pounds by the death of your cousin. I am asking only 10 per cent., and I am taking 50 per cent. of the risk."

Blane nodded sullenly.

"Be it so. You shall have the sum you name."

"Very well. You'll put that in writing!"

"Absurd!" said Blane, angrily.

"Not at all. I do not intend to have my claim repudiated after I have done your dirty work. You will sign a paper promising me five thousand pounds when you come into the Courtland property."

"Such a paper would be enough to put the rope round both our necks if it were produced in public."

"Yes, and therefore you will take care that it is not produced in public," said Mr. Skeat, coolly. "I shall hand it back to you when you hand me a cheque for five thousand pounds."

"Such a paper would not secure you; you would not risk producing it if I refused—"

"Not at all. I might suffer as an accomplice, unless I was able to turn King's evidence. But you would be hanged for murder, as Leonard Courtland will die in your house."

"In my house?"

"Certainly."

"But you—"

"I shall contrive it—yes."

"But our plan—"

"Our plan was to undermine his system, and cause what the wise doctors call a natural death. That could have happened here; but not this. No, my dear Mr. Blane, if my neck were risked and not yours, I know exactly how much you would pay me."

"But—"

"It would be perfectly simple. I shall send him home when the holidays commence. He will drink a cup of coffee before he starts on his journey. Exactly six hours afterwards he will die suddenly of heart failure."

Blane looked at him almost in terror.

"Do you mean to say that that can be done, Skeat?"

"Certainly. I have not studied toxicology for nothing. It will happen as I say."

"You are a fiend!"

"Come, come. Is it settled?"

"There will be no suspicion?"

"Absolutely none."

"You are sure?"

"Quite."

"I suppose, then—"

"I will sketch out the paper. You will write it out in full and sign it."

"If you insist—"

"I do insist. When you pay me you can have it back and burn it. I will call in Black to witness it."

"A witness—are you mad?"

"No, I assure you. Black will, of course, witness it without reading it."

Mr. Skeat took pen and ink, and rapidly sketched out the paper. Blane, with visible hesitation and disquietude, copied it out and signed it. Skeat unlocked the door, and rang for the porter.

Black came, and being told what was required, signed his name to the document, which was folded so that he could not see the contents. Then he retired.

"Then, in three days you may expect your dear ward home for the holidays?" said Mr. Skeat.

"Very well. I—I want you—"

"Well?"

"Treat him well; let him have anything he likes. For heaven's sake! let there be no more cruelty when he has only three days to—"

"To live! Exactly. Leave it to me!"

"Take care of that paper."

"I shall place it in a secret drawer."

"If it should ever be seen—"

"It will never be seen."

"Then, I may as well go. Is the trap there?"

"Yes. Won't you stay and take some refreshment? The 11.5 doesn't leave for half-an-hour yet, and it is only ten minutes' drive to the station."

"Thanks, no; I think I'll be off."

"A cup of coffee—"

"Coffee! Are you mocking me?" said Blane, with a shudder, thinking of the cup of coffee which Leonard was to drink ere he commenced his fatal journey. "I shall never drink coffee again. Good-night, good-night!"

The schoolmaster accompanied his visitor to the door. When the trap drove away he returned to the study. A smile of evil satisfaction was upon his thin, feline face.

"The cowardly fool!" he muttered aloud. He opened a secret drawer in his desk, and concealed the paper. "It will be safe there. Five thousand pounds! Excellent."

He locked the desk and turned off the gas, and then passed from the study. Sedley Sharpe heard the key turn in the lock, and the footsteps of the schoolmaster die away down the corridor. But not for ten minutes more did he emerge from his hiding-place.

Then he carefully climbed over the bookcase and stepped to the door. In the darkness his face was pale. The lock did not baffle him; he opened it with a picklock, and, passing through, fastened it from the other side. When Mr. Skeat came to the study in the morning he saw nothing there to arouse his suspicions. A few minutes more, and Sedley was in bed.

### A Surprise for Mr. Skeat.

The next day passed much as usual at Kelmer House. In spite of the conscience-stricken wish of Blane, Mr. Skeat's conduct towards Leonard did not alter. Cruelty had become a habit with him, and he would have missed the enjoyment of tormenting his victim. The beatings ceased, as Mr. Skeat reflected that it would not be prudent to leave traces of ill-treatment upon the unfortunate boy, to be remarked upon after his death. But every other means of torment he used to the full.

Leonard received, with astonishment, the news that he was to go home for the holidays. He was glad of it for, much as he disliked his guardian, Blane was never so brutal as Topham Skeat. Sedley had given him no hint of what he knew.

After school Sedley Sharpe broke bounds, and walked into Kelmer, where he despatched a long telegram in cipher to an address in London. He contrived to hurry back to Kelmer House in time for calling-over.

The next morning, about eleven o'clock, while school was proceeding as usual, Black, the porter, with a strange look upon his face, showed two gentlemen into the big schoolroom, where Mr. Skeat was busy finding fault and caning, as was his amiable custom.

Mr. Skeat glanced up in surprise. He recognised one of his visitors as Colonel Sharpe. The other was a stranger, but to an initiated eye he could have appeared nothing but a constable in plain clothes.

"Pardon me, my dear Colonel Sharpe, but that stupid fellow should not have shown you in here. I—"

"Not at all," said the colonel, calmly. "He did not wish to do so, but I insisted."

"I do not understand."

"Allow me to explain. I am Inspector Sharpe, of Scotland Yard, and I arrest you in the King's name. Whatever you say may be used in evidence against you."

"Are you mad?"

"Your hands, please!"

Mr. Skeat sprang back, panting.

"What is the charge?"

"Attempted murder!"

"Madman—of whom?"

"Leonard Courtland," replied the inspector; "and the boy's guardian, Herbert Blane, is probably under arrest by this time as your accomplice. The two warrants were issued at the same time. Will you hold out your hands, or must I use force?"

Mr. Skeat snarled and held out his hands. The plain-clothes man drew out a pair of handcuffs, and the steel clicked and clinked on the schoolmaster's bony wrists.

"You shall smart for this," hissed Skeat. "The charge is manifestly absurd. As for proof—"

"I think we shall find some—"

"Where?" sneered Skeat.

"Oh! perhaps in a secret drawer or a desk," said the inspector, in a casual sort of way.

Mr. Skeat staggered.

Then, realising what was at stake, he made a spring for the door.

Instantly the strong hand of the constable fastened upon his collar and jerked him back. He was a prisoner.

"Curse you, curse you!" he hissed. "How did you know all this?"

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders.

"Tell me," said Mr. Skeat, calming himself as well as he could, "how was your attention directed to my school?"

"Information received."

"Ah! yes, and I can guess from whom you received it."

He fixed a tigerish glare upon Mr. Allan, who stood pale and silent. While the strange scene proceeded, the whole room was still as the grave, the boys being too utterly astounded to do anything but stare with wide-open eyes.

Mr. Allan met the schoolmaster's savage eyes with forced calmness.

"You—you did this?"

"I did it, Mr. Skeat."

"You, the pauper—you, the gaol-bird!" "Yes," said Mr. Allan, bitterly. "I, the pauper and gaolbird. I saw what you were doing with Courtland, and my conscience could not bear it."

"The conscience of a forger!"

"Even so. I long hesitated, for I knew that it would be my ruin. I remonstrated with you first. I remonstrated again after I had sent the information, and your answer made me glad that I had acted as I did."

"You fool—you are ruined as well as I—and your mother—"

Mr. Allan's face contracted a little.

"Yes, she will suffer—but she will approve my action, and I do not regret it."

"Fool—scoundrel—if I had but guessed—"

"That will do," interrupted Inspector Sharpe. "Mr. Allan is a brave and honest man, worthy of every man's respect. As for you—but come along!"

And Mr. Skeat was led away.

### Back to Chumley.

The arrest of Mr. Skeat filled the boys of Kelmer House with amazement, but only Leonard Courtland guessed that Sedley Sharpe had had anything to do with it. To him Sedley gave an explanation—how, after the Inspector had taken up the case upon Mr. Allan's information, he sent for Sedley to come from Chumley School to aid in the investigation, and how for that purpose Sedley had come to Kelmer House in the guise of a pupil, as the "nephew" of "Colonel" Sharpe.

"And you went through all those floggings for my sake, Sedley!" exclaimed Courtland, much moved.

Sedley Sharpe smiled.

"Of course; it was necessary to thoroughly take in old Skeat. I don't mind the floggings; all in the day's work, you know."

"It was brave and noble of you."

"Hum! Well, after my little talk with you that day on the stile, I left a note for dad in an agreed upon spot, to let him know that the information he had received was correct, and that I was on the track of a villainous plot. After that, fortune, aided by me, favoured my plans; and here's the result. Skeat will never keep a school again; and your loving cousin will have a chance to think upon his sins during the next seven years or so."

"You saved my life, Sedley."

"Yes, I suppose I did."

"I wish we could stick together, after this; we ought to be chums, oughtn't we?"

"So we will be. The Court will appoint you a new guardian, and I don't see why you shouldn't come back to Chumley with me for the rest of your school days."

"Hurrah! that will be jolly!"

Kelmer House School, as Sedley had predicted, was closed, and its inmates dispersed to their various relations—to find fresh quarters, which certainly could not be less comfortable than Kelmer House.

Mr. Skeat and Herbert Blane were placed on trial, and of course witnesses were not lacking as to the persistent ill-treatment of Leonard; and the document obtained from the secret drawer of Skeat's desk fully proved the motive of it. Added to that, the affairs of the Courtland estate were investigated, and Herbert Blane had to answer also a charge of embezzlement. Seven years penal servitude each rewarded them for their misdeeds; and, of course, a fresh guardian was appointed for Leonard, who had his dearest wish granted, and accompanied Sedley Sharpe to Chumley School after the Christmas holidays. And Mr. Allan, who had sacrificed so much in the cause of justice, did not go unrewarded. Inspector Sharpe befriended him, and he obtained a good position in a Colony where no reminder of his early fault could reach him, or disturb his career. So that in his case was once more exemplified the truth of the old saying, that "honesty is the best policy."

To Chumley School went Leonard Courtland and Sedley Sharpe; and there we shall doubtless hear again of the Schoolboy Detective.

THE END.

### Convenient.

"Why do you persist in fostering the Santa Claus myth?"

"Because," answered the man with a large family, "it is more convenient to have someone in the background to take the responsibility for presents that fail to please."

### Jests and Jingles.

"Yes," said the bride of a week, "Jack tells me everything he knows, and I tell him everything I know."

"Indeed!" replied her former rival, who had been left at the post. "The silence when you are together must be oppressive."

### Proud of Him.

WILLIE'S not good in his grammar.

He has scant mathematical zeal.

But on thinking a bit

We're obliged to admit

He's accomplished a very great deal.

His copybook lessons are shaky,

And he isn't especially neat.

He's no prodigy bright;

He is seldom polite,

And his trousers get torn in the seat.

But he didn't get drowned going swim-

ming,

Nor blown up in November, sky high,

Nor hurt in the fall

That he had playing ball—

His perils have oft made us sigh.

And he didn't get sick eating turkey.

His escapes fill our bosoms with joy.

His nerve and digestion,

Beyond any question,

Make us mightily proud of the boy.

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OUR GRAND  
NEW  
YORKSHIRE  
SERIAL.

MASTER AND MAN  
OR  
THE WEAVERS SECRET.

BY  
JOHN G. ROWE.



CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

The Shot in the Dark.

"What was it you said? What was his name?" he asked, quickly.

"Herbert Barclay. Do you know him?"

And Phil stared at the man and now noticed how different he was in speech and appearance to his two fellow-bargees.

He was very tall and slim, with handsome, dark, and even aristocratic features, though the mouth was marred by the traces of dissipation. He had a well-waxed moustache and his cheeks and chin were clean shaven.

His eyes were particularly bright and intelligent, but there was something shifty about them that did not please Phil; and his attire was the same as his companion's, though newer and cleaner.

"No, I do not know the name," he replied to our hero's query. "How should I? Do either of ye know the name, Sam, Pete?"

He spoke the last sentence in a poor imitation of the broad dialect and the "burr" of his mates.

"Barclay! Ay, that's t' name o' a big worsted man'facturer raound here," answered Sam. "But t' mon as shot thee, lad, canno be no relation o' his'n."

"He is though, he's the millowner's son," trembled on Phil's lips, but in the face of his lack of evidence that it really was Herbert who had shot him and the thought that it might be as well to keep his own counsel in this strange company, he said instead:

"I've no real proof anyhow, that it was the young fellow I speak of who fired at me. He'd be capable of it, I have no doubt, but I don't see how he could have known I would come this way. Thank you again, friends, for the trouble you've taken with me, and your kindness. My name's Philip Bramham and I am a weaver. I should like to know your names in case I may want to find you again to give evidence in a police court against my cowardly assailant, whoever he was."

Sam and Pete looked in some alarm at their aristocratic companion.

"We don't need any thanks, young fellow, for what we done for yer. We could not leave yer lying in the street, bleeding and senseless," he hastened to say. "And we don't particularly want to be mixed up in no police court case, that we don't."

"You don't know for certain now, do ye, who fired at yer? It may have been an accident, and it may not, and ye're little the worse, ye've not come by no hurt. So you'll please us best by not eaying nowt about it, not going to the police at all and dragging us into the business. Ye can walk alright?"

"Oh, yes, I am all right now, and I don't live far from here. I can walk home easily enough. My head smarts rather much still, and I feel a bit weak and giddy, but I'll be all right. And, perhaps, all things considered, it would be as well if I said nothing more about it, and did not put the matter in the hands of the police."

"I do not see, as I said, how it could have been the enemy I mentioned. It's hardly likely he has been dogging my steps all the evening, since I left home; though I can't imagine who else it could have been. Still, you say you don't want to be mixed up in a police-court case and perhaps it might only be my own undoing, if I instituted proceedings against my supposed assailant; so I think I will let matters drop and content myself with keeping my eye on the object of my suspicion. Tell me your name, anyhow, friend! I'd like to know it; and here's something to share amongst you, in return for your kindness to an utter stranger."

He pulled out a sovereign and handed it to the Unknown, who looked greatly surprised at his liberality, and said:

"No, no, we don't want to rob you, to take so much as that for what little we did. You are a weaver, you said, and you can't earn so very much. A shilling will do, just for the three of us to drink your health, you know."

"Oh, I had a stroke of luck to-day and can afford it," replied Phil, eyeing the other seriously. "You'll excuse me, but you seem a strange flatman, I am sure your mates won't refuse the money."

"They will, when I order them to," laughed the Unknown. "I see you have found me out, my young friend. You are quite right. I am a strange flatman, a very strange one, for I am not one at all. I am a pressman—a journalist, getting an insight into barge life, to write an article upon it for a Liverpool paper. My name's Fletcher—George Fletcher."

"So now you know me and what I am, and why I have no particular wish to be detained here in Leeds to give evidence in a police-court when my employers expect me back in Liverpool as soon as possible. Good-night, Mr. Bramham! I'll take the shilling, if you like, for Sam and Pete. Thanks! Good-night."

Fletcher accompanied Phil on to the deck and saw him in safety off the flat, then returned to the cabin, while our hero proceeded home without meeting with any further misadventure.

CHAPTER IV.

The Accident to the Loom.

When the factory bell rang out its summons to work at six o'clock next morning, Phil Bramham, with his thick, curly hair arranged so as to hide the sticking plaster upon his scalp, was amongst the throng of weavers, spinners, drawers, combers and carders, who trooped into the millyard through the mill-gates.

The night's rest had set him up, and he was quite recovered from the ill-effects of his wound.

It was a beautiful morning, and the mills never looked uglier than they did in the bright golden sunshine. It was a day on which one would like to be out and about in the fresh air, roaming the leafy, sweet-smelling country lanes, so he thought, rather than be cooped up in the heated, steaming sheds and workrooms, toiling and spinning at the rattling, clashing loom and spinning frame.

But the tall chimneys of the numerous factories were already belching forth black smoke, which hung over the town like a canopy, shutting out the bright blue sky and still further blackening the dismal, dingy streets. To look up was to get ashes in the eyes, smuts on the nose and soot down one's throat.

Phil looked round, as he hurried with his fellow-weavers to the weaving-shed, for a glimpse of Herbert Barclay, amongst the clerks outside the counting-house door. But that young man was not to be seen.

"He won't come down till about nine or ten, of course," he muttered. "Catch him getting up so early as we poor operatives. I firmly believe it was he who fired at me last night. Well, if it was, he ought to betray himself when we meet, and I will frighten him so with the threat of handing him over to justice, that I don't think he will care about trying on any more such tricks."

Jesse Ruddock, the overlooker, was standing beside one of our hero's looms, as the latter entered the shed. He moved quickly away with a furtive squint around, and then approached Phil.

"Bramham," he said, "I've gotten some bad noos for 'ee. Tha'rt to go on half time from Monda's nixt—gaffer's orders."

"On half-time!" exclaimed Phil, in surprise, and no little chagrin.

"Ay! and half the others are to do t' same. Trade's gittin' wuss nor ever through this here infernal corner in wool by the Page clique, and t' demand for fancy worsteds is falling off every day. T' gaffer's thinkin' o' going in more for t' cheaper fabrics."

"Who are t' others on us as hev' gotten t' go on half-time, Ruddock?" anxiously demanded the weavers around.

"Thee, for wun, Ted Rogers, an' thee also, Bill Munson," replied the overlooker, with a grin that made the men mentioned feel they could knock him down. "But, git to yer looms, all of ye. I'll come round and tell ye who are to go on half-time and who're no', sharp eno' for yer likin', I've no doubt."

Phil went to his two looms, feeling anything but pleased at the information he had received. Half-time meant half-wages.

"Anyhow," he muttered, as he proceeded to start his looms, "I'm better off than most of the others also put on half-time. I have only myself to keep, while many of them have wives and families, and then there's that twenty pounds I got yesterday from Mr. Barclay. That ought to tide me over the interval until I am put on full time again, and it's just as well I should be one of the number thus reduced, instead of some other poor chap less able to bear it."

"If only this wretched corner in wool would collapse like the cotton one did, the other day! It's downright scandalous these millionaire speculators should be allowed to corner the market as they do. I am sure I have the sympathy of all right-minded men in wishing to see this Jonas Page, the 'Wool King,' as they call him, coming a crash like the Yankoe, Sully, of cotton-corner fame. He and such as

in an awful tangle about the heddles, and the weft thread coiled around the bottom of the batter.

Phil gazed in horror and speechless consternation, at the dire havoc wrought in those few brief seconds.

The loom was wrecked—the cogwheels were smashed to atoms, and the rods and shafts either bent out of all shape or broken, while the piece he was engaged upon was irretrievably spoiled, and all cut and hacked about.

Ejaculations of utter amaze went up from all his fellow operatives, and then a dead, ominous silence supervened, while they stared in awe and dismay at him and the ruined machine.

Phil could only return their looks in stupefied bewilderment, mute horror.

Jesse Ruddock, the overlooker, came chasing to the spot.

"Whatever hast tha done, Bramham? Wracked thy loom? Tha mun ha' done it for spite becoss tha wert put on half-time. Tha vicious, spitefu' scoondrel, tha't see t' inside o' Arnley Gaol for this if tha get thy deserts. Pelling, fetch t' gaffer."

He addressed his boy help, called a "jobber."

With a frightened, pitying glance at Phil, the lad reluctantly left the shed to bring the manager.

"I don't know what you mean, Jesse Ruddock," replied our hero, when he could recover his breath at this gross accusation. "I did not wreck the loom out of spite, I am in no way to blame. It was a pure accident, though how it happened exactly, goodness only knows. I don't. I saw something fall from the heddles amongst the cogs and hadn't time to stop the machine. It must have been a screw or a nut



"Is this true, Herbert?" he asked, "that there is some animosity between you and Bramham?" (SEE NEXT WEEK'S INSTALMENT.)

he, only make their money through pinching us poor millhands. If a man makes money by big speculations in the raw material, we have to suffer. It's out of our pockets, not the mill-owners' so much, that the money comes."

He broke off his meditations with a sharp exclamation, and hastily stopped one of the looms.

A lot of warp ends had been broken by the shuttle, causing what is known as "a trap." It took him some time to reunite the broken threads, and of course as he was engaged on piecework, it was so much loss of money to him.

Hardly had he set the machine going again when the same thing occurred, and this time it was a very bad "trap."

But he was an expert "warp-twister," and he soon had matters right once more. Before restarting the loom, however, he examined the shuttle. There appeared to be nothing wrong with it.

"It's a bad warp," he muttered. "If the ends break again, I'll tell Ruddock he'll have to cut it out, I'm not going to weave with it."

Once more Phil set the machine in motion, closely watching his handiwork. He suddenly saw something small and bright, like a nut or screw, drop from the heddles of the harness and disappear among the complicated arrangement of cogwheels.

Before he could stop the loom, there was a grinding crash, fragments of broken metal flew half-way across the room, and the machine ceased to work, while the warp-threads twisted

that was loose."

"An' wasn't it tha business t' mak' sure t' loom was all right, that iverything was in puffed warkin' order afore tha started runnin' it? But donno' tell us tha didn't do it purposely. Ah know different. Ah know 'ee, Philip Bramham, what a dangerous, spitefu' whipster tha'rt, an' Ah don't need no tellin' tha' did it oot o' viciousness."

"You know very well I did not. But I'm not going to argue the matter with you, Jesse Ruddock. I know you'd gladly get me into trouble, that you've been itching ever since I came here for an excuse to report me; and I shouldn't be surprised but you, yourself, put that nut or screw, or whatever it was, amongst the heddles, so as to annoy me with traps."

The overlooker's face turned a livid hue, and his eyes squinted more horribly than ever.

"Tha owdacious, lyn' yong rascal!" he roared in a white hot rage. "Ah'll hev t' laer o'thee for that, no matter what t' gaffer says. I niver heerd o' such a libellous assertion. Whatever else wilt say?"

"Nothing. As I told you I am not going to discuss the matter further with you. I'll wait until Mr. Marshall comes."

"Ay, we'll wait until t' manager cums. We'll hear what he'll say to it all. Ah, here he is."

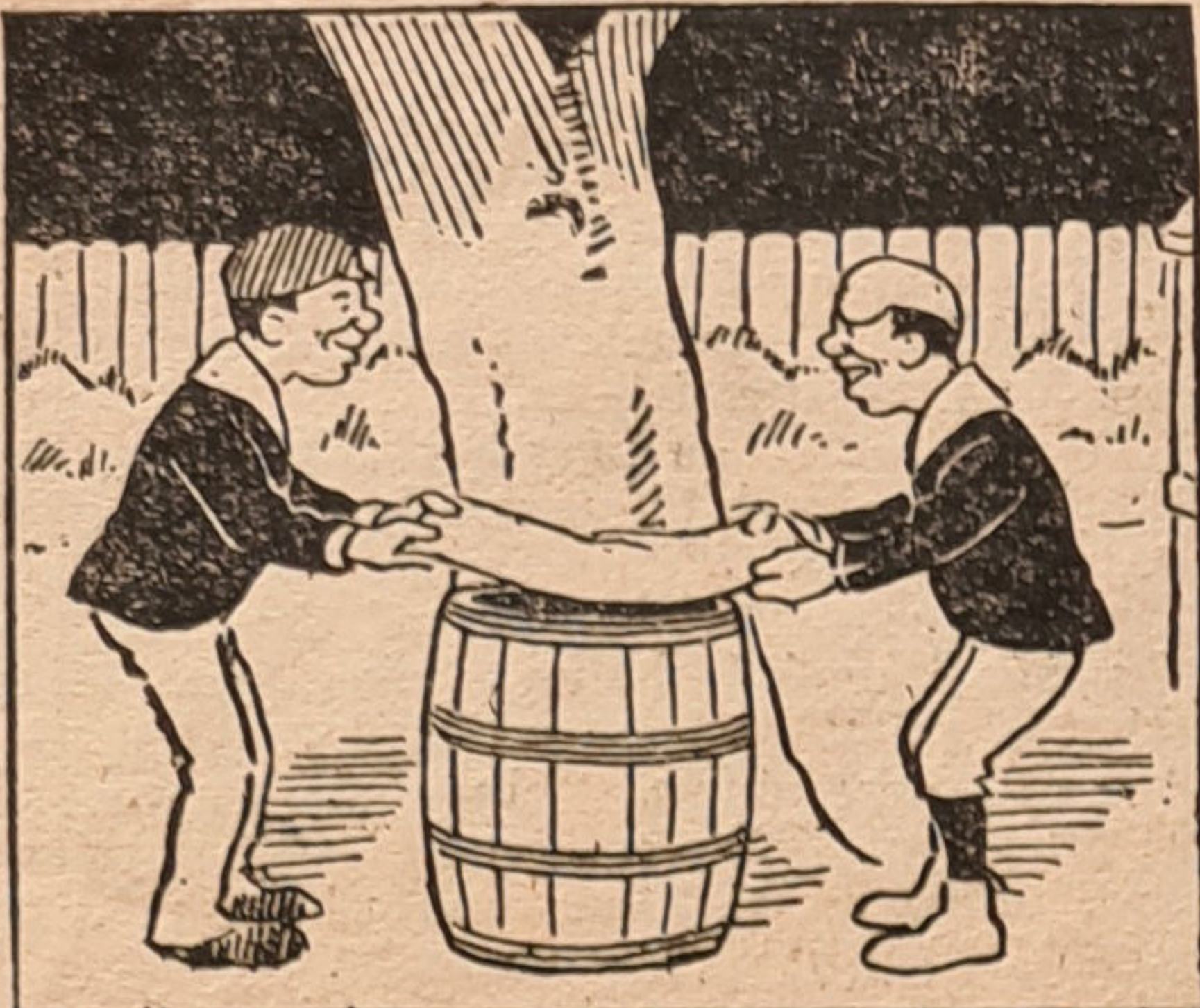
The other weavers turned sympathetic glances upon Phil, as Mr. Marshall entered quickly, followed, to our hero's mingled anxiety and hope, by Mr. Barclay and Herbert.

(ANOTHER FINE INSTALMENT NEXT WEEK.)

## A SEVERE SHOCK FOR GRANDPA.



1.—“HA!” said Grandpa, “this inverted barrel will make a splendid seat. I’ll put this paper over the top to keep my trousers clean.”



3.—Then they re-arranged the paper on the top and hid away to watch the fun.



5.—Then Pongo had an innings, and Grandpa shot up again like a rocket.



2.—But Tommy and Jack were up for a lark, so they turned the barrel the right way up and put the pup Pongo inside.

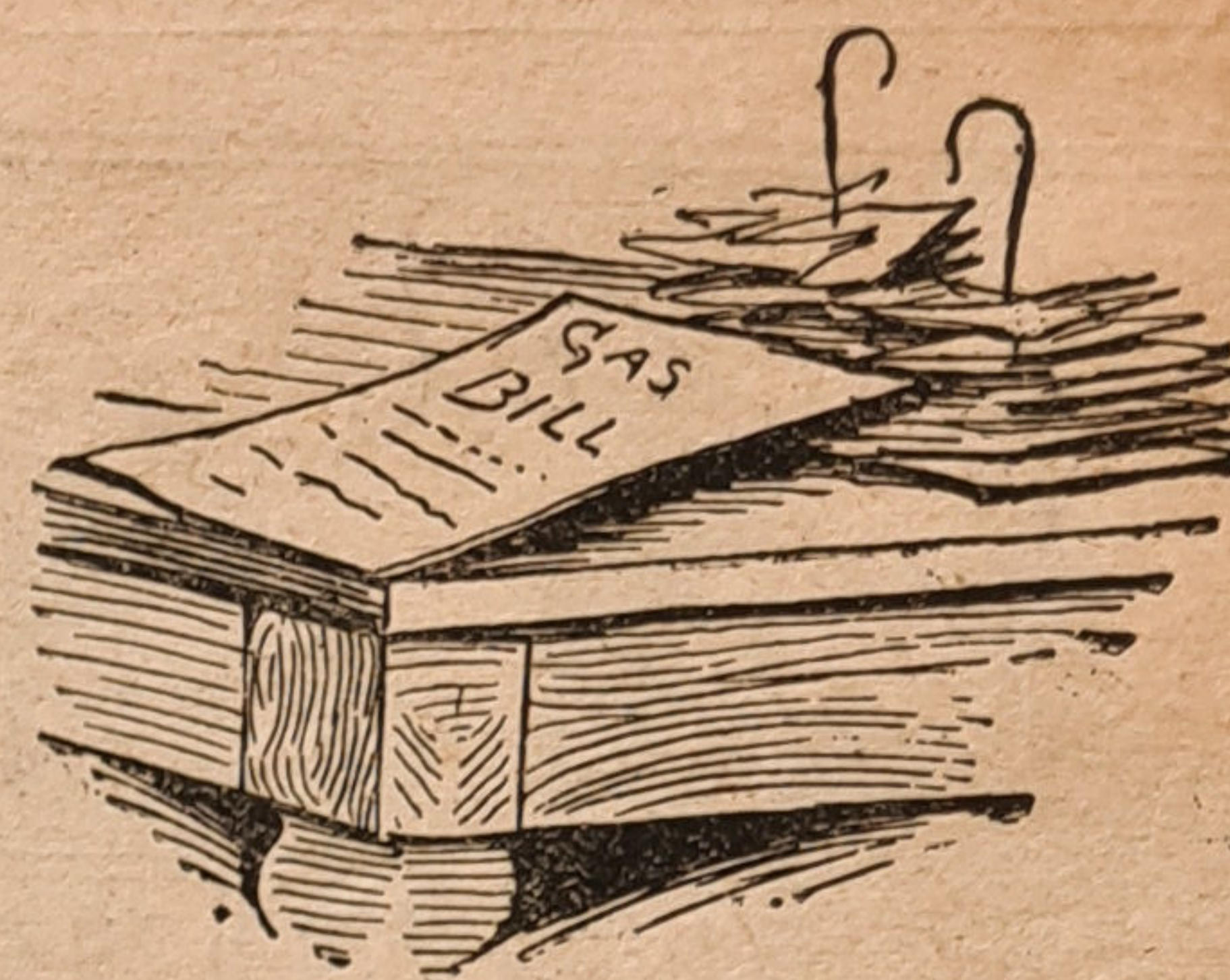


4.—Well, when Grandpa returned with his newspaper he sat down, and, of course, went down right into the tub.



6.—Lor! you should just have seen the old chap doing a record sprint down the orchard with the pup hanging on behind. You would have laughed, I bet.

## LIGHT AFFLICTION.



A GAS BILL.

## SUCH A DISAPPOINTMENT.



1.—“Oh, Krismuss, ’ere’s a find! A bottle of hold Tom, corked and everythink, washed hup from ther briny!”



2.—Longcheeks (reading): “This is ter say that ther crew of twenty of the cruiser Mary Ann ain’t drowned as serposed, but carst hon a island.”  
Both: “There’s a disgusting frod! No drink, ony twenty blooming sailors living instead of dead!”

## A TEAZER.



Boy: “If ye please, mother sent me ter know if you kin spare a little of that blanc-mange you made yesterday.”  
Mrs Casey (who thinks these requests are getting a little too frequent): “You go and tell yer mother the only kind of mangle we’ve got in the house is wot the dog has, and she kin have that if she likes.”

## DEAR FRIENDS.



FIRST GIRL: “But what could I say when he said he knew he was unworthy of me?”  
SECOND GIRL: “Well, I wouldn’t have contradicted him so early in the engagement.”

## TWO GRAND NEW SERIALS!

“MASTER AND MAN,” in “Larks!”

“THE SCUTTLED SHIP,” in “The Halfpenny Comic.”

Take Good Advice and Read Both.

## A FERTILE IMAGINATION.



1.—EXTRACT from a letter received from a correspondent in Australia: “Dear Sir,—My uncle, who has a wooden leg, went out for a walk one day and coming to a nice bit of scenery, he stood awhile to admire it.



2.—“The soil is so fertile here that while he stood his wooden leg took root and commenced growing. Uncle never noticed it.

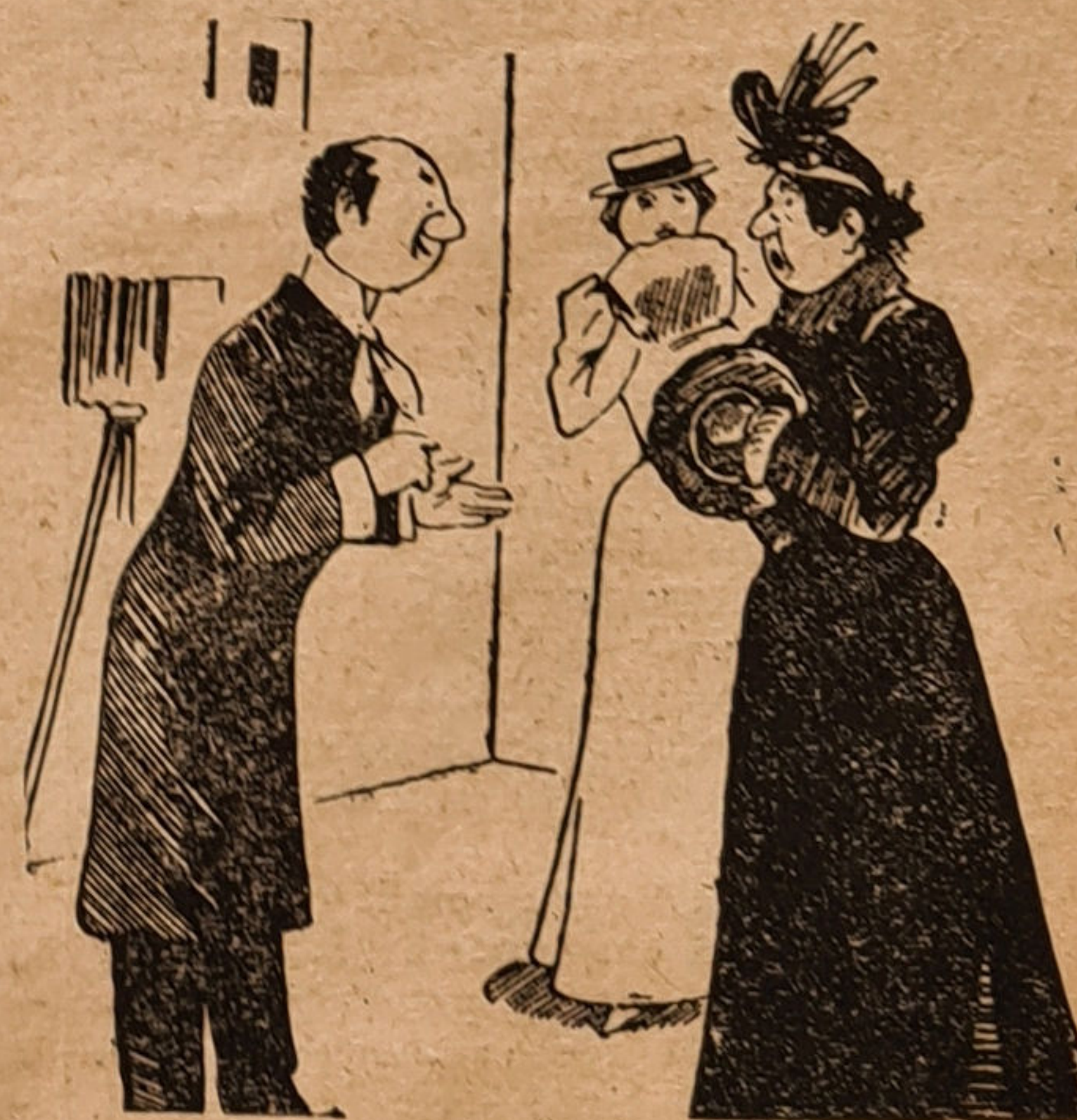


3.—“And b’est if the darned leg didn’t commence growing into a tree. But uncle never noticed it.



4.—“And when uncle thought he’d continue his walk he found himself up a tree, so to speak, and there he had to stop till we came and rescued him.—I remain, yours truly, A. KRAMM.”

## RUDE MAN.



LADY (to photographer): “I wish to be taken in two positions: one standing in my bonnet, and the other sitting in my cap.”  
Photographer: “Certainly, ma’am, just as you please; but it ain’t usual for my lady sitters either to stand in their bonnets or sit in their caps.”