

Freddy and the Bean Home News

The 10th Story in the
Freddy the Pig
Series

Walter R. Brooks
1943

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FREDDY and the Bean HOME NEWS

Walter R. Brooks

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Freddy and the Bean Home News

Chapter 1

Charles the rooster was asleep on his perch in the warm, dark henhouse. His head was tucked snugly under his wing, and he was dreaming. He dreamt that he was giving his wife Henrietta her orders for the day. At five o'clock, he said, she was to get up and tiptoe out without disturbing him, and climb up on the fence post and crow three times, to wake up Mr. and Mrs. Bean and all the animals so that the day's work on the farm could begin. She was not to wake him until ten o'clock, when she would bring him his breakfast. At eleven, while he was having his constitutional, she was to tidy up the henhouse. At twelve, she would bring him his dinner. At one, she would listen to him rehearse a patriotic address which he had composed for the meeting that evening. At two . . .

It was a nice dream, but unfortunately when he had got that far in it, a sharp peck on the shoulder awoke him. It was something that happened every morning of his life, yet somehow he had never got used to it. His head came out from under his wing with a jerk. "Yes? What is it? What's wrong?" he gasped. "Oh! Oh dear me! I wish you wouldn't poke me like that, Henrietta."

"Nonsense," said Henrietta. "I hardly touched you. Now get along out there and crow. It's five o'clock."

"Yes, dear," said Charles submissively. He ruffled his feathers, shivered, and then sneezed. He sneezed so hard that he blew two of his daughters right off the perch beside him.

"Good gracious!" said Henrietta. "I do believe you're coming down with a cold. Oh dear, what next!"

Charles knew that he was not coming down with a cold. He had sneezed because when he had pulled his head out from under his wing a feather had tickled his nose. But Henrietta's remark had given him an idea. It was no fun to wade through icy slush to the fence post on a raw March day, and to draw in a lungful of damp cold air in order to crow loud enough to wake everybody up. You had to crow louder on cold mornings, because people's ears were usually covered up with quilts and blankets. Charles was proud of his voice, which was high and penetrating, and considered by some—but principally by Charles himself—very musical. Indeed,

on fine mornings he often kept on crowing just for the pleasure of hearing himself until the other animals chased him back into the henhouse. But this morning he thought it would be much nicer to stay in where it was warm and let someone else get things started.

So he said: "I believe I ab cubbing dowd with subthig this bordig." And he took a deep breath and then let out just a faint squawk, and said: "I cad crow, Hedrietta."

"Well," said his wife, "I shall have to go out and crow for you. You try to go back to sleep, and I'll fix you up when I get back."

So Henrietta went out and got on the fence post.

Henrietta had never tried crowing before. Like most hens, she thought she could crow as well as a rooster can. But when she got up on the post and opened her beak, all that came out was a cackle, and if Mr. Bean or any of the animals heard it, they just thought it was Henrietta scolding Charles, and turned over and went to sleep again. Henrietta tried and tried, but nobody paid any attention.

Nobody, that is, except Freddy, the pig. Freddy was a sound sleeper, and sometimes Charles had to come right down and put his head in the door of the pigpen and crow in order to wake him up. But when he had some especial work to do, I dare say there was no pig in New York State that got up earlier in the morning. And this morning he was working out a plan for a scrap drive that he was to present to the animals at a meeting in the cowbarn that evening. So when he heard Henrietta's excited cackle, he rushed to the window.

Of course it didn't do him much good to rush to the window, for the panes were so dirty that you couldn't tell whether it was daylight outside, much less see anything that was going on. Freddy had put off having them washed because he didn't like being disturbed—and also perhaps because he didn't like having visitors he didn't want to talk to, peeking in the window to see if he was at home. But after all, when it was getting so bad that you couldn't tell any more if the sun was shining or not, something would have to be done about it, and muttering: "I really *must* have that window washed," he went to the door.

When he opened the door he couldn't see much more than he had through the window, because the sun hadn't come up yet, but the moon was setting, and in its light he could just make out what he supposed to be Charles on top of the fence post.

"Good gracious, Charles," he said, walking over to the fence, "what an awful noise. You sound like an old sick hen."

"Oh, do I indeed?" said Henrietta angrily. "Well, I'll thank you to keep your opinions to yourself, pig. I guess it's enough to have a sick husband on my hands

without having to listen to any smartness from you.”

“Why, Henrietta!” exclaimed Freddy. “I didn’t know it was you. I thought it was Charles. There was nothing personal about it, you understand; I was just going to have a little fun with him. As a matter of fact, I came out because his voice seemed so much more musical this morning. Quite thrilling in the upper notes, in fact.”

“You can save your compliments for those that like them,” said Henrietta.

“Everybody likes compliments if they’re true,” said Freddy. “You have a very nice voice, Henrietta. But it hasn’t the harshness of Charles’, and that’s why you haven’t been able to wake anybody up.”

“Well, what am I to do?” said Henrietta. “Charles’ job on this farm is to get people up, but he’s so hoarse he can’t crow a note.”

“Well, I can’t crow,” said Freddy, “but I can squeal good and loud. We can’t let old Charles down.” And he lifted up his head and let out a shriek that could have been heard halfway to Centerboro.

I guess there wasn’t another snore snored on the Bean farm after that squeal. Birds’ heads came out from under their wings as if they had been on springs, and squirrels and chipmunks popped out of their holes, and the three cows and Hank, the old white horse, came clattering out of their barns, and a light went on in Mr. Bean’s bedroom window. And thirty seconds later, Mr. Bean himself came hurrying across the barnyard.

He had dressed the lower half of himself in boots and trousers, but the upper half he hadn’t bothered about, and he still had on his long white nightshirt and the white nightcap with the red tassel. And over his shoulder was a shotgun. “What’s going on here?” he roared.

Henrietta sat on the post and didn’t say anything, and neither did Freddy, because although in a way Mr. Bean was very proud of his talking animals he had a kind of old-fashioned notion that animals should be seen and not heard. So unless it was absolutely necessary none of them ever spoke to him directly, although they talked to Mrs. Bean a good deal.

But Mr. Bean was pretty sharp. He peered at Henrietta on the post, and then at Freddy, and then he said: “H’m, ‘whistling girls and crowing hens.’ Heard of them before. Never heard of a crowing pig. Where’s Charles? Sick?” And he went over to the henhouse and turned the beam of a flashlight on Charles, who blinked miserably and sniffed.

“Got the sniffles, hey?” said Mr. Bean. “I’ll take you in to Mrs. B.” And he lifted Charles off the perch and started for the house. As he passed Henrietta and Freddy he said gruffly: “Much obliged to ye.”

That wasn't much to say, but from Mr. Bean it was high praise, and they knew he meant every word of it.

Mrs. Bean wrapped Charles in an old quilt and tucked him up in a box behind the stove, and then she fed him some of the corn meal mush left over from Mr. Bean's breakfast. She even brought him an old soft handkerchief of Mr. Bean's to wipe his nose on. Charles felt a little ashamed of himself. But it was warm and comfortable in the box, and by and by he fell into a doze, and took up the dream about Henrietta where he had left it off when she had waked him up.

But he had only got as far as four o'clock, when she was to clear a path from the henhouse to the barn, so that he could walk over to make his speech that evening without having to wade through slush, when a loud voice woke him again. "Hi, Charley, how's the boy?" It was Jinx, the black cat, who had a basket behind the stove, next to Charles' box.

Jinx didn't like getting his feet wet, and so he hadn't gone outdoors that morning. He had been wandering about the house, trying to think of something to do, and bothering everybody. He had jumped out from behind doors at Mrs. Bean, and he had pretended that Robert's tail was a rat, and had pounced on it until the dog had lost patience and cuffed him good. He had tried to chase the mice, when they had come up through the holes in the floor that Mr. Bean had bored for them, to get the crumbs from breakfast. But it wasn't much fun, because the mice didn't pay any attention to him when he crouched and lashed his tail. They just said: "Oh, be your age, Jinx!" and went on hunting crumbs. So at last he decided to take a nap in his basket, and it was then he saw Charles.

Although he was a nice cat, Jinx did not have a very sympathetic nature; but when he heard that Charles had a cold, he said: "Golly, that's hard luck. You won't be able to make your speech tonight, then."

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Charles. "I never thought of that! Mrs. Bean will never let me go out to the barn. And—well, to tell you the truth, Jinx, I haven't really got a cold at all." And he told the cat what had happened.

"Well," said Jinx with a grin, "it's hard luck for you, all right, but it's a break for us. We won't have to listen to that speech again."

"What do you mean, again?" said Charles indignantly. "This is a bran new speech. A speech designed to inform the animals on this farm of their high privileges as citizens of a free nation, to—"

"Save it," interrupted Jinx. "You see, Charles, your speeches—well, it's like Mrs. Bean cooking spinach. Sometimes she cooks it with cream, and sometimes with butter, and sometimes this way and sometimes that. But in the end, it's always

spinach that gets to the table. Now, your speeches—”

“I won’t have my speeches compared to spinach,” said Charles huffily.

“Tisn’t a fair comparison, I’ll admit,” said the cat. “Because spinach does you a lot of good, while your speeches—”

But Charles had pulled his head down under the quilt and refused to listen to any more.

After a little, Jinx got tired of waiting for him to come out, and went off to find somebody else to tease. Charles could hear Mrs. Bean’s quick footsteps moving around upstairs, making the bed. He climbed cautiously out of the box and looked around. The pantry door was open a crack, and he felt pretty sure that the pantry window was open a crack, too. If it was open wide enough so that he could squeeze through . . .

He knew that it was his one chance of making that speech. Mrs. Bean would never let him go out for the evening when he had a cold. He could hide somewhere for the rest of the day, and then when the meeting was in full swing, and Freddy was saying: “Our principal speaker is unfortunately not able to be with us this evening,” he would make a dramatic entrance, and launch magnificently into the speech before Henrietta could stop him. For he knew that Henrietta would be pretty mad.

He squeezed through the pantry window with only the loss of a few unimportant feathers. Nobody was in sight, and he legged it for the barn. Hank, the old white horse, had his back turned, and Charles sneaked upstairs into the hay loft. Then he burrowed down into the hay and tried to go to sleep.

But a few years earlier, when the animals had come back from their famous trip to Florida, Mr. Bean had put furnaces in the barns, and had also put an electric heater in the henhouse. He had even put a revolving door in the henhouse, so that it wouldn’t be so draughty. Some people thought that he pampered his animals. But he only said that he didn’t see what harm it did them to be warm and comfortable in the winter time. However, there is no denying that Charles had got pretty soft. When you have been able to get heat any time by just snapping a switch, you aren’t likely to be very comfortable in a cold hay loft.

Pretty soon Charles was shivering so that his beak rattled. He got out and flapped his wings, and did setting up exercises, but as soon as he stopped he got cold again. But every time he was on the point of giving up and going back to the house, the thought of that big audience swayed to wild applause by his eloquence, strengthened his determination to stick it out.

Along in the afternoon Mrs. Bean discovered his absence. “The young scamp!” she exclaimed. “Jinx! Robert! Georgie!” she called. “Where are you? Go see if you

can find Charles and bring him back here. He's got a bad cold, and he has no business running around outdoors in this weather. Hurry, now!"

So they went to look for him. Jinx didn't want to give Charles away, so he didn't tell the others that Charles was just pretending to have a cold, and he didn't hunt very hard. He went up into the spare room and curled up on the bed.

"You look in the barn, Georgie," said Robert, "and I'll go down to the cow barn." So Georgie went and asked Hank if he had seen anything of Charles.

"Why, I dunno," said Hank. "I did see him—let me see, was it yesterday or the day before? Don't seem as if I'd seen him this morning. No, he ain't here. But as long as you are, Georgie, I wish you'd run up in the loft and see what it is that keeps sneezing up there. I know there ain't anybody up there, but there's a sneeze there because I've heard it. It isn't natural to have a sneeze around that ain't attached to somebody."

So Georgie ran up the steep stairs. The sneeze was there all right, because he heard it just as he got to the top. And it wasn't long before he found the sneezer.

"Come on out, Charles," he said. "Mrs. Bean wants you."

Charles was too cold and unhappy to refuse. He followed, sneezing miserably, to the kitchen, where Mrs. Bean, instead of scolding him, gave him half a molasses cookie, and then wrapped him up again in the quilt behind the warm stove.

By and by Jinx came downstairs again. "Well, well," he said; "where have you been?"

"I was oud id the bard," said Charles.

"Look," said Jinx, "you don't have to talk that stuffed up way with me. I guess you forgot that you told me you didn't have any cold."

"Well, I god wud dow," said Charles.

Chapter 2

So Charles didn't get to the meeting in the barn that night, and I guess it was a good thing for his reputation as an orator, for you can't make much of a speech if you haven't got the use of your nose. But all the animals agreed that something was lacking. For though they always complained that he talked too long, and though they never could remember afterwards anything he had said, they had come to feel that no meeting was complete without one of Charles' highflown orations.

The meeting was called for half past seven, and when Freddy climbed into the old phaeton and rapped on the dashboard for order, the barn was crowded to the doors.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Freddy; "friends and fellow animals—yes, and fellow insects, for I see our good neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Webb, have spun front row seats for themselves here in the whip socket. And Randolph is here too." And he waved to a beetle who was sitting on a beam that ran along the side wall.

Randolph reared up and attempted to wave his forelegs at Freddy, but immediately fell over on his back and lay there struggling until Jinx flipped him right side up with his paw.

"Yes," said Freddy, "I am glad to see so many of you here, and so many of the woods animals, too. For the matter which has called us together is one which concerns us all. You all know of the scrap metal drive which was held in Centerboro last year. You know that Mr. Bean collected, on his farm alone, three tons of old iron, which was shipped off to make guns and ships to help our fighting men win the war. You probably know, too, that another drive is being held this year, to get out all the scrap metal that was missed on the last one. And you have probably heard of the prize which is being offered to the person who brings in the most scrap.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, we would like that prize to go to the Bean farm."

"What's the prize?" shouted someone.

"The prize," said Freddy, "is a blue pennant, with a white S on it for Scrap. To which the sheriff has generously added a box of cigars."

"Hooray for the sheriff!" shouted Bill, the goat.

"I don't know what you're hoorayin' about, goat," said Jinx. "You haven't taken up cigar smoking at your age, have you?"

"I can eat 'em, can't I?" said Bill. "There's nothing tastier to finish off a nice dinner of thistles than a good strong cigar."

"The cigars will be for Mr. Bean to smoke," said Freddy. "If he wins them. And we must all see that he does win them. But it won't be so easy. Mr. Bean has

already cleaned up all the old iron he could find. Some of the other farmers, who didn't work very hard at it on the first drive, have a lot of stuff still lying around. That is why this meeting was called. We animals get around in places where Mr. Bean never goes. Probably each one of us knows half a dozen places where there are pieces of iron—”

“I know where there's an old stove,” said Peter, the bear, in his gruff voice. “Back of that deserted house, up in the woods.”

“There's a couple of old horseshoes under this floor,” piped up Eeny, one of the mice.

“Of course,” said Freddy. “All we've got to do is get the stuff together. Now I don't know that there is much more to say. I know that everybody here will work hard, because everybody here will be working for his country, Mr. Bean, and for himself. I might say that Mr. Bean has generously announced that when he sells the scrap, each animal will be paid for whatever he has brought in. And I may add that, when this money is paid, if any of you wish to put some of it away in a safe place against a rainy day, the First Animal Bank, of which I am president, will be only too glad to accommodate you.”

“Does all the iron we collect have to come just off this farm?” asked Mrs. Wiggins.

“Yes,” said Freddy. “Or from up in the woods, where nobody else would be likely to claim it. Of course, if you find some on somebody else's property, and the owner says you can have it, you can bring it in here.”

“What I want to know,” said Bill, “is what's it worth? Suppose I bring in ten pounds. How much'll I get?”

“I don't know exactly,” said Freddy. “But it will be a little less than half a cent a pound.”

Bill snorted. “Less than a nickel!” he said. “Rather stay at home and curl up with a good book.”

Freddy rapped sharply on the dashboard. “Perhaps I have not made myself clear,” he said. “If we can make a little money by bringing in this old iron, why that's fine. But we're not doing it to make money. We're doing it because it's our patriotic duty, and if we didn't get a cent for it, we'd do it just the same. Of course, we'd like to have our own farm win the prize, but that's not so important either. All we want is to get that scrap out.”

The animals gave a cheer at this, and Freddy continued. “As you know, our distinguished friend, that superb orator, Charles, was to have delivered a patriotic speech tonight. But though I am sorry to announce that illness has prevented his

fulfilling the engagement, I am in a way glad that there is to be no patriotic speech. This is no time for patriotic speeches; it is a time for us to get to work. We've got a little over two months, until the first of June, and that isn't any too long for what we have to do. So I suggest that as we have an hour or so of daylight left, we wind up this meeting by singing *The Star Spangled Banner*, and then get to work *right now*."

Up in the house, Mr. and Mrs. Bean heard the singing. Mr. Bean smiled, but he shook his head doubtfully. "Ought to be in bed," he said, "instead of sitting up singing half the night."

"Now you leave them alone, Mr. B.," Mrs. Bean replied. "It isn't eight yet. And my land, you ought to be proud of 'em! No country can fail to win its wars when even the animals are patriotic!" And she stood up and sang the last of the national anthem with them. And pretty soon Mr. Bean stood up and sang too.

The next morning Charles felt a good deal better, but he still had a cold all right. He hopped out of his box at five o'clock and tried to crow, but his voice was so hoarse that he didn't even wake up Jinx. He could hear Mr. Bean snoring away upstairs. Of course Mr. Bean knew that he had a cold, and wouldn't expect him to crow that morning, but he was a little ashamed of the way he had acted, and he thought if he could manage to wake everybody up in spite of having a cold, he would feel better about it.

There was an iron frying pan hanging on the wall, and he hopped up on a chair where he could reach it and began hammering it with his beak. It rang as clear as an alarm bell. Jinx bounced out of his basket, and there was a thump upstairs and in a minute Mr. Bean came down into the kitchen. He had a candle in his hand, and he peered at Charles and then looked at the clock. "H'mph! Five o'clock. Right on the dot. But can't ye crow?"

Charles showed him what his crow sounded like.

Mr. Bean nodded. "Guess your crow needs oilin'," he said. He patted Charles on the head and went back upstairs.

Pretty soon Mrs. Bean came down and shook down the fire and put the coffeepot on, and then she put some eggs and bacon on, and then she mixed up some pancake batter and put the griddle on to heat. And then she thought a minute and went and got some doughnuts and an apple pie and some baking powder biscuits and put them on the table. She never liked Mr. Bean to get up from the table hungry.

Charles walked over to the outside door and tapped on it with his beak.

"You want to go out?" said Mrs. Bean. "Well, your cold's certainly better; I

guess it won't hurt you. But hop up on this chair first and let me look at your throat."

So Charles hopped up and opened his beak, and Mrs. Bean peered down his throat.

"H'm," she said, "looks pretty good. But if I were you, I wouldn't try to crow for a few days. You might strain your voice. I'll have Mr. Bean hang that frying pan up outside somewhere, and you can wake us up by rapping on that."

So she let Charles out, and the first animal he met in the barnyard was Alice, one of the ducks. "Why Charles," she cried, "Emma and I were sorry to hear that you were ill. We missed you at the meeting last night. We always enjoy your speeches. So stimulating, we always think. But should you be out on such a raw day when you have a cold?"

Charles said grandly that it was nothing, nothing; just a touch of the grip. (He called it "a dudge of the grib.")

"Dear me," said Alice, "I do think you should be bundled up. Though I must say that you don't *look* sick. With your fine ruddy color you're the picture of health." This of course was the rankest flattery, since a rooster's face is covered with feathers and unless you pulled them all out you couldn't tell what his complexion was like.

But Charles never examined compliments very carefully. When anyone paid him a compliment, he just said: "Do you really think so?", and of course they said it over again, so that then he got two compliments instead of one. And sometimes, by continuing to ask questions about it, he could get the compliment repeated seven or eight times. They made him feel that he was quite a rooster.

He had intended to go back to the henhouse, for although when he was well Henrietta ordered him around a good deal, when he was sick she did everything she could to make him comfortable. But Alice's compliments had made him feel so handsome and important that he decided to see if the other animals wouldn't like to say a few admiring things.

Unfortunately, the first one he met was Mrs. Wiggins. Like most cows, Mrs. Wiggins always said exactly what she meant. She seemed quite shocked at Charles' appearance. "Good land!" she exclaimed. "You do look terrible, Charles. You ought to be in bed."

"But I—I've just got a little cold," said Charles uncertainly, "I—I feel fine."

"Well, you don't look it," said Mrs. Wiggins. "What on earth Henrietta's thinking of to let you go out, I can't imagine. You look awful."

"Do-you really think so?" stammered Charles. The concern on Mrs. Wiggins' broad face worried him. He did feel pretty awful, he thought. "Well," he said,

“maybe you’re right.”

“Of course I’m right. You go straight home and gargle.”

“I—I guess I’d better,” said Charles weakly. And he turned and walked unsteadily off towards the henhouse.

Chapter 3

Early that morning Freddy set out for Centerboro. He had written out an account of the meeting, and he was going to take it into Mr. Dimsey, the editor of the *Centerboro Guardian*. Mr. Dimsey was a good friend of Freddy's, and often printed in the *Guardian* items of news about the Bean animals. He was really very glad to get these items, particularly in the winter, when there wasn't much news to print, except about the church suppers, and old Mr. Lawrence's lumbago, and things like that. He even printed some of Freddy's poems.

Of course since the famous trip to Florida, everybody in Centerboro knew about the Bean animals, and was interested in their doings, even if they didn't know them personally. Freddy particularly was popular, and indeed was often invited to evening parties in the village. He seldom went, however, because although a good dancer and a fine conversationalist, he did not care for cards, and most of the parties were euchre parties.

As he trotted down Main Street he was stopped a number of times by friends who wanted to know how he was getting on and if he had had any interesting detective cases lately. He climbed the narrow stairway to the printing office, pushed open the door marked "Editor," and then stopped. For the man sitting at the cluttered desk was not his friend Mr. Dimsey; it was a stranger.

Before Freddy could say anything the man got to his feet. He was a short, dark, thickset man with an angry expression. "Pigs!" he roared. "Jumping Jehosophat, what next! Get out!"

"I'm looking for Mr. Dimsey; I'm a friend of his," said Freddy, backing up.

"I'm not surprised," said the man. "But that don't make you a friend of mine. Come on; beat it."

"Well, I just wanted—" Freddy began, but the man picked up a ruler and started for him, and Freddy ran. He forgot that he was at the head of a flight of stairs, and so he ran right off the top step into the air. For a minute he hung there with all legs working, and then he went down and hit on the tenth step from the top and rolled all the way into the street.

He picked himself up and brushed himself off. Fortunately he was pretty fat so it hadn't hurt him much. All he said was: "Well!" And then he went off out Elm Street, to the little farmhouse where Mr. Dimsey lived, and rang the doorbell. And Mr. Dimsey himself came to the door. "Well, well, Freddy," he said. "Nice to know my old friends haven't forgotten me. Come in."

Mr. Dimsey was a nice man, but it is hard to describe him. I guess it is because

he wasn't very important looking. Even his friends sometimes passed him on the street without recognizing him. It is easier to say what he wasn't. He wasn't tall, and he wasn't fat. He didn't have any special kind of expression. I think he had a little gray moustache, but you had to be pretty close to him to see it. But Freddy liked him a lot.

"I went around to the *Guardian* office," said Freddy, wiping his trotters carefully on the mat, "but there was a man there—"

"Mr. Garble," said Mr. Dimsey. "He doesn't like animals." He led the way into his parlor, and pulled up an armchair before the fire for Freddy. The armchair was upholstered in horsehair, which is pretty slippery. Freddy sat down in it, and promptly slid off onto the floor.

"Well, what is Mr. Garble doing in your office?" said Freddy. He got into the armchair more carefully this time and wriggled himself well back into it. But the minute he let go of the arms, he slid off onto the floor again. "I guess I'd better stay here," he said.

"Nobody with short legs can stay in a horsehair chair," said Mr. Dimsey. "I'm sorry, but all the others are the same. You stay there and I'll come down with you." So he got down on the floor beside Freddy. He was a very polite man.

Then he told Freddy that he wasn't editor of the Centerboro *Guardian* any more. "Mr. Garble is running the paper now," he said. "He's a mean man, Freddy. If that's another poem you've brought, you might as well tear it up. He doesn't like animals and he doesn't like poetry. I don't know anything he does like. He doesn't even like himself very well."

"He must like being an editor," said Freddy. "But why did you let him?"

"I couldn't help myself," said Mr. Dimsey. "You see, Freddy, he's Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk's brother. You know her?"

Freddy didn't know Mrs. Underdunk personally, but he knew a lot about her. She had a big house that looked like a castle out Main Street, with an iron deer on the front lawn, and she was very rich, and she liked to run things.

"Well," said Mr. Dimsey, "some years ago the old press that we used to print the *Guardian* on broke down. I had to get a new one, and I didn't have the money for it myself, so I went to Mrs. Underdunk to see if I could borrow it. At first she wouldn't have anything to do with it, but then she talked to her brother, and at last she agreed to lend the money. She drove a hard bargain, but I figured if things went well, I'd be able to pay her back in a few years. I suppose I ought to have seen what she was up to, but I didn't.

"Well, things didn't go well. Instead of paying her back, each year I owed her a

little more, and before long she had a mortgage on my whole plant. And then she began telling me what I should print in the *Guardian*.

“Well, most of the things she wanted printed didn’t matter so much. They were mostly about parties she gave and what important people were there, or about how generous she was to give a new organ to the church, and so on. But when she wanted to sell the town a piece of her land to build the new school on, and wanted me to say it was the best place to build on, I wouldn’t do it. The town had an offer of two other sites that were cheaper and better in every way.

“Well, I owed her so much money that she could have taken the *Guardian* away from me then if she’d wanted to. But she knew it wouldn’t look well if people knew why she had done it, and she had to wait for a better excuse. And pretty soon she found one.”

Mr. Dimsey stopped. “H’m,” he said, “I don’t know as I ought to tell you what it was. It may make you kind of mad. It did me. But as long as I’ve started—” He got up and went over to his desk and brought out a copy of the *Guardian*. “You remember the picture of you I printed last fall? When you had your birthday party?” He spread out the paper, but Freddy did not need to see it to remember it. He had the clipping pinned up over his desk at home. It wasn’t a very good likeness, but newspaper pictures never are. I guess that is why they always have the person’s name under them. Under Freddy’s, it said: “Prominent Pig Fêted,” and went on to tell about the party and the many attractive and tastefully wrapped presents, and the cake Mrs. Bean had made for him, and a short sketch of his career. It was a nice piece and had pleased Freddy very much.

But it had not pleased Mrs. Underdunk. For on the day of Freddy’s party, she had had lunch at the Governor’s mansion in Albany, and there was a story about that, with her picture, in the very next column. Maybe she wouldn’t have thought much about the two pictures being together if it hadn’t been for old Mr. Lawrence. Old Mr. Lawrence didn’t see very well, and when she showed him the piece in the paper he looked at the wrong picture. “Fine likeness,” he wheezed. “For the first time I see a look of your father in your face.” The story went all over town, and several people who didn’t like Mrs. Underdunk very well, called up and wished her many happy returns of the day. One or two even asked her which was her picture.

“She was pretty mad,” said Mr. Dimsey. “She came in the office and just about tore the place to pieces. She said I’d made her the laughing stock of the town, putting her picture side by side with a pig’s—I hope you won’t be offended by my telling you this, Freddy,” he said. “Personally, you’re a friend of mine, and I’d be proud to have my picture beside yours any time, and so would a lot of other

people.”

“Don’t give it a thought,” said Freddy. “The way I look at it, it’s mostly a question of ears and noses. You put my ears and nose on you, and you could hear folks laugh from here to Buffalo. But put your nose and ears on me, and you could hear ’em in Detroit. A pig has one kind of good looks and a man has another, and you can’t mix ’em up.”

“I see what you mean,” said Mr. Dimsey. “If anybody told you you looked like me, you’d be mad. It isn’t that I’m so terrible looking; it’s that you’d know you looked queer. Well, to make a long story short, Mrs. Underdunk demanded payment of her loan, and as I couldn’t pay, I had to get out. She took the *Guardian* and put her brother in as editor. And now she can put anything she wants to in the paper.”

Freddy thought that was terrible, and said so.

“Well, there won’t be any more news of the Bean animals in the *Guardian*,” said Mr. Dimsey. “You can bet on that. I’m kind of sorry, too. It brightened up the paper a lot. You and Jinx and Mrs. Wiggins and the rest of you have got a lot of friends in this town, and they were always interested in your doings. As for myself, while I miss running the paper, I’m kind of glad to have time to sit on my front porch and just rock. ’Tisn’t very exciting, but it’s nice and peaceful.”

“Well, I think it’s a shame,” said Freddy. “I wish there was something we could do to get the paper back for you.”

“I know you do, Freddy,” said Mr. Dimsey. “But there’s nothing anybody can do. Fortunately I can get part of my living off this farm, and I’ve got a little hand press left, and I’ve set that up in my cellar. I’m getting some printing work—just small jobs. If you ever want any of your poems printed up—”

“Say!” interrupted Freddy. “That gives me an idea. Why couldn’t I get out a newspaper myself? Just for the animals on the farm. I’ve taught most all of them to read, you know, and when you had pieces about them in the *Guardian*, they all wanted to read them. I’m sure they’d read a paper printed just for them.”

Mr. Dimsey thought this was a good idea. But he pointed out that paper and ink cost money. “I’d be glad to help you with it for nothing,” he said. “Set the type and print it. But—”

“I wouldn’t think of asking you to do that,” said Freddy. “It’s true, most of the animals haven’t got money to pay for subscriptions with. But they could work it out. Hank, for instance, could give a day’s work on your farm for a subscription, and Jinx and the dogs could chase rabbits out of the garden, and so on.”

“Maybe Mr. Bean wouldn’t like that arrangement,” said Mr. Dimsey.

“Oh, he doesn’t care what we do with our spare time,” said Freddy. “No, the more I think of it, the more I think it’s a great idea.”

“I think it is myself,” said Mr. Dimsey, getting up off the floor. “Come down cellar and I’ll show you the printing press.”

So that was the beginning of the *Bean Home News*, which was destined to become something of a power in the county.

Chapter 4

Freddy said nothing to the other animals about his scheme. He locked himself in the pigpen and pounded his old typewriter for two days, and on the third, he took what he had written in to Centerboro, and he and Mr. Dimsey spent the day setting it up in type and printing it. And on Saturday morning at five o'clock, when Charles banged on the iron frying pan which Mr. Bean had hung up for him on the back porch, Freddy was beside him with a sheaf of freshly printed papers.

"Extra! Extra!" shouted Freddy. "First issue of the *Bean Home News*! Get your copies here. Read all about the big scrap iron drive. Extra! First robin seen in the back pasture. Read all about it."

In two minutes he was surrounded by a crowd of animals, all eager to know what the excitement was about, and he passed out the papers as fast as he could. "All the local news, hot from the press," he shouted. "First animal newspaper ever printed. Don't ask questions. Read it for yourselves. Extra! Extra!"

Then the back door opened and Mr. Bean came out on the porch. "What's all the racket?" he demanded.

Freddy picked up a paper in his mouth and handed it to him. Mr. Bean peered at it right side up, then he turned it upside down and peered at it, then he shouted: "Mrs. B., bring me my spectacles."

So Mrs. Bean brought him his spectacles, and he hooked them carefully over his ears, and then they both looked at the paper. Mr. Bean looked at the front page, then he opened it and looked at the inside, and then he looked at the back page. All the time he didn't say anything, and the animals who hadn't already taken their copies into the barn where they could spread them out on the dry floor, watched him in anxious silence.

Mrs. Bean was smiling, but at times like this she never said anything until Mr. Bean had expressed an opinion. And at last he spoke. He folded up the paper in his left hand, and struck it sharply with the back of his right hand. "There's a paper that's got some sense to it," he said.

"What do you mean, Mr. B.?" asked Mrs. Bean.

"I mean, Mrs. B.," he replied, "there ain't any politics in it." He peered at Freddy over his spectacles. "Politics," he said, "ain't news. Remember that." Then he fished in his pocket and drew out a dollar. "My subscription," he said and handed it to Freddy. Then he went in to breakfast.

Freddy, of course, was pretty pleased. And while he is being pleased let's look at the paper ourselves.

THE BEAN HOME NEWS

The Animals' Own Newspaper
Published Once a Week by Dimsey,
Freddy & Co.
Price 5 cents
Yearly subscription \$1
or what have you?

Publisher: Wilberforce Dimsey
Editor-in-Chief: Freddy

Please address all communications to the firm.

On the first page was an article about the meeting and the scrap drive, with an appeal to the animals to win the prize for the Bean farm.

On the second page, under the heading: "Neighborhood News," were such items as the following:

"Our distinguished fellow citizen, Charles, who was prevented by a bad cold from delivering a patriotic address at our last meeting, is much improved.

"Mr. Bean and Hank were in Centerboro on business Thursday. Hank says the old town doesn't change much.

"A surprise party for Mr. and Mrs. E. Nibble was given by a number of their squirrel friends at their residence in the oak tree in the upper pasture Wednesday evening. Guessing games were played, and a tasty supper of beechnuts was enjoyed by all.

"Among the woods animals present at our last meeting was Peter, whom we are glad to welcome after his hibernation. He says he is out for the summer now, and will be glad to see callers here in his new den in the big woods. He is At Home on Tuesdays.

"One of the prettiest weddings ever held on the Bean farm took place last Monday in the henhouse, when Chiquita, the eighth daughter of Charles and Henrietta, was united in marriage to Mr. J. Bantam Merrythought, a rooster from the Schermerhorn farm, over the hill. The henhouse was tastefully decorated with pink and white paper streamers, and a cold collation of cracked corn was served. The happy couple left after the ceremony for the Schermerhorn farm, where they will make their home with his parents. May their life together be a long and happy one.

“Mr. and Mrs. Webb will move next week from their winter quarters in the Bean parlor to their summer home on the third rafter in the cow barn.”

On the third page was an account of the arrival of the first robin. “The influx of summer visitors,” wrote Freddy, “has begun. In preparation for the spring renting season, the many attractive summer cottages maintained by Mrs. Bean in the commodious grounds of the Bean farm, have been cleaned and thoroughly renovated. We look forward to welcoming back many old friends among the bird colony, and to making many new ones among those who have never before visited us. It is a source of great pride and satisfaction to us that so many of our feathered friends return year after year, and we venture to predict that few who spend one on the Bean farm will ever care to spend a summer elsewhere.”

He filled out the page with a poem on spring which I am sorry to say was not one of his best efforts, and so it is not printed here. But it made the page look nice.

And then on the last page he explained how those who did not have a dollar and yet wished to subscribe for the paper, could pay for it in work, or by bringing in wild nuts and berries and so on. Subscriptions would be taken at the First Animal Bank, during banking hours (from three to four every other Tuesday afternoon), or at Freddy’s home. Any animal bringing in three subscriptions would receive one for himself free.

After Freddy had received the compliments of the other animals on the fine appearance, and the interesting contents, of his new paper, he left them all busily reading their copies and hurried down to the pigpen, to wash his windows. He was scrubbing away with a piece of one of Mr. Bean’s old shirts when Henrietta came to the door of the henhouse.

“Well, upon my word!” she said. “Are you sick or something, Freddy?”

“Editor’s got to have windows he can see through,” replied the pig. “He’s got to know what’s going on in the world, so he can write about it. Besides, if anybody comes with a subscription, I don’t want to miss them.”

“Nobody’ll know it’s the pigpen if it has clean windows,” said Henrietta. “They’ll walk right by. Have you seen Charles around?”

“Sure. He’s where he is every morning this time—up on the back porch, waiting for the sun to get high enough so he can see his reflection in the bottom of that frying pan Mr. Bean hung out for him to bang on.”

“Is he up there admiring himself again?” exclaimed Henrietta. “I don’t know what I’m going to do with that rooster. He’s smart, and he’s a good husband, but he’s the conceitedest bird that ever lived. I never would have a piece of looking glass in the henhouse for the girls to fix their feathers in front of, because I knew Charles

would be admiring himself in it all the time. But at least, he'd have been indoors—not strutting around in front of everybody.” She hurried off in the direction of the house.

Pretty soon Freddy threw down the rag and went in and sat in his old armchair. “Why, it’s quite pretty—quite a nice view,” he said. “Should have washed the window long ago. But what’s that range of hills off beyond the woods? I never saw them before.” But when he got up to look more closely he saw that what he had taken for hills were just streaks of dirt that the rag had left on the pane. “Dear me,” he said, “that’s very picturesque. Quite an addition to the landscape. I guess I’ll leave it like that.” So he didn’t try to get the window any cleaner.

For the rest of the day he was pretty busy. Animals kept coming in to arrange for subscriptions to the *Bean Home News*, and other animals brought pieces of iron to be weighed and added to the scrap pile, and this made a good deal of pretty complicated bookkeeping. With Mrs. Bean’s help, Freddy had worked out an ingenious scheme for weighing the iron. They had put a long plank over a sawhorse, so that it balanced just evenly. Then they had found out just what each animal weighed. A mouse weighed four ounces, a fat chipmunk, half a pound, an average rabbit, a pound and a half, and so on. When a piece of iron was brought in, they put it on one end of the seesaw, and then they would add animals to the other end until it balanced. Then they would add up animals and get weight. A piece of iron that weighed three rabbits and a chipmunk, weighed just about five pounds.

Of course most of the pieces of iron that were brought in were pretty small, because the animals that brought them in were small. But it is surprising how many nails and bits of wire and old rusty hinges and things of that kind are scattered around any old house, and when several hundred small animals start gathering them they get together a pretty imposing pile. The four mice alone brought in over a bushel basket full of old nails.

Anyone who had visited the Bean farm during these days would have known that something unusual was going on all right. Chipmunks and field mice were darting in and out of the stone walls, and a line of rabbits, spaced a foot apart, moved across the fields, examining every inch of ground. Skunks and squirrels and raccoons come down in a steady stream from the woods, each with a bit of iron in his mouth. And every now and then one would come to report to Freddy of something too big for him to handle alone, and Freddy would send one or two of the larger animals up for it with a rope.

One day Theodore, the frog, who lived up in the brook, came down with half a dozen rusty hairpins in his mouth.

“Heard you were having a d-d-dud, I mean drive for iron, Freddy,” he said, “so

I brought these. No use for 'em myself.” Theodore stuttered, although he really didn’t have to. He did it because he thought it gave him more time to think up what he wanted to say.

Freddy grinned. “Had your long golden hair all cut off, eh, Theodore?” he said. “Well, I don’t know that I blame you. Must have been kind of a nuisance, doing it up under water every morning. Sure we can use these.”

“Hairpins!” exclaimed Charles contemptuously. “Can’t build battleships out of them!”

“You m-mean they’re too small to be of any use?” said Theodore, looking rather crestfallen.

“Certainly not,” said Freddy, sharply. “Nothing’s too small to be of use. I don’t know what call Charles has to sound off—he hasn’t brought in anything at all yet.”

“I have too,” said the rooster. “At least, I told you where there was a horseshoe. I guess I’m as public-spirited and patriotic as any animal on this farm. I guess—”

“I guess you might get to work instead of standing around making speeches,” interrupted Freddy. “It might take a hundred billion hairpins to make a battleship, but it would take seven trillion of your speeches, and then they wouldn’t have built anything but the noise one of the big guns makes.—Where did you get them, Theodore?”

“It was f-four years ago, there were a couple ladies gathering flowers and one of ’em fell in the brook. She made an awful fuss. I don’t know why—she just got wet. I found ’em afterwards and put ’em aside; thought I might need ’em some time. But I guess the country needs ’em more than I do.”

Freddy thanked the frog, and made an entry in his book: Theodore, 6 hairpins.

Of course some heavy things were brought in, too. Peter dragged down the old stove from the Grimby house in the woods, and Mr. Bean got two old automobiles from down on the flats, and in a little gully where the brook crossed the upper road, the animals worked two days digging in an old rubbish heap and found a sewing machine and a hot water boiler and three iron beds.

With all this work, and with the subscriptions to his paper coming in by the dozens, Freddy had very little time to get the next week’s issue ready. So he decided that he would have to have a secretary, and went over to the Macy farm for his Cousin Ernest’s son, Little Weedly. But Weedly was away on a visit, and so his brother, Ernest, Jr., came.

Ernest, Jr., was as nice a pig as you could find anywhere. The only trouble was that when you did find him, he was usually asleep. He couldn’t seem to keep awake, and there wasn’t any use reprimanding him for it, because right in the middle of your

talking to him, he'd drop off again. Freddy didn't get much work out of him. I guess he wouldn't have got any if he hadn't hired a porcupine named Cecil to stay with Ernest, Jr. and just sort of lean up against him whenever his head started to nod.

And even Cecil wasn't as helpful as he might have been. For one afternoon Freddy came into the bank, and there was Ernest, Jr. sound asleep with his head on the desk, and beside him was Cecil, and he was sound asleep too. Freddy was pretty mad.

"Here, you," he said, giving Cecil a poke, "what do you think I hire you for? Wake up!"

Cecil opened his eyes and then jumped up. "Oh, gosh, Freddy," he said, "I'm sorry. I don't know what's the matter with me. If I stay with Ernest, Jr. a little while I get so drowsy I can't keep my eyes open. You know how it is yourself. If you're with somebody that keeps yawning, pretty soon you begin yawning too, and if his head begins to nod, yours begins too, and your eyes go shut and there you are."

"There you aren't, you mean," said Freddy. "I guess you could keep awake if you wanted to."

"All right, you try it, then," said Cecil. "If you can keep awake the rest of the afternoon, I'll work for you for nothing the rest of the month."

So Cecil went out, and Freddy woke up Ernest, Jr., and everything went along nicely for a while. Several animals came in with subscriptions, and Ernest, Jr. had to go out and weigh up an old milk can that Sniffy Wilson and two other skunks had found down on the Flats, and rolled all the way up the road to the Bean farm. Freddy sat in the corner with pencil and pad scribbling away at an article for his paper. But when things quieted down, and Ernest, Jr. came back in and sat down with a yawn that almost cracked his jaw, Freddy himself began to feel unaccountably drowsy.

It was very quiet in the bank. The only sound was the "Hi, ho, yaw!" of Ernest, Jr. yawning, and the only thing that moved was Ernest, Jr.'s head, drooping, drooping, nodding towards the desk in front of him. Freddy got up, walked over to him, and poked him awake.

"Ho—*hoooo*," yawned Ernest, Jr. and smiled sleepily. "Fraid I was getting wee mite—*hoo-yaw!*—dozy. Very comf'ble here." And he closed his eyes.

Freddy got up and poked him again. As long as he was poking he felt quite lively. But when he sat down again—well, it *was* very warm and comfortable in the bank. And you couldn't keep getting up and poking people if you wanted to get any work done. Suddenly his jaw flew open in an uncontrollable yawn. "Darn it!" he thought. "I *am* catching it from him!" He half got up to poke Ernest, Jr. again, and

then sank back. It hardly seemed worth while. So warm, so comfortable. . . . Something hit him under the chin, and realizing that it was his chest, he snapped his head upright, blinking. And just then Cecil came in the door.

The porcupine grinned. "Awake?" he asked.

"Certainly 'm awake," said Freddy. Then, shaking off his drowsiness he said briskly: "Been working steadily ever since you left."

"O. K." said Cecil. "You win. But you only win by about five seconds. If I'd waited that much longer before coming in you'd have been snoring your head off."

"Nonsense!" said Freddy sharply. "However," he added, "I admit your job is a tough one. You keep on with it, and I'll hire one of the mice to drop in every ten minutes and see that *you're* awake. Maybe if he doesn't stay in here more than a minute I won't have to hire anybody else to poke him. We'll have to stop somewhere."

Chapter 5

Mr. Dimsey had been rather doubtful about whether the work that a lot of different animals were to give in exchange for their subscriptions, would repay him for the trouble and expense of printing the *Bean Home News*. But when Freddy took the copy for the second issue down to Centerboro on the following Friday, he found that Mr. Dimsey was delighted. It was Hank's day off, and the horse had got hitched up to the old phaeton, and had brought fifteen or twenty small animals down to start working out their subscriptions. When Freddy got there, Hank was helping Mr. Dimsey drag his garden, and a gang of rabbits and squirrels, under Sniffy Wilson, the skunk, were cleaning up the front yard, and weeding the lawn. Robert had brought the parlor rug out and was beating it with his tail, and Henrietta and several of her daughters had pulled all the old dry last year's stalks out of the flower bed and were raking it smooth with their claws.

"At this rate," said Mr. Dimsey, "I'll have my garden work all done for me this year. And there's a lot of work to a garden, Freddy. Hank tells me you've got a couple of ducks up there that are great little seed planters."

"Alice and Emma," said Freddy. "Yes, you just mark the row with a string and tell 'em what you want in, and they'll take a bill full of seeds and go straight down the line, poking them in faster than you can count. You see, we animals ran the farm one summer when the Beans were away, and we know how to do nearly everything."

"Well," said Mr. Dimsey, "I don't see any reason why you and I can't build up a nice business. Because there's another thing that I haven't told you. I printed up a few extra copies of last week's issue and passed them around in Centerboro, and fourteen people in town have subscribed already. Some of them, like the sheriff, are friends of yours, and some of them subscribed, I guess, because they thought an animal newspaper was sort of a curiosity to show around. But we don't care why, as long as we get their dollar."

"Maybe we ought to have a page of Centerboro news in the paper," said Freddy. "Then more of them would subscribe."

"I could write such a page, all right," said Mr. Dimsey. "But then it wouldn't be an animal newspaper."

"I could write it," said Freddy. "If I had anything to write. But not living in Centerboro—" He stopped. "I have it," he said. "Henrietta has got an aunt in town, and the mice have relatives there too. I could hire some of them as reporters. Then we could have a column headed: 'From our Centerboro Correspondent.'"

Mr. Dimsey thought this was a fine idea. He left Hank to finish the garden by himself and went in to set type, and Freddy started off to hunt up a reporter.

Henrietta's aunt was an elderly hen named Abigail, who lived with old Miss Halsey on Elm Street. Anything that old Miss Halsey didn't know about what went on in Centerboro wasn't worth knowing, and whatever Miss Halsey knew, Aunt Abigail knew too, for the old lady talked to the hen as if she was a human being. The townspeople said that the two looked so much alike that if Abigail was a little bigger, and wore an old-fashioned bonnet, you couldn't tell them apart. They were certainly alike in one way: they both hated not to know everything that was going on.

Miss Halsey always sat in her front window, peeking out through the curtains. And as Freddy didn't want to be seen, he went in through the back gate, and found Abigail sitting in the sun on the south side of her little coop.

"Hello, Aunt Abby," said Freddy. All the animals called her Aunt Abby.

"Well, deary me," said Abigail, "if it isn't Freddy! Bless my soul, how you have grown since I saw you last."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Freddy. "I'm not any taller."

"You're a lot fatter," said Abigail bluntly.

Freddy was rather touchy about his weight, but he changed the subject quickly and said that as he'd been in town, he thought he'd just drop in and pay his respects.

"Why, that's very thoughtful of you," said Abigail. "But you always were thoughtful, even as a little squealer. Why Henrietta couldn't have picked out someone like you, instead of that Charles! Talk, talk, talk, from morning to night; I should think he'd drive her to distraction. But how is Henrietta getting on? I haven't heard from her in months. And how are the good Beans, and all the animals?"

Freddy started to say that they were all well, but she didn't wait for an answer. "Of course I read about the wedding in your paper. And so you're an editor now? Dear me, such an interesting career, journalism, I always think. I've sometimes thought that I might have done well in it."

"I'm sure you would," said Freddy, "and it's too bad that you haven't some newspaper experience, for I need someone really clever now to help me." And he told her about the Centerboro column he planned to run in the *Bean Home News*. "But of course," he said, "I'm afraid you wouldn't do for the job."

There was a contrary streak in Abigail, as there is in most hens, and Freddy knew that if he asked her straight out, she would probably refuse. But if she thought he didn't want her, she would be determined to get the job. And that was the way it worked out.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "I don't know *why* I wouldn't do! I flatter myself I know

as much about what happens in Centerboro as anybody you could find.” And she began telling him some of the gossip. Did he know that the Reverend Dr. Wintersip of the First Methodist Church, had the measles? Did he know that Mr. Weezer, the President of the Centerboro Bank, was going to marry Miss Biles, the Assistant Cashier? Did he know that Jonas Harrington fell off a ladder and broke his leg, and then picked himself up, and with the broken leg under his arm, hopped two blocks home on the other one—

“What?” said Freddy.

“It was his wooden leg, of course,” said Abigail.

“Oh,” said Freddy.

And did Freddy know about Miss Burnham and the burglar, and about the fight at town meeting when Major Sibney had hit old Mr. Lawrence over the head with his ear trumpet?

“Ah, there it is,” said Freddy. “You see, if you had had experience, you’d know that we couldn’t use that last item. We don’t want to print unpleasant things.”

“Pleasant or unpleasant,” snapped Abigail, “it happened, and it’s news.”

“Quite true,” said Freddy. “And yet it could cause trouble. Probably Major Sibney was sorry afterwards, and probably he and Mr. Lawrence made up their quarrel and are good friends again. But if this came out in the paper, it would start it up all over again. You see, your lack of experience—”

But Abigail continued to argue, and gradually Freddy allowed himself to be persuaded. And when he left a little later, all arrangements were made, and Abigail was pretty pleased with her success in persuading Freddy to take her on.

It was unfortunate that on his way back to Mr. Dimsey’s, Freddy went past the Busy Bee dry goods store just at the moment when Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk was getting out of her limousine in front of that establishment. The chauffeur held the car door open for Mrs. Underdunk, and she swept majestically across the sidewalk and ran smack into Freddy, who had turned to wave to his old friend, the sheriff.

“Oh, I *beg* your pardon,” said Freddy.

“Clumsy idiot!” exclaimed Mrs. Underdunk. Then she stared at Freddy. “Why, it’s a pig!” she exclaimed. “I declare, this town is becoming impossible! Pigs running wild in the streets! Sheriff, sheriff! I want something done about this. Who owns that pig?”

“I’m Mr. Bean’s pig,” said Freddy. “And I’m very sorry I ran into you.”

“Oh, so you’re *that* pig!” exclaimed Mrs. Underdunk, glaring at him. “H’m, well I think we’ve had about enough of you.”

“Freddy ain’t running wild, ma’am,” said the sheriff. “Nobody ever complained

about him before.”

“Well, I’m complaining about him now,” she snapped. “There’s a law about animals running wild in the streets. And there’s another law, that dangerous animals must be shot.”

The sheriff laughed good-naturedly. “Freddy’s about as dangerous as a pint of milk,” he said, and Freddy looked a little glum, for no animal, or person either, likes to be thought as harmless as all that. But the sheriff went on. “Aside from that, he’s done the gentlemanly thing and apologized. I don’t believe any lions or tigers would be as polite as that.”

“Your views on lions and tigers are of no interest to me,” said Mrs. Underdunk. “I *demand* that this animal be locked up. Main Street is not a barnyard. I expect you to get in touch with his owner *at once*, and see that this is done.”

The sheriff looked down at the silver star on his vest and polished it with his sleeve. “Well now, ma’am,” he said softly, “it ain’t for you to give me such orders, and if it was, I wouldn’t carry them out. I don’t say this because Freddy here is a special friend of mine, although he is. If he breaks the law, I take him to jail. But he ain’t broke any law I know of. You think it over, ma’am, and when you cool off—”

“You might do well to remember, sheriff,” said Mrs. Underdunk, “that I have some influence in this town. And I understand that you come up for election again this fall. There are some people who are not too well satisfied with the way you perform your duties—particularly the way you run the jail. If all the facts were to be looked into—”

“Just a minute, ma’am,” interrupted the sheriff. “I don’t like threats. So let’s have this clear. You’re tellin’ me that you’re going to have the *Guardian* publish some criticisms of me, is that it?”

“I certainly intend to ask the editor to investigate the facts,” said Mrs. Underdunk. “If they are unfavorable, that is your lookout.”

“Yes, ma’am,” said the sheriff. “Then I see no need for prolongin’ this interview. You get your facts, and I’ll get mine. Because there’s some folks in town that’d like to know how come you got so much gasoline to go shopping with, when you live within ten minutes’ walk of the stores. Good day, ma’am.”

He lifted his hat, and Mrs. Underdunk compressed her lips and walked off. But she did *not* go into the Busy Bee. She went up the stairs to the *Guardian* office.

Freddy and the sheriff walked on together. “Gosh, sheriff,” said the pig, “I’m sorry that happened. Why couldn’t you have pretended to chase me out of town. Could it be bad for you if she did what she said?”

“She owns the newspaper, and that gives her a lot of influence,” said the sheriff.

“And she’s rich—there’s lots of ways she could put the pressure on. Yes, I expect she could lose me my job. Not that I’d mind so much for myself—it’s the boys in the jail I’m thinking of. I’m pretty easy on ’em—lettin’ ’em out to the movies and giving them parties and so on. But most of ’em ain’t really bad, and when I turn ’em out, I usually manage to make good citizens of ’em. But put a real tough sheriff in there, and they’d have a bad time. But don’t you worry, Freddy. I got a trick or two up my sleeve yet.”

“Well, I hope so,” said Freddy. “I’ll drop in and see you next time I’m in town. Now I’ve got to go help Mr. Dimsey.”

Chapter 6

There was an ant named Jerry Peters who lived in a big ant hill near the henhouse. Ants are worthy citizens, but they are not, as a rule, very much fun. They work hard from dawn to dusk seven days a week without even stopping for lunch, and they despise all creatures who do not work as hard as they do. Since there are no animals or insects that work as hard as they do, they despise nearly everybody. And as for games and jokes, I don't suppose there is a man living who has ever seen an ant laugh.

But this Jerry Peters was different. On warm sunny days you would often find him lolling comfortably under the shade of a dandelion leaf, leaning back with his feelers clasped behind his head and his six legs crossed, and the little brown beetle which he kept as a pet, crouched at his feet. The beetle's name was Fido, and he was devoted to his master. He was not much bigger than the head of a pin, but his heart belonged to Jerry.

Or sometimes Jerry would go off, with Fido at his heels, for a long aimless ramble about the farm. The other ants could not see that he brought back anything of practical value from these excursions, since to them the discovery of something new and different which could not be eaten, or an interesting exchange of experience with a chance-met grasshopper, was a complete waste of time. But though they considered him a loafer, they never argued with him, for argument too was a waste of time. And if they pushed him contemptuously aside when he got in the way, Jerry didn't mind. He just went and took a nap somewhere else.

But Jerry was no fool. The summer before, in the course of his explorations, he had wandered into the pigpen, and had been very curious about the papers and books on Freddy's desk. He had hidden in a crack and watched for a week. He had seen Freddy typewriting, and then heard him read over what was written, and then he had put two and two together and one day came up over the edge of the page and waved his feelers.

"Hey!" said Freddy. "Go away, ant, I'm busy. I . . . What is it?" he said, as Jerry continued to wave. "You want something? O. K. let's have it." And he put his ear down as close as he could get it. But all he could hear was a faint whispering.

"Sorry," he said. "Your voice is too small. Wait a minute, though! We need a megaphone." He took a sheet of paper and rolled it into a cone. Then he put the small end close to the ant and put the big end at his ear. And Jerry's voice came quite clearly. "I want to learn to read," he said.

"You want—what?" said Freddy. "Learn to read? What on earth for?"

“So I can read, stupid,” said Jerry. “What else would I want to learn for?”

“H’m,” said Freddy; “well, I suppose that is a good reason. But—”

“Now don’t give me a lot of stuff about what use will it be for me,” interrupted Jerry. “Because I like things that aren’t any use to me. Such as watching the clouds on a summer day, or taking walks to nowhere in particular, or listening to the wind in the grass. And as far as I can see, reading is just another of those things.”

“Not at all,” said Freddy rather stiffly. “Reading is the—h’m, the gateway to knowledge. It opens up the—ha, the portals of wisdom. It permits you to share the thoughts of all great thinkers of the past—”

“Such as what?” said the ant.

“Eh?” said Freddy.

“What thoughts?” said Jerry. “What are some of these great thoughts? You read a lot. Give me just one great thought you’ve got out of your reading.”

“Well, naturally,” said Freddy, “you can’t just offhand pick out *one*. There’s Shakespeare, for instance, whose Complete-Works-in-One-Volume I possess. Shakespeare is full of great thoughts—”

“Such as?” said the ant.

“See here,” said Freddy, “you—whatever your name is—I’m not going to be cross-examined by an ant. You say you want to learn to read. Very good, very praiseworthy. But you can’t expect me to give you the results of my wide reading in two minutes. If you want to know these things, learn to read and then read them for yourself.”

“That’s just what I want to do,” said Jerry. “Look, I didn’t mean to be fresh. I’ve just got the idea from watching you that reading was fun, and I thought I’d like it. I don’t want to work. I don’t like work. And what’s more, I don’t see that it gets you anything, either. Look at my family. Work, work, work—and what has it ever got them? Just *more* work, that’s all. Well, what fun is there in that?”

“None,” said Freddy. “I quite agree with you. And yet, there’s something wrong about your argument, too. For instance, I write poetry.” He paused a moment for Jerry to express gratification at meeting so distinguished a pig, but as the ant didn’t say anything, he went on. “Now that is work, and pretty hard work, too. And yet it’s fun. Eh? How about that?”

Freddy always liked this kind of argument, and could go on for hours without ever getting anywhere. Which was an advantage in a way, because if it had ever got anywhere it would have to stop. But in Jerry he had met someone who was just as good as he was.

“You say your work is fun,” said the ant. “But if it’s fun then it can’t be work. It

can't be both."

Well, the argument went on for a long time, but I don't know that we need to follow it any further. In the end, Freddy agreed to teach Jerry to read, and the lessons began that day. Freddy had taught most of the Bean animals, and was a pretty good teacher, and Jerry could learn when he put his mind to it, and whether it was work or fun, by the end of the summer he could read almost anything. Freddy would open a book and Jerry would walk along the line of print. When he came to a word he didn't understand, Freddy would tell him what it meant, and Jerry would go on. Often Freddy would leave a book or a magazine open on the desk, when he was going out, and Jerry would read along until he got to a word he didn't know, and then he would just lie down on it and go to sleep till Freddy came back. Or if he wasn't very sleepy, he would try to teach Fido to read. But it wasn't much use. I guess anybody as small as Fido is too small to be a very good student.

Freddy got very fond of Jerry Peters. They spent hours arguing about nothing much, and talking about nothing in particular. Freddy made a big funnel out of brown paper and hung it up on the wall, and when they wanted to talk, Jerry would go down into the little end of the funnel and then his voice would come out almost as loud as Freddy's. And at last, along in the fall, Jerry asked if he and Fido couldn't come and live in the pigpen that winter.

"You see," he said, "in winter the ants all stay underground. It's dark and gloomy, and there's nothing to read, and there's a kind of general atmosphere at work that's very depressing. We wouldn't take up much room. And of course we wouldn't expect you to entertain us or anything; you'd just go your way and we'd go ours."

Freddy's experience with guests had been that they expected to be entertained a lot, and that when they weren't being entertained, they expected you to be feeding them. But Jerry didn't care about parties, and feeding him was no problem, for one gumbdrop would keep him going for six months. As for Fido, I guess food rationing wouldn't have bothered him much either, for it would probably have taken him his entire lifetime to work through a jelly bean. As it turned out, they both lived very well on the crumbs they found in Freddy's old armchair, which of course had never had a cleaning since Freddy got it. In fact, Jerry said afterwards that he had never had such a variety of good meals before, for there were crumbs of all sorts of cookies and cake, and bits of pie and candy. . . . He said if the other ants found out about it they would certainly leave their hill and move into the armchair. Freddy said it made him itch just to think of it.

Of course Jerry had to stay indoors all winter, but as soon as spring came and it

began to get warm, he was anxious to get out. It was still too wet underfoot for an ant to go anywhere, so Freddy took him. He rode on the tip of Freddy's ear, and when he wanted to say anything, he would shout it down the ear, and then Freddy would answer him. At first it seemed pretty funny to the other animals to see Freddy walking around, apparently talking to himself, and some of his friends thought he was getting queer and began worrying about him. And as often happens in such cases, they were so worried that they just talked among themselves about it and didn't say anything to Freddy.

One morning—it was the day after the second issue of the *Bean Home News* came out—Freddy and Jerry were coming down past the back porch of the farmhouse, busily discussing an idea Freddy was working out for his paper. Freddy thought he would take some of the old familiar poems, and rewrite them for animals. He had started to rewrite one:

*Breathes there a pig with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said:
“This is my own, my native pen?”
Whose heart has ne'er within him burned
As home his trotters he has turned
From wandering in the world of men?*

Jerry didn't like the idea. He thought Freddy ought to write original poems, his own poems,—not try to fix up something that had been written by someone else. He thought Freddy's poems were much finer than those he wanted to rewrite.

“Nonsense!” said Freddy modestly. “That poem is by Sir Walter Scott. I may be good, but I'm not as good as Scott and Longfellow and Shakespeare. No, no, my dear fellow,” he said, “you have much too high an opinion of my feeble verses.”

“Oh, I wouldn't say that, pig,” said a sarcastic voice. “What's Shakespeare got that you haven't got, hey?”

Freddy turned sharply. Neither he nor Jerry had noticed Charles, who was standing on the porch. He spent most of his time there nowadays, admiring himself, when he thought nobody was looking, in the shiny bottom of the iron frying pan.

“Can't you get anybody else to tell you how smart you are, that you have to walk along, telling it to yourself?” continued Charles.

Freddy laughed. “I don't know that it's any worse than your telling your reflection in a mirror how handsome you are all day long.”

“Oh, is that so!” said Charles. “Well, I guess if you'd look in a mirror once in a while, you wouldn't always be going around shaking hands with yourself. I guess you

wouldn't be so pleased with what a pig looks like."

"What's all the row?" asked Jinx, coming out from under the porch where he had been annoying a beetle. "Great Scott, Charley, are you still up there making noble faces at yourself? You know, Freddy, we've got to do something about Charles. He's falling in love with himself. He does nothing but strut up and down in front of this frying pan all day long, looking magnificent."

"I do not!" said Charles. "I come to look at myself in it once in a while—sure, I do. I'm not like some of you animals that don't care how they look. Mr. Bean expects us to look nice, and how can you tell if everything is all right unless you take a look at yourself once in a while?"

"That's all right," said Freddy, "but you've been looking at yourself for two weeks, and if you can't tell what's wrong in that time, you'd better give up."

"You'd better ask me," said Jinx. "I can tell you what's wrong in two seconds."

"Aw, you make me sick," said Charles, and walked to the other end of the porch and turned his back.

Freddy and Jerry went down to the bank to see if Ernest, Jr. was awake, and then they went home.

"I suppose it is a good thing to know what you look like," said Jerry. "You know, Freddy, I've never seen myself."

"You look just like other ants," said Freddy.

"You don't look like other pigs," said Jerry.

"That doesn't sound like a compliment," said Freddy. "Well, let's see." He looked at a small mirror which hung on the wall, but, like his window panes, it hadn't been cleaned in several years, and all he could see in it was just sort of a faint shadow of a pig. He wiped a cloth across it, but that only made it worse. What he saw then was the shadow of a pig with zebra stripes and one black eye. "I guess you couldn't get much idea what you look like from that," he said. "Maybe I could draw your picture. I'm pretty good with a pencil. Only your face is so small. I don't think I know really what you look like myself."

He rummaged around in the drawer of his desk and brought out a large magnifying glass. Then Jerry got down on a sheet of white paper and Freddy held the magnifying glass over him—and gave a loud cry of dismay. "Good gracious, Jerry, you've got an awfully ferocious looking face!"

"Have I?" said Jerry in a pleased voice. "I wish I was bigger. Maybe I could scare people. I never can scare anybody—even Fido. Where is Fido, anyway? Didn't he go with us? Here, Fido! Fid—oh, there you are, you bad beetle! Hiding behind me like that!"

Fido rolled over on his back to show he was sorry and waved all six legs in the air, and Jerry patted him with his feeler and told him to lie down and keep quiet. For Freddy had begun to draw.

Freddy erased a good deal when he drew, and on the difficult parts it seemed to help him to stick his tongue out and move it around as if he was drawing with it and not with his pencil. He was fond of Jerry and wanted to give him a pleasant expression, but the harder he worked the more terrifying the portrait looked. Ants haven't much expression anyway, except a sort of dragon-like ferocity. They don't mean anything by it; it's just the way their faces are put together.

"Well," said Freddy at last, "I guess this is the best I can do." And he held the drawing up for Jerry to see.

The ant looked at it for a long time, then he climbed up on Freddy's ear. "Do I really look like that?" he said. "Golly, I'd hate to meet myself on a dark night."

"Well, as Mrs. Bean says, you'll never be hung for your good looks," said Freddy. "But for that matter, neither will I. If the Bean farm ever has a beauty show, you and I had better be the judges."

"Yes, I know, Freddy," said the ant, "but you're *nice* looking. You're not handsome, but you look pleasant. But I look—well, I wonder how Fido stands it." Then he laughed. "Though I will say that when I was looking up at you through that magnifying glass, you were pretty scary yourself."

"Say, I've got an idea," said Freddy. He took the drawing and some colored crayons and went out and across the barnyard to the back porch, where Charles was still strutting up and down.

"Hey, Charles," he said, "Henrietta wants you." And as soon as the rooster had hurried off he took his crayons and copied his picture of Jerry's face on the bottom of the frying pan. Then he sat down and waited.

He had barely finished when Charles came running back. "Say, what's the idea?" he demanded. "Henrietta didn't want me."

"Of course she didn't," said Freddy. "I just wanted to pry you loose from that frying pan for a few minutes. What you said a while ago about how we ought to try to look our best—well, I guess I've been kind of careless of my appearance and I thought I'd take a look at myself and see if anything needed to be done."

"There's plenty to be done, all right," said Charles, looking at him scornfully. "But if you can do it to that face, you're a wonder."

"You don't have to be unpleasant about it," said Freddy humbly. "I know I'm not as handsome as you are. You've got a fine, noble profile, Charles—there's something of the eagle in it, proud and haughty, but with more dash, somehow, than

an eagle. No, I wouldn't kid you; take a look in the frying pan yourself."

Charles was suspicious, but he could not resist a quick glance, for Freddy had edged him around until he was directly in front of the frying pan. He looked, then his head darted forward and he stared. And then he gave a faint gurgle and fell over in a dead faint.

"Golly," said Freddy. "I didn't think he'd take it that hard!" He called Jinx out from under the porch, and they were working over Charles to bring him around, when a big car drove into the barnyard. "Wow!" said Freddy. "Mrs. Underdunk!" And he dove off the porch into the bushes.

The chauffeur held the door open, and Mrs. Underdunk got out just as Mrs. Bean came to the door to see who her visitor was.

"How do you do," said Mrs. Bean pleasantly.

Mrs. Underdunk did not reply. She looked Mrs. Bean up and down through a little pair of glasses which she held up to her eyes on a stick. "I am Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk," she said. "I understand you are the owner of a pig."

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Bean. "Won't you come in?"

Mrs. Underdunk came up on the porch. "I can say what I have to say here," she said. "I wish merely to warn you that you will have to keep your pig tied up. He has been running wild and causing disturbances in Centerboro. We are not going to allow that."

"Why, dear me," said Mrs. Bean. "Do you mean our Freddy? Freddy wouldn't cause disturbances."

"The fact remains that he did," said Mrs. Underdunk. "If he is found in the village again, I have given orders—"

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Mr. Bean, appearing beside Mrs. Bean in the doorway, "but who are you to give orders about my pig?"

"I have given orders," said Mrs. Underdunk calmly, "that he is to be shot."

Freddy, peering out through the bushes, couldn't tell whether Mr. Bean was angry or whether he was smiling. Or maybe both. Behind all those whiskers, you couldn't tell much more about his expression than you could about an ant's, Freddy thought.

"So he's to be shot," said Mr. Bean. "Well, now I'll give some orders. I'll order you, ma'am, to kindly get in your car and drive back home. If my pig has trespassed on your land or uprooted your garden, you can go to law about it. You can make me pay for any damage he's done. Bring your proofs into court, ma'am, and I'll meet you there. But don't come out here with threats about shooting my pig."

Mrs. Underdunk glared at him and pressed her lips tight together. "Very well,

then,” she said. “If you choose to be stubborn about it, you’ll have only yourself to blame. I warn you again: if that pig is allowed to run wild, he—will—be *shot!*” She emphasized each word with a nod of her head, and on the last nod her hat slipped down over her nose. As she turned to go, she stooped to straighten her hat in the shiny bottom of the frying pan, which had caught her eye. She had put her hands up to her head; they stayed there a moment, poised; then they dropped slowly, and with a gurgle which was exactly like the one Charles had given, she fainted away.

“Boy!” said Freddy in an awed tone. “Am I a good artist!” And while the Beans were sprinkling water on Mrs. Underdunk and slapping her hands to bring her to, he quickly erased the picture from the bottom of the frying pan.

Chapter 7

On an evening a couple of days later, Freddy went down to Centerboro to see his friend the sheriff. He was a little nervous about going into the village alone, and he had tried to persuade Peter, the bear, to go along as his bodyguard. But Peter had declined with thanks. "I'm twice as big as you are, Freddy," he said, "and if there's any shooting, I'm twice as likely to be hit."

"Nonsense," said Freddy. "Nobody'd dare shoot at a bear this time of year; you're out of season."

"Sure, I know that," said Peter. "The hunting season on bears doesn't open till fall. But the hunting season on pigs is apparently open right now. And my old grandmother used to say that a person is known by the company he keeps. If I'm seen in the company of a pig—"

"Oh, of course, if you're afraid!" interrupted Freddy.

"Sure, I'm afraid," said Peter. "And so are you, or you wouldn't want me to go with you."

Freddy couldn't think of an answer to that one, and so he went alone.

And nothing happened. He got to the jail safely, and walked right into the sheriff's office, for the jail doors were never locked. The sheriff had explained this once to Freddy. "The prisoners don't like it," he said, "and to tell you the truth I wouldn't like it myself if I was a prisoner. I want 'em to be happy here. Of course before we go to bed I always lock up. Some of 'em objected to that,—said it made 'em feel sort of shut in. But I told 'em it was only common sense, because there might be burglars around. 'But some of us are burglars,' they said. 'Sure,' I said, 'but if anybody burgled this jail, they'd be caught, and then they'd have to come live here. And the kind of burglars that would burgle a jail ain't the kind of people we want to associate with.' That convinced 'em."

Tonight Freddy found the sheriff just putting on a necktie to go to the movies. He never wore one except to the movies and to funerals.

"Better come along," he said. "It's a pirate movie—lots of shootin'."

"Shooting!" exclaimed Freddy and shuddered. Then he explained.

"Pooh!" said the sheriff. "Don't you worry. If anybody shoots you, I'll shoot 'em right back."

"That won't help me much," said the pig.

The sheriff grinned. "I don't think you're in much danger really," he said. "Mrs. Underdunk, she talks big, but she wouldn't know one end of a gun from t'other, and there ain't anybody in town she could get to do her shootin' for her. Besides,

Centerboro ain't the Wild West. I been sheriff twenty years and I ain't ever fired a shot. The only shootin' I can remember here was when old Mis' Purinton threwed some of her son's cartridges into the stove by mistake." He laughed. "That sounded like a real fracas, but the only casualties was the stove lid and a kettle of soup and Mis' Purinton's nose which she skinned, slidin' for safety down the back steps."

So Freddy decided to go. On the way downtown the sheriff told him that the last number of the *Bean Home News* had been a great success in Centerboro. "Dimsey's having quite a time keeping up with the demand, so I'm told," he said. "He printed quite a lot extra, too. Why, Freddy, you had more news in that Centerboro Doings column than Herb Garble has had in the *Guardian* all the time since he took it over. Where in tunket did you get that item about Mr. Weezer and Miss Biles being engaged to be married? There wasn't a soul in town knew about it. I ain't even sure they knew about it themselves."

Freddy was pretty pleased to hear that the Centerboro people were buying his paper, and he told the sheriff about hiring Abigail as a reporter. By that time they had reached the theatre. Mr. Muszkiski, the manager, came waddling out to shake hands with Freddy, and a number of other people came up and greeted him and told him how much they enjoyed the *Bean Home News*, and some of them told him about parties they were going to give that they thought he might like to mention in the next issue. Even old Mrs. Peppercorn, who never had done more than nod distantly to him before, stopped him to ask if he wouldn't like to write a little something about next Saturday being her ninetieth birthday.

"My, people are awfully nice to me," said Freddy. "Not that they haven't always been, but they seem especially nice tonight."

"Folks are always specially nice when they want something from you," said the sheriff. "They want their names in your paper. I don't know why it is, but nothing makes folks any happier'n to see their names in the paper. Makes 'em seem more important, I suppose."

The movie was an exciting one, with lots of shooting, but Freddy didn't enjoy it as much as he might have, for shooting was something he didn't want to think about. Every time a gun went off it felt as if a lot of ants with very cold feet were walking up his back. Afterwards they went to the drugstore and sat on stools at the soda fountain, and the sheriff took off his necktie and put it in his pocket and ordered chocolate sodas.

"Dunno why it is I never could abide a necktie," said the sheriff. "Specially when I'm eating. Guess it must interfere with my Adam's apple. Every time you swallow, your Adam's apple goes up, and then down. When I've got a necktie on, mine goes

up all right, but the necktie stops it on the way down, and then I have to loosen the tie before I can start the next swallow. Slows me up terrible at banquets. Last one I went to, the speeches were all over before I'd even begun tackling my dessert.

"Now you," he said, looking at Freddy, "haven't even got an Adam's apple. You could wear a necktie with the best of 'em. And when you're a famous editor, I expect you will."

"I won't ever be any kind of an editor," said Freddy, "if Mrs. Underdunk shoots me."

"I s'pose that's what you came to see me about," said the sheriff. "Well, you got two choices. You can stay on the farm, give up coming to Centerboro, give up your newspaper—"

"I won't do that," said Freddy firmly.

"O. K.," said the sheriff. "Then I tell you what I'd do. I'd print the whole story—about running into Mrs. Underdunk, and her ordering me to shoot you, and her coming out to see Mr. Bean—I'd print it in the next issue of your paper. She's told her side of the story. Have you seen the *Guardian* this week?—well it's all there, about the ferocious pig running wild and attacking people, and about Mr. Bean refusing to lock you up. Now Centerboro folks know you, Freddy. But if they keep being told you're wild and ferocious, and if they don't hear anything to the contrary, pretty soon they'll begin to believe it. Folks are like that, you've got to tell 'em your side. Of course, as long as I'm sheriff, nobody'll dare do anything to you. But I may not be sheriff next year. Mrs. Underdunk wants Herb Garble to run in the election against me. And there you've got a good example of what I've been talking about. Herb's got the *Guardian* to tell his story in, and well as folks know me, if they keep reading things against me, they're going to begin to believe 'em. And then they'll vote for Herb instead of me."

"You've got the *Bean Home News* back of you," said Freddy. "I know it's just an animal newspaper, but some of the people will read it." But the sheriff said Freddy had better keep out of it. "You don't want to get mixed up in politics," he said.

But Freddy had made up his mind. He didn't say any more, but he began to plan his campaign. They had another soda, and then walked back to the jail.

He was trudging along with his head down, up the last long hill on the way home when he heard a shout, and lifted his head to see a horse and carriage almost on top of him. He dove off the road into the ditch and landed rather too heavily on his nose.

Freddy was pretty mad. He scrambled out of the ditch and ran towards the carriage, which had stopped. "Hey," he shouted, "why don't you big lummoxes look

where you're going? Don't you know you're supposed to carry a light? You might have killed me. I'm going to report you to the police, that's what I'm going to do."

There was some giggling in the carriage, and then a slow voice that he recognized said: "Well, I dunno's I would, Freddy. Pigs are supposed to carry a light, too, ain't they? Or ain't they? I dunno."

"Why it's Hank!" exclaimed Freddy. "And you've got the phaeton. What on earth—"

"Pipe down, pig," said Jinx's voice. "We're on a secret mission; that's why there is no light. We're going into Centerboro to collect scrap metal."

"How are you going to collect scrap in the dark?" said Freddy. "No, thanks, I'm going home to bed."

"Oh, no you aren't," said Jinx. "We need you. I suppose you think because you started this scrap drive, you don't have to do any more about it. The rest of us have been working hard on it, but as far as I know, you haven't brought in so much as a rusty tack. You've been so busy hobnobbing with editors and important people that you haven't had time to help Mr. Bean get the prize. And I'm telling you, he won't get it unless we all get out and hustle. Robert has been out scouting around, and he says nearly every farm in ten miles has collected more than we have. Now get in."

"Well, if you put it that way," said Freddy. He felt a little ashamed. For he really hadn't done much. He had turned the weighing of scrap over to Ernest, Jr., and that was really about all he'd done. "How are you going to collect it?" he asked, as he climbed into the back seat beside Robert and Georgie.

"Wait and see," said Jinx; and the dogs, and Sniffy Wilson, the skunk, who was sitting beside Jinx on the front seat, all giggled.

Freddy knew that there is no use trying to get anything out of a cat if he doesn't want to tell you, so he didn't say any more.

They drove into town through streets which were now silent and empty, for it was nearly midnight. At the corner of the first alley they came to, Hank stopped. "You wait here with the phaeton, Hank," said Jinx. "Come on, gang. Quietly, now. Freddy, you'd better stay here too, this first stop. You can help load the stuff when we bring it out."

"Look, Jinx," said Freddy, "I don't think you ought to take stuff that doesn't belong to us, even if it is; just junk. That's stealing.

"Stealing, nothing!" said the cat. "We can have anything that's given to us—you said so yourself. Well, this stuff is going to be given to us, all right." And Sniffy and the dogs giggled again.

Freddy went back and sat down in the phaeton, as the others melted into the

darkness of the alley. There was no sound for perhaps five minutes. Then, high and clear through the stillness of the night, came the wail of a cat.

On and on went Jinx's song, up and down the scale, from low gurgling yowls through anguished caterwaulings to a piercing screech that made Freddy's tail uncurl. Jinx was giving it all he had.

Hank shook his head. "I heard a lot of them opry singers on Mrs. Bean's radio," he said, "but I ain't ever heard anything to equal that. There ain't a one of 'em ever made my back teeth ache before. Lordy, they ache like—well, like the toothache, I guess."

Freddy heard windows going up, and there were angry shouts, and then, as Jinx started on the second verse of his song, the thumps and rattles and crashes of an assortment of household goods that were being thrown down into the backyard where the yelling came from. But as Jinx stopped abruptly, presently the sound of the barrage died down, and after a few minutes of silence Freddy heard movements in the alley, and the animals came out.

Each of them was carrying something, and they piled their booty by the curb and went back for more, while Freddy got out and began loading it into the phaeton. When they had all made three or four trips, they scrambled aboard and Hank went on.

"You see, Freddy," said Jinx, "people are pretty patriotic about this scrap iron drive. All I had to do was get out there and make an appeal for scrap, and you see how they came through. They gave me all I asked for. How much did we get?"

"There's two small frying pans," said Freddy, "an iron spider, and a flatiron, and two hammers, and an old brass lamp, and two rubber balls—we save rubber, don't we?—and five or six pounds of small stuff—I don't know what they are. But I don't know, Jinx; it doesn't seem quite right to me, to get people to throw things at you and then run off with them."

"Well, for Pete's sake!" exclaimed Jinx. "That's the thanks I get for risking my life to bring in a little scrap. If those people had wanted all this junk, do you suppose they'd have thrown it at me? You act as if you thought I enjoyed having things thrown at me!"

"You do," said Freddy.

"Well," said Jinx with a grin, "to tell you the truth, I do. Always have, from a kitten. Ha, ho, those were the days. What moonlight sings we used to have, father and mother and all my brothers and sisters, lined up on the back fence. And what applause we got! Old bottles, shoes—I've seen old Mrs. McLanihan heave the whole contents of her kitchen, including the stove, at father when he was in good

form. And how he could dodge! Jump over a skillet that was coming right at him without missing a note. Us kittens used to get hit now and then, but not father—not until that last terrible night.” Jinx shook his head sadly. “Father made a mistake that night. He picked out Joe Frawley’s back fence. Joe was pitcher on the Centerboro ball team. He let go with a potato masher, and it caught father just as he was hitting the G above high C. He never spoke again.”

“Who, Mr. Frawley?” asked Sniffy.

“No, you dope; father,” said Jinx disgustedly. “Well, Hank, draw up here. We’ll try this alley.”

So Jinx went through his act again, and they collected two old clocks, and some more kitchen utensils, and a horseshoe, and a sash weight and an electric toaster.

“The thing to do,” said Jinx, as they started off again, “is to stop after the first round of applause. If you give too many encores, you might get a few more things, but some of ’em might really get mad and get out their guns. Move on before they bring up the heavy artillery, is my motto.”

They made several more stops, in different parts of the town, and then Hank said if they piled any more iron in the carriage he wouldn’t be able to get it up the hills. So they started home.

“Don’t people ever throw anything but iron?” asked Georgie.

“Oh, sure,” said Jinx. “Shoes, hunks of wood, all sorts of things. But no use taking those things home. I’d have taken some of those old shoes tonight for Bill. Nothing he likes better to chew on between meals than an old shoe. But Bill hasn’t done a tap of work on this drive. Just moons around reading fairy tales. You hadn’t ever ought to have taught him to read, Freddy. I finally got him to go look over that rubbish pile back of the Grimby house to see if there was any iron. When I went up there what do you suppose he was doing? Lying in the grass, reading an old copy of the Arabian Nights he’d dug out. All about somebody that had a lamp, and you rub it, and a big giant comes and brings you a lot of things to eat.”

“The story of Aladdin,” said Georgie. “I read it last fall.”

“Yeah?” said Jinx. “Well, I asked him why he wasn’t working, and he said: ‘You know, Jinx, I used to eat old books before I got an education. To think,’ he said, ‘of all the books I can’t ever read now because I ate ’em!’ He said: ‘I don’t know why I ate ’em, either, because there isn’t much flavor to ’em. But I knew they must be some good, and in my ignorance I supposed they must be good to eat.’”

“Well, I told him to get up in his ignorance and go to work looking for iron, but he just shook his head kind of dreamily, and said: ‘Later, Jinx, later. This story is too absorbing; it grips me.’”

“You get up,’ I said, ‘or I’ll grip you,’ but he just grinned and started to tell me the story, so what could I do? He said he was going to see if he couldn’t find that lamp of what’s-his-name’s. He said why worry and get a little scrap together when if we could just find this lamp, the giant would bring us a thousand tons in the twinkling of an eye. Twinkling of an eye! What kind of talk is that? Twinkling of a pollywog’s whiskers! You hadn’t ought to have taught him to read, Freddy.”

“Ain’t any harm in reading,” said Hank, “long’s you don’t believe any of it. I read a lot of fairy tales last winter, nights when my rheumatism wouldn’t let me sleep. Liked ’em too. But you don’t see me goin’ off with my sword at my side, looking for the Sleeping Princess, or jumpin’ off the barn, thinkin’ I can fly, like Pegasus. Though maybe I could fly—I dunno. I never tried it.”

That night when he got home, Freddy sat up until nearly daylight, changing Paul Revere’s Ride into a poem for animals.

*“Listen, my children, while I discourse
Of the midnight ride of Hank, the horse.
'Twas in April, nineteen forty and three.
Robert and Sniffy and Georgie and me,
With Jinx, our leader, to set the course.*

*It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Centerb’ro town.
Then some of the folks got an awful shock
When Jinx climbed up on the back fence rail
And let out a terrible piercing wail
That shook the leaves of the maples down.*

*You know the rest. In the books you have read
How the wakened townsfolk jumped from bed,
How they fired their skillets and pans and pots
At the voice that came from their garden plots,
A cry of defiance and not of fear
Although the barrage was pretty severe.
And the scrap brought home from that ride of Hank’s
Was received by Mr. Bean with thanks.”*

Chapter 8

In the next issue of the *Bean Home News* Freddy printed the whole story of his disagreement with Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk, as the sheriff had suggested. He also printed a spirited defense of the sheriff, and of the management of the jail. The result was better than he had hoped. A hundred and fifty of the Centerboro people subscribed to the paper the following day, and for a week it was the talk of the town.

But the sheriff pointed out to Freddy that he mustn't count too much on that. "Lots of people don't like Mrs. Underdunk," he said, "but not likin' her and not doin' what she wants 'em to are different. You can get 'em to agree that's she's mean and unfair, but they'll keep right on doin' what she asks 'em to because they're afraid of her. Take Henry Weezer, president of the bank. He don't like her a little bit. But she has a big account at his bank, and he'll try to please her so she'll keep her money there. Same with Lieber & Wingus at the hardware store, and Harry Ketcham at the grocery, and Dr. Winterpool. They don't want to lose her trade."

"You mean you don't think it did any good?" asked Freddy.

"I don't mean that at all," said the sheriff. "You gave 'em your side of it, and it's funny, Freddy, but they believe you instead of her. I don't mean it's funny to laugh, I mean it's funny-queer. And maybe not so queer, either. Because they like you, and you'd always rather believe people you like. No, you keep right on. And thanks for that piece about me. The boys at the jail have had it framed and hung up in the music room."

The *Guardian* came right back the following week with another attack on the sheriff, criticizing his management of the jail, and also his failure to enforce the laws against animals which ran wild and made nuisances of themselves. "Not only are we continually subjected to the attacks of wild pigs," Mr. Garble wrote, "but recently our nights have been made hideous by a plague of howling cats. We have frequently taken occasion to suggest that a sheriff whose bosom friends are pigs and other of the lower animals is a disgrace to a thriving town like Centerboro, the garden spot of Oneida County. But are we to have no protection, Mr. Sheriff, from these animal friends of yours? Beware, Mr. Sheriff! If such conditions are permitted to continue, an enraged citizenry will some day rise and drive you and your four-footed accomplices from the sacred soil of our community."

At a meeting in the barn when these developments were discussed, Jinx said that he guessed they'd better not make any more midnight trips into town for scrap. "We've skimmed off the cream, anyway," he said. "Five trips, and more than half a

ton of stuff we've brought in. Guess we'll have to think of something else. Gosh, I wish we could get that iron deer Mrs. Underdunk has on her lawn. It must weigh an awful lot."

"She and her brother hate animals so much," said Robert, "I'm surprised she'd even have an iron animal on her lawn."

"She's an iron woman," said Freddy, and Mrs. Wiggins said: "My land, what does that Garble man mean, talking about that nice sheriff being a disgrace because he's friends with animals? Lower animals, indeed! I'll lower him if he ever comes around here!"

"I think," said Jinx slowly, "that I'm going to have me some fun with Mr. Herbert Garble. I think some of these dark nights I'm going to pay him a little call."

"You'd better lay off him, cat," said Freddy. "Keep this a newspaper fight. We're ahead now, and so long as we can fight him with printed words we'll stay ahead, because we're smarter than he is. But once we get down to a real rough-house—"

"I completely disagree," said Charles in a loud voice. He hopped up on the dashboard of the phaeton. "My friends, lower animals all," he said, "you will agree, I think, that we have been grossly insulted. My friend, Freddy, counsels us to reply to these insults—but with what? With blows? No, with further insults. As an editor, as a master of insult and invective, I respect his advice. But I, as a rooster, as a bird of spirit, beneath whose feathered bosom beats the stout heart of a long line of warriors—I reject his counsel. For my friends, it is a counsel of appeasement. No, no—rather let us perish nobly on a stricken field, than sit back and reply to these foul insinuations only with words. Let us strike! Who will follow me?" And he jumped down and strutted towards the door.

There was some applause, but it was rather for the fine words than for the sentiments expressed.

"Where do you want us to follow you to?" said Jinx, and Freddy said: "Come back here, Charles. We can't tackle Mr. Garble, and you know it."

Charles turned upon them contemptuously. "Cowards!" he exclaimed witheringly. "Very well then, I will go alone," and he left the barn.

"Hey, come back here!" shouted Freddy, but Jinx said: "Oh, let him go. He won't get any further than the henhouse."

"I'm not so sure," said the pig. "Ever since he licked that rat in fair fight, he's had these spells of thinking he can lick the whole world. And another thing; he thinks he's pretty ferocious looking ever since he saw the ant's picture in the bottom of the frying pan. He thinks he can scare Mr. Garble. I wish Henrietta was here. He may

do something foolish.”

Unfortunately Henrietta had gone over to the Schermerhorn farm to see her married daughter that afternoon, and before they could think of any way to stop him, Charles was nearly out of sight down the Centerboro road.

What happened the animals later learned from Jinx, who was chosen to follow the rooster and see that he came to no harm. Charles, still inspired by his own warlike words, trotted along steadily, up hill and down dale, until he reached town. He perched for a few minutes on the watering trough in front of the bank to get his breath and arrange his feathers, and then he walked straight up the stairs to the *Guardian* office, and tapped on the door with his beak.

“Come in!” shouted an irritable voice, but of course Charles couldn’t open the door, so he tapped again.

There was the grate of a chair being pushed back and then the door was flung open.

“Well, who—” said Mr. Garble, looking around; then he glanced down. “Great jumping peacocks, a chicken!” he exclaimed. “Shoo! Scat! Get out of here!”

He made shooing motions with his hands, but Charles slid past him into the office and perched on the desk. Jinx said afterwards that he thought Charles’s nerve was just about to give out, and that in another moment he would have turned and flown squawking down the stairs. But the word “chicken” was a fighting word with the rooster. Like most big talkers, he usually backed down more or less gracefully before the first blow. But the word “chicken” made him see red.

“‘Chicken,’ is it?” he squawked. “I’ll show you who’s a chicken.” And he flew at Mr. Garble, who was reaching for his ruler, and pecked him sharply on the hand, so that the editor dropped the ruler with a yell and put his finger in his mouth. And while he was sucking his finger, Charles went for him again. Jinx said Mr. Garble never had a chance. With one arm across his face, to protect his eyes, he stumbled about the office, reaching for something to strike the rooster with. But Charles’s claws were in his hair, and Charles’s wings beat across his eyes and blinded him, and Charles’s sharp beak was pinching his ears and his nose till he yelled with pain. “Chicken, hey?” Charles yelled. “Lower animals, hey? I’ll teach you to call respectable people names in your paper. I’ll give you a lesson you won’t forget!” And he seized Mr. Garble’s nose, which was large and so offered an excellent hold, and gave it a half twist. And yelling for help, Mr. Garble blundered out of the office and went stumbling down stairs.

Charles would have followed, but Jinx caught him by the wing. “Hold it, old boy,” he said. “You’ve won. But don’t go out in the street, or he’ll get you. Out the

window, now, quick, before he comes back with a gun. I'll meet you on the edge of town."

Charles leaned against the desk panting. "Why . . . I did win, Jinx!" he exclaimed. Then a look of horror came over his face. "Good gracious, what will Henrietta say? What on earth got into me?"

"One of your brave fits, I guess," said the cat. "But come on, get going. Great Scott, don't faint away now!" he said, as the rooster began to tremble at the thought of the danger that he had faced. "Come on, will you?"

"Golly, yes," said Charles, and hopped up on the windowsill and fluttered down into the back yard.

They got away safely after that. Charles was a good deal worried on the way home about what Henrietta would think. But as frequently happens in such cases, Henrietta, when she learned of it, was pretty proud of him. Of course she gave him a good scolding, but Charles wasn't upset about that, because she always scolded him three times a day whether he had done anything or not.

Chapter 9

Things were pretty quiet for the next few days, but Freddy felt that it was the quiet before the storm, and he was not mistaken. The *Guardian* and the *Bean Home News* both came out on Saturday, and on Saturday afternoon, after he had washed up and while he was waiting for his supper, Mr. Bean used to go through both papers and mark with a pencil articles that he wanted to read out loud to Mrs. Bean after supper. Freddy had noticed that he marked almost everything in the *Bean Home News*, while in the *Guardian* he marked only a few pieces. So on this Saturday he sat down in the rocker and picked up the *Bean Home News*.

Mr. Bean did not read the paper out loud before supper, but you might have thought he was doing so because of the continuous flow of comment with which he accompanied his reading. "Tut, tut," he would say. "Stuff and nonsense! What's the matter with those fellows down there?" And as his eye went down the column: "Good! There's a man that knows his job!" And then: "Of all the tarnal balderdash!" He either liked the pieces a lot or thought they were terrible.

But this evening he didn't say anything while he read the first few lines, and then he put the paper down and looked over his spectacles at Freddy, who was sitting down beside the porch. "What's all this you've written down here about the sheriff?" he said. "I ain't saying it ain't true, mind you," he said; "the sheriff's a good man. But if you're backin' him in the election this coming fall, well—" He struck the paper with the back of his hand—"that's politics! And I don't like it!"

Freddy didn't say anything, but he thought: "Oh, dear! He'll make me stop defending the sheriff, and I just *can't* do that. The sheriff's my friend."

"You understand what I mean?" said Mr. Bean.

"Yes, sir," said Freddy meekly.

Mr. Bean put down the *Home News* without reading any more, and picked up the *Guardian*. "H'm," he said. "Folsom Jacks got married. Pity . . . Tut, tut, that's no way to run a government . . . Hey!" he exclaimed suddenly. "What's this!" He looked at Freddy. "You read this paper yet?" and without waiting for an answer he began to read out loud.

"The *Guardian* has had occasion several times recently to call the attention of our townspeople to the outbreaks of animal violence in our streets, and has suggested that measures must be taken to put an end to them. The events of the past few days make it plain that the situation is even more serious than we had supposed. The editor of the *Guardian* was the victim of a shocking attack last Wednesday, when a gang of savage animals forced their way into his private office and beat him

severely. The attack was entirely unprovoked, and only the fact that the editor put up a stout fight against overwhelming odds, saved his life!”

At this point Mr. Bean looked up. “True or false?” he asked.

“False,” said Freddy.

“Knowing Herb Garble, I thought as much,” said Mr. Bean. “Besides, all of you were here Wednesday, except Charles and Jinx. Yet there must be something to it. Was it them?”

“Just Charles,” said Freddy.

“What?” said Mr. Bean. “Charles *alone*?”

“Yes, sir.”

It is pretty hard to believe that a rooster could drive a man out of his own office. But there was one nice thing about Mr. Bean: he never doubted the word of any of his animals. Now he just looked hard at Freddy, and puffed furiously on his pipe, and Freddy felt pretty sure that he was laughing, though as he never laughed out loud it was pretty hard to tell behind the smoke and the whiskers. But after a minute he turned back to the paper.

“The *Guardian* has made an investigation into the causes of these outrages, and some interesting facts have come to light. It appears that the animals involved are all members of a gang which won some notoriety several years ago by taking a trip to Florida. Our readers will not need to be told that they were the property of Mr. William Bean.

“There seemed, at the time, little harm in this trip. But it caused some talk; the animals were interviewed and their pictures appeared in the New York papers; and many foolish people made a fuss over them—invited them to parties and told them how cute and clever they were. The result was what might have been expected. The animals were thoroughly spoiled. No longer content to live the simple life of farm animals, in their efforts to get attention, they began the series of annoyances which have reached their peak in the recent violent outbursts!” Mr. Bean stopped again. “True or false?” he asked. Then he leaned over and patted Freddy on the head. “Don’t answer. If anyone’s spoiled, it’s Herb Garble. Let’s read some more of his violent outburst.” And he went on.

“The blame for this rests squarely on the shoulders of William Bean. A silly pride in the so-called accomplishments of his animals has led him to encourage their impertinences. He has even refused to chain up his ungovernable and dangerous pig. Our sheriff, too, with his well-known slackness, has refused to take any steps whatever to protect the public. Our readers will be glad to know, however, that measures are being taken for their safety. The solid citizens of Centerboro have

swung into action, and have passed a law that any animal found on our streets, unaccompanied by his owner, becomes the property of the town, and may be seized and disposed of as the town sees fit.”

Mr. Bean dropped the paper again, and puffed so hard at his pipe that the sparks flew in all directions, and Freddy moved a little out of range.

“The consarned busybody!” Mr. Bean exclaimed. “Going to seize my animals, hey? Well, just let him—” He stopped abruptly as a buggy drove into the barnyard. “Mrs. B.!” he shouted. “Company’s comin’!” And he got up and went to meet the sheriff, who was climbing out of the buggy with a folded newspaper in his hand.

“Evenin’, sheriff,” he said. “Just in time for supper. Come in and draw up a chair.”

“Thank you kindly,” said the sheriff, “but I can’t stay. I promised the prisoners I’d be back. It’s Bloody Mike’s birthday, and we’re giving him a little party. Couldn’t get any paper hats at Lieber’s and had to drive over to Tushville for some. The boys would never forgive me if I didn’t get back with ’em.” He held out the paper. “I suppose you’ve seen this?”

Mr. Bean nodded.

“Well that ain’t the worst of it. There’s a warrant out for Freddy’s arrest. State troopers. We’ve got to get Freddy away. They’ll come tonight.”

“My land!” said Mrs. Bean, who had come to the door. “They tried to arrest Freddy last year when they thought he’d stolen a balloon. And now they’re after him again. Well, they don’t get him, warrant or no warrant. Just let them try!”

But Mr. Bean shook his head. “We can’t fight the state police, Mrs. B.,” he said. “What’s your idea, sheriff?”

“Well, we got to act quick. Suppose Freddy comes down and stays with me for a while. He could put on one of his disguises—maybe that old lady disguise he went to see Mr. Weezer in that time. I could say he was my old aunt come to visit me.”

“Why don’t I just go up in the woods and stay with Peter?” said Freddy. “I don’t want to get the sheriff into trouble. Anyway, people have heard about that disguise. They might recognize it.”

“No trouble at all,” said the sheriff. “Not half as much as my real aunt would be, because she always makes me wear a necktie at meals. Besides, how could you run your newspaper up in the woods?”

“How could I run it anyway, if I’m in hiding?” said Freddy.

“Just write your stuff and send it over to Mr. Dimsey. Let Herb Garble worry about how it gets there. Centerboro’s the last place he’d look for you.”

Mrs. Bean, who had disappeared for a moment inside, came out with a bundle

which she unwrapped. "Here's a disguise nobody's ever seen," she said. "I found it today when I started my spring housecleaning. It belonged to Mr. Bean when he was a little boy." And she spread out an old-fashioned boy's sailor suit. "You can be the sheriff's nephew, instead of his aunt."

The sheriff and Freddy looked at the sailor suit and then at Mr. Bean, and then at each other.

"Go on, laugh," said Mr. Bean. "I wore it, and I got pictures in the album to prove it."

"I bet you looked right cute in it," said the sheriff. "Well, Freddy, crowd into it and let's get going."

The suit was pretty tight for the pig, but Mr. and Mrs. Bean and the sheriff pulled and tugged and got him into it finally, and when the navy blue scarf was knotted around under the wide collar and the round hat with the ribbon was perched on his head, Mr. Bean slapped his thigh. "Looks most as good as I did in it," he said.

"Which isn't saying much," said Mrs. Bean with a twinkle. "I was looking at those old photographs this afternoon.—Oh, land of Goshen, here they are," she exclaimed, as a white police car drove into the yard.

Freddy knelt down and pretended to be playing with some pebbles as a trooper got out of the car and came up to the porch.

"Evening, Mr. Bean," he said. "We got a warrant for that pig of yours. I'm sorry, but we've got to do our duty and arrest him."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" said Mrs. Bean, her eyes snapping.

"Now, Mrs. B.," said Mr. Bean; "never argue with the law."

"Do you know where he is?" asked the trooper.

"Wouldn't tell you if I did," said Mr. Bean. "It's against the law to hinder ye, but I ain't going to help ye."

"We'll just have to search, then," said the trooper, and he went back to the car and he and the other trooper started towards the pigpen.

"Supper's on the table," said Mrs. Bean. "Sheriff, you and your nephew had better come in and have a bite. You can get back in time for your party. We haven't got much—just fried chicken and cold ham and Lyonnaise potatoes and grilled tomatoes and gingerbread and mince pie and pickles and coffee—but you're welcome to what there is."

"Why, thank you kindly, ma'am," said the sheriff, "but I wouldn't want you to stint yourself on my account. I guess we ought to be getting along. Mustn't disappoint Bloody Mike."

"Well, goodbye, then," said Mrs. Bean. "Goodbye, little boy. What's your

nephew's name, sheriff?"

The sheriff looked at Freddy a minute, then he grinned. "Longfellow," he said. "After the poet. Longfellow Higgins."

"Well, goodbye, Longfellow," said Mrs. Bean, as they drove off.

"What did you have to give me a name like that for?" said Freddy. "This suit is bad enough, without that."

"Well, you are a poet, aren't you?" said the sheriff. "And besides, with a name like that, nobody'll guess who you really are. Who ever heard of a pig named Longfellow?"

Chapter 10

Freddy enjoyed his stay at the jail. The prisoners all knew him and liked him, and the sheriff said that he would answer for it that none of them would give him away, so he didn't have to pretend to them that he was a little boy. He had a nice cell which was very handsomely and comfortably furnished, and the sheriff lent him his typewriter so that he could do his newspaper work. There was always something going on at the jail—the prisoners' families came to visit them and had picnics on the lawn, and there were tennis courts and all sorts of games, and ice cream every day for dinner.

He spent a good deal of time with Mr. Dimsey. By going out the back door of the jail and cutting across two vacant lots, he could reach the road that led to the editor's farm, and although the troopers were still looking for him he didn't think there was much chance of being caught. Mr. Dimsey was delighted with the success of the *Bean Home News*. "We've got more subscribers in Centerboro now than the *Guardian* has," he said. "Everybody thinks it is a much better paper than the *Guardian*. That is why Mr. Garble is so mad at you. It has twice as much news in it, and they say Herb Garble has the staggers every time a new issue comes out. He can't see how you can get so much more news than he can."

"I've just found out," said Freddy, "how Aunt Abby gets all her news. Of course, she hears all the gossip from Miss Halsey, but she finds out a lot that even Miss Halsey doesn't know. It's the mice."

"Mice!" said Mr. Dimsey.

"Yes. It seems the mice in Centerboro got up a social club, and they wanted a place to hold their meetings. Most of the houses in Centerboro have at least one family of mice living in them, and there were plenty of good cellars, but none of them seemed very safe on account of cats. Most of the houses have a cat, too. The mice usually have an arrangement with the house cat. The cat agrees to let them alone, and not interfere with them as long as they only pick up crumbs, and leave package goods alone. But the cats all said if there were any big meetings, it would be their duty to break them up. They said social clubs weren't in the contract. So Aunt Abby offered them Miss Halsey's cellar, because Miss Halsey is a little deaf, and hasn't a cat any more. And then Aunt Abby was made an honorary member of the club, and attends the meetings. Well, you know what gossips mice are."

"I didn't," said Mr. Dimsey.

"Well, they are. And what they don't know about what goes on! Why my bet is, there's mice under the floor here right now, and our whole conversation will be

talked over at the next meeting.”

“Good gracious!” said Mr. Dimsey.

“Of course,” said Freddy, “there is a lot of what Aunt Abby finds out that hadn’t ought to be put in the paper. I have to leave a lot of it out. Just private matters, that people wouldn’t want known. But there’s things the mice know that the people don’t know, too. Like in the last issue—you know?—I wrote: ‘Better look for moths in the plaid blankets in the closet off the blue room.’ I didn’t say whose house it was in because good housekeepers don’t like other people to know it if they’ve got moths in things. Nobody knew whose closet I meant. But Mrs. Wingus knew when she read it, and she went and cleaned the moths out. She had no idea they had got in there either. But the mice knew.”

“That was pretty smart, Freddy,” said Mr. Dimsey.

“It always looks smart if you know something that other people don’t,” said the pig. “Specially if you don’t tell them how you found it out.”

Once or twice a week Freddy went out to the farm to see the Beans and gather news for the paper. This wasn’t so dangerous as it might seem, for he had hired a couple of flickers to scout ahead of him and let him know at once if they saw anything of the troopers. On one of these trips he brought Jerry Peters and Fido back to the jail with him in the pocket of the sailor suit.

One afternoon the prisoners and the sheriff all went off to the ball game. Centerboro was playing Tushville, and the sheriff thought it wouldn’t be safe for Freddy to go, because duty always seemed to take the troopers to the ball grounds when there was a game. The sheriff had said that they wouldn’t even stop to get a soda after the game, but would come right home, but the afternoon wore on and supper time came, and Freddy could hear the distant shouts and yells that told that the game was still in progress. “It must be a double-header,” he thought, “or else they’re tied, and going to twelve or thirteen innings. Oh dear, I wish I was there!”

It was beginning to get dark, now, and Freddy had just gone into the pantry to get a cookie, when a faint noise in the front of the jail made him go back, and there just inside the front door was a man. He was a small man with a round rosy face and small eyes, and a smile that was much too bright to be real. Freddy recognized him at once. He was a detective named Jason Binks, whom Mr. Weezer had hired two years before to spy on the affairs of the First Animal Bank, when that institution was first founded. Disguised as an old Irishwoman, Freddy had fooled him good, but he wasn’t so sure he could fool him again. For Mr. Binks might well remember him.

“Well, well, my little man,” said the detective, coming forward. “I guess you didn’t hear me knock, did you? Deary me, you *are* a fine little fellow and no

mistake! And where is your good papa?"

Freddy did not like to leave the man alone in the jail, or he would have run away. On the other hand, although it was rather dark in the hall, he didn't want Mr. Binks to get too close a look at his face. So he hid his eyes in the sleeve of his sailor suit and leaned against the wall and pretended to cry.

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Binks, patting him on the shoulder. "There's my brave little man. Don't cry. Why Jason Binks wouldn't touch a hair of your head!"

Freddy thought: "I guess he wouldn't!" Because of course pigs don't have any hair on their heads. And he sobbed louder, so that Mr. Binks moved away from him nervously.

"There, there!" said the detective. "Good gracious no, Jason Binks *likes* little boys. Why, he has a little boy at home just like you." (I bet he'd be surprised if he did, thought Freddy.) "Is the good sheriff your papa? And will he be back soon?"

"No, he ith not my papa," said Freddy, trying to talk like a little boy, and throwing in a lisp for good measure. "He ith my uncle, and my name ith Longfellow Higginth, and I with you would go away!"

"Dear me, what a pretty name, to be sure! And he has left you all alone in this great big jail!" He came closer, but Freddy sobbed louder and he moved away again. "And he leaves you without any little playmates to romp with? Tut, tut! No jolly little pets? You haven't a little dog to be your comrade? Not even perhaps a cunning little piggywig?"

"My goodness," thought Freddy, "he really is looking for me!" And he stopped sobbing and began to wail.

"Sssssh!" whispered the detective apprehensively. "Gracious to goodness, brave little sailors don't make noises like that!"

"Thith brave little thailor doeth," lisped Freddy, "and he can make worth oneth too."

"Well, well," said Mr. Binks, "I thee—I mean, I see you won't be friends, so I'll just go along. I only stopped in to enquire about a good little friend of mine who used to live near here. A jolly little fellow, a little piggy named Freddy. Have you seen any little piggywigs about, my little man?"

"No, I haven't theen any piggy-wigth," wailed Freddy, "nor any doggy-wogth, nor any thkunky-wunkth, and you had better go away becauthe I am going to thcream the houthe down. And then you will thee the thyeriff-weriff." And he began to yell and scream at the top of his lungs.

So Mr. Binks went hurriedly out and closed the door.

"He certainly was looking for you, Freddy," said the sheriff when he heard about

this, "and if he's the man I saw coming out of the *Guardian* office yesterday, we know who's hiring him. Well, it's about what I expected. Herb Garble and Mrs. Underdunk know that if they want to keep the *Guardian* going, they've got to put the *Home News* out of business. And the quickest way to do that is to put you out of business. I guess you got a war on your hands, Freddy."

"Well, if their side is going to use detectives, we'll use 'em too," said Freddy, and that evening he took Jerry Peters down the back way into the yard behind the *Guardian* office and pointed out Mr. Garble's window. "You can get in through a crack," he said, "and hide somewhere, and then every evening at eight-thirty I'll come to find out if you have anything to report. Eight-thirty sharp, remember, you be right in this knot hole."

"O. K.," said Jerry. "And you keep an eye on Fido, won't you, Freddy? In case he gets lonesome?"

"I'll try," said the pig. "It's kind of hard even to *get* an eye on anything as small as Fido, much less keep it there. But I'll try."

And Jerry waved his feelers and climbed up the wall.

The presence of Mr. Binks in Centerboro hampered Freddy a good deal in his movements, and he hardly dared go out any more in the daytime. Mr. Dimsey also reported that someone answering to the detective's description had called to ask questions. For the first day or two, Jerry had little to report except a letter which he had read. It was a letter from Mr. Binks to Mr. Garble, agreeing to take on the job of finding Freddy. It was merely proof of what Freddy had already guessed, but it was useful. For Jerry had also been able to read and tell Freddy everything that was to be in the next issue of the *Guardian*, and one of the items was a line or two, saying that Mr. Jason Binks was in town on business. So Freddy wrote a paragraph telling exactly what the business was and who had hired Mr. Binks, and at the end of the paragraph, he wrote: "We believe our readers will be interested in comparing the full statement of the facts published in this paper to the incomplete account published in our esteemed contemporary, the *Guardian*. And then they will perhaps be interested in comparing the names of their two newspapers. The *Bean Home News* gives them the *news*; the *Guardian* appears merely to *guard* the secrets of its editor."

As a result of this, a large number of people wrote to the *Home News*, congratulating Freddy on having the best newspaper in town; and expressing disgust at the cowardly attempts of Mr. Garble to put him out of business. What puzzled Freddy was that half of them did not sign their names.

"Nothing funny about that," said the sheriff. "They're afraid you will print their

letters in the *News*, and while they are secretly on your side, they're afraid to come right out and say so. They're afraid of Mrs. Underdunk."

Of course this made Mr. Garble madder than ever, and Jerry reported that he just sat at his desk and growled. He called up Mr. Binks several times a day and bawled him out for not doing more, and whenever he saw an animal on the street—not just a pig, but any animal—he threw stones at it and called it names. Then the people who owned the animals, if they happened to be there, would throw stones back at Mr. Garble and call *him* names.

"Looks as if we were getting the town divided up into parties," said the sheriff. "The pro-animal party and the anti-animal party. The farmers, and the folks around town who own horses and dogs and cats, are going to get mad at Herb Garble if he keeps on this way. Looks to me, if I want to win my election this fall, as if I'd better come out strong pro-animal." So wherever he went, he stuffed his pockets with lumps of sugar and bones and sprigs of catnip for the horses and dogs and cats he met on the street, and he went out of his way to pet them and be nice to them. And Freddy put a piece in the *Home News*, saying that nobody wanted a man for sheriff that was unkind to animals, and if Mr. Garble was going to run for the office he would have to mend his ways.

Well, Mr. Garble was no fool, and he did mend his ways—at least outwardly. He took to carrying sugar and bones and catnip around in his pockets too, and he made a great show of his affection for animals, and even wrote a piece in the *Guardian* about how everybody should be good to them. But he said at the end: "I have spoken about mankind's debt to our dumb beasts. I have said that we should treat them kindly. But dumb beasts are one thing, and talking beasts are another. I do not include among our animal friends those notorious talking animals owned by William Bean. They have shown themselves, by a series of outrageous offences, unworthy of our affection. It is the opinion of this paper, as of all right-minded citizens, that the severest justice should be meted out to them."

But when nobody was looking he still threw stones at every animal he saw.

Of course with two men going around town, stuffing every animal in sight with delicacies, there was bound to be trouble. Judge Willey's horse came down with the jaundice, and Mrs. Wilgus' cocker spaniel Benny got so fat that he couldn't get up the front steps, and four cats developed fits. When Mr. Bleek spaded up his garden he got out two bushel baskets full of bones. And there were so many complaints that the sheriff and Mr. Garble finally had to stop the feeding part, though they kept on going out of their way to pat every animal they saw on the head. It was said that Mr. Garble, who was a little near-sighted, had patted old Mrs. Peppercorn on the head

one day when she was down on her hands and knees, weeding the garden. He thought she was Judge Willey's police dog, Olga. "How's my good old girl?" he said. "Digging up a nice bone for supper?" He lost a vote there, and nearly got hit with Mrs. Peppercorn's trowel, which she threw at him.

One afternoon Freddy was sitting on the front steps of the jail. On the lawn, some of the prisoners were sitting at little tables, shaded with brightly striped parasols, drinking the tea and eating the little cakes which were always served at half past four. Freddy didn't know what made him look down at the sidewalk in front of the steps, but he did, and there was an ant, acting in a very queer way. He would dart a few steps in one direction, then in another, then would fall over on his side and wave his legs in the air. It is as hard to tell one ant from another as if they were all twins, but there seemed to be something familiar about this one, and Freddy got down close to him and said. "Is that you, Jerry?"

The ant tried to wave his feelers and fell over on his side again, but Freddy picked him up and carried him into his cell and put him in the paper cone. And Jerry's voice said weakly: "Dizzy! Soon's I feel better—tell you. Bad news."

"I'll get you some tea," said Freddy, and he got some in a saucer and put Jerry down by it. As soon as it was cool Jerry drank some, and in a minute or two he sat up and washed his face with his front legs, and waved his feelers to show that he could talk. So Freddy put him back in the cone.

"It's that detective, Freddy," he said. "He knows where you are. He bribed the goat to tell him."

"Bill?" said Freddy. "Oh, I don't think Bill would give me away."

"Well, he did. Mr. Binks had been talking to all the animals out at Bean's, and some of them told him about Bill looking for Aladdin's lamp. They thought it was a great joke, but Mr. Binks went right to Bill and said that he had the real original lamp, and if Bill would tell him where you were hiding, he'd bring it out. And today he went out with an old brass lamp and gave it to Bill, and Bill told. And as soon as he can get the troopers, they'll be here."

"But Bill would find out as soon as he rubbed the lamp that it wouldn't work," said Freddy.

"Mr. Binks told him not to rub the lamp until he was off by himself somewhere. He said the genie that would appear was eighty feet high, and if he appeared when the Beans or any of the animals were around he'd scare them into fits. He made Bill promise to go up in the woods before he rubbed it."

"Oh, dear!" said Freddy. "I suppose I'll have to hide somewhere else now. But what made you so dizzy, Jerry?"

“Well, I wanted to get here as quick as I could, and I knew it would take me till midnight to walk it, so I thought I’d better hitch-hike. I went down into the street and got on the wheel of an automobile that was headed this way. It started before I’d had time to get on to the running board, and so I just went round and round with the wheel. Golly, Freddy, it was awful. It makes me sick to think of it.”

“Maybe if you’d shut your eyes you wouldn’t have got dizzy,” said Freddy.

“I had to watch, so I could jump off when I got to the jail. Round and round, with the road swinging up and over me at every turn—Ugh!”

“You’re a darn brave ant,” said Freddy. “Well, go up on the shelf and get Fido—he’s all right, I saw him this morning. At least, I guess it was him, though maybe it was just a speck of dust. We’ve got to get going.”

But before Jerry could get back with his pet, there was a tramp of heavy boots on the porch and the two troopers, accompanied by Mr. Binks and Mr. Garble, came down the hall and into Freddy’s cell.

“That’s him,” said Mr. Binks. “That’s our pretty little piggy-wig.” And one of the troopers snatched off Freddy’s sailor hat, while the other held him by the elbows.

“Good work, boys,” said Mr. Garble. He came forward and stared at Freddy. “So!” he sneered. “You and your friend the sheriff thought you could put something over on me, did you? Well you’re a gone pig now, my friend And your sheriff will be a gone sheriff, too, in a short time. Guess we’ll put an end to this animal reign of terror right now. Put the cuffs on him, boys.”

“Oh, yeah?” drawled a voice from the door. “Who’s putting any cuffs on one of my prisoners?” And they turned to see the sheriff lounging in the doorway, with his thumbs hooked in the armholes of his vest.

“You’ll keep out of this, sheriff, if you know what’s good for you,” snarled Mr. Garble.

“Yeah?” said the sheriff. “Well, suppose these boys take him; what are you going to do with him, officer, hey?”

“Why, we’ll arrest him,” said one trooper. “Put him in jail.”

“Well, he’s in jail now, you dodunk,” said the sheriff, and began to laugh. “By Roger, you’re smarter than I thought you were. You don’t go to all the trouble of arresting people outside of jail that are trying to hide from you. You come around and arrest folks that are in jail already. Why, you could come here and arrest all my prisoners every day for a year. Then you could say you’d made a couple of thousand arrests in that year, and it would look fine on the record. Maybe you’d get promoted. But boys, it don’t work that way. This pig is my prisoner. You can’t arrest anybody that’s in jail already. So put those handcuffs in your pocket and be on your

way.”

“Well,” said the trooper doubtfully. “If you put it that way, sheriff—”

But Mr. Garble stepped forward. “Oh, no you don’t!” he said. “This is a put up job. The pig isn’t a prisoner; he’s been hiding here. We’ll take no chances on our smart sheriff letting him escape. We’ll lock him up where he’ll be safe until he comes up for trial before Judge Willey.”

“But we can’t lock prisoners up anywhere but in the jail, Mr. Garble,” said the trooper.

“We can lock him up in my sister’s cellar,” said Mr. Garble. “It’s a little damp, but he’ll be safe there.” And he stepped forward and took hold of Freddy’s shoulder.

But the sheriff unhooked his thumbs from the armholes of his vest and said with a smile: “Look, Herb, do you get out of here, or do I sock you right on the nose? And do I then lodge a complaint against you for illegal entry and search, false arrest, and usin’ profane and unbecomin’ language to an officer of the law, which is me?”

Mr. Garble looked at him a moment steadily. He was younger than the sheriff, and he was short and powerfully built where the sheriff was long and lazy looking. But at last he backed away. “Very well,” he said. “But I call these troopers to witness that you have said that the pig is your prisoner. You will be held responsible for his appearance in court when his case comes up before Judge Willey. Come, men.”

They trooped out, but they were only about halfway down the walk when there was a rattle of hoofs and Bill, the goat, came galloping in the gate. He stopped a minute as he saw the group of men. He glared at each in turn with his wicked billy-goat eyes, pawing the ground. Mr. Binks gave a low moan of fear, then suddenly turned and ran as fast as his short little legs would carry him. He ran across the lawn between the little tables, and with a snort Bill lowered his head and shot after him.

Mr. Binks running was a broad mark, and Bill did not miss. The curve of his heavy horns caught the detective squarely beneath the flying coat tails and lifted him fairly over the table where Bloody Mike and a friend were having tea. Mr. Binks gave a whoosh! like a rocket when he went up and a thump when he came down. “Goal for our side,” said Bloody Mike calmly, and sipped his tea.

Mr. Binks lay where he was, and Bill walked around to him. “Cheat!” said the goat. “That lamp wasn’t any good. It isn’t the one, and you knew it.”

“Oh, please, my young friend,” moaned Mr. Binks. “It *might* have been the right one. But if you say it isn’t, of course I’ll take it back—”

“And who’ll give me back my friend, Freddy?” demanded the goat. “I only told

you where he was because I thought I could rub the lamp, and then I would have told the genie to take you and Mr. Garble and Mrs. Underdunk and carry you off to Greenland. If the lamp had worked, it wouldn't have mattered if you knew where Freddy was. But you just cheated me." He lowered his head again. "Will you get up, or do I butt you up?"

Mr. Binks got to his knees. "Oh, please, Mr.—er, Bill, don't do that again. I didn't mean any harm. I—"

"I'll give you till I count ten to get to that fence and over it," said the goat.

"That great iron fence?" squealed Mr. Binks. "Why, it's ten feet high. It—"

"If you can't get over, I'll help you," said Bill, with his blattering laugh. "One, two—"

Mr. Binks gave an agonized look at the troopers. But they said afterward, they were too interested in knowing if Bill could lift the detective over the fence to care about interfering.

"Three, four—"

Suddenly Mr. Binks scrambled to his feet and started running. Bill waited honorably until he had counted to ten. Then he started. He reached Mr. Binks before Mr. Binks reached the fence. There was a smack—whoosh—thump! and Mr. Binks was sitting in the road outside. "Oh, well played, sir," said Bloody Mike; and he raised his teacup to Bill, while the other prisoners cheered. And Mr. Binks limped off down the road and none of them ever saw him again.

Chapter 11

“Of course,” said the sheriff, “this is an awful easy jail to escape from.” He and Freddy were eating tutti-frutti ice cream at one of the little tables on the lawn the following afternoon. It was not the regular time of ice cream, which was always dessert at dinner, but the sheriff often had a freezer full made and served to the prisoners just any time he felt like it, and this was one of the times. “Awful easy,” he said, and licked his spoon meditatively.

But Freddy shook his head. “I can’t escape,” he said. “You’re responsible for me, and it would get you into trouble.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the sheriff. “It would be kind of a novelty, in a way. We ain’t ever had an escape in all the years I’ve had charge here. Trouble seems to be to get ’em to go when their time’s up. One little escape wouldn’t be held against me.”

“The *Guardian* would make an awful fuss about it,” said Freddy. “And with you coming up for election and all—no, I won’t do that. I guess I’ll just have to stand trial. After all, if I’m found guilty, they can’t do any more than send me to jail. Then I’ll just be back here again.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said the sheriff. “You see, there’s that new law that says that any animal found on the streets unaccompanied by his owner, becomes the property of the town. My hunch is that Herb Garble will ask the judge to sentence you to be sold at auction. And if that happens, he’ll buy you in.”

“Oh, dear,” said Freddy. “That would be pretty bad, wouldn’t it? But Mr. Bean would buy me at the auction.”

“Mr. Bean hasn’t got as much money as Herb Garble has. And I’m afraid Herb would be willing to pay a lot to get you out of the way. It’s getting so nobody reads his newspaper at all any more; they just read the *Bean Home News*. Well, if he owns you, and you own the *Bean Home News* then he owns the *Bean Home News* and can stop publishing it.”

“And if he owns me, he can take me down to the butcher shop and sell me,” said Freddy. “Oh, dear, what shall I do?”

The sheriff said again that he thought Freddy ought to escape, but Freddy said no, he wasn’t going to do anything to get the sheriff in trouble. “I guess I’ll go up and see Old Whibley. He’s pretty cross, but if I’m careful not to make him mad he’ll tell me some way out, I bet.”

Old Whibley was an owl, who lived with his niece Vera in the Bean woods. Freddy went up there that afternoon. Spring was pretty well along now, and the

leaves were all out, so that Freddy walked along in a green twilight under the big trees. It was wet underfoot, and in sheltered hollows there were still patches of dirty snow. Freddy wore the sailor suit. He hadn't wanted to wear it because it was uncomfortable, and he didn't need a disguise any more. But he had eaten so much ice-cream with the sheriff that he couldn't get it off. He went to the old beech tree in which Whibley had his nest and rapped on the trunk.

He had to rap several times before the owl's head finally appeared in the hole high up in the trunk.

"Well, what is it?" he said testily. "Don't knock the tree down."

"It's me—Freddy," said the pig.

"Of course it's you," said Old Whibley. "Nobody else would be silly enough to put on a sailor suit for a walk in the woods. Or have you come to invite me to go for a sail in your yacht?"

"It's a disguise," said Freddy.

"Very poor one," said the owl. "Fifty years behind the style. Disguise should be right up to the minute in style. Then nobody notices you. The more stylish you are, the more you're like everybody else, and the less attention you attract. Besides which, you look foolish in that suit."

"I suppose you're right," said Freddy. "But I wanted to ask your advice."

"Of course you do. Never see you unless you want help."

"Why, I would come call on you when I didn't want help," said Freddy, "but I know you don't like to be bothered. That's why I don't come."

"Bothers me more to have to give advice than to have you just come for a call," said the owl. "Don't have to think, then, and if your conversation gets dull I can go to sleep. Well, let's get it over," he said resignedly, and flew out and perched on a branch above the pig's head.

So Freddy told him his story. Old Whibley listened with his eyes shut, and when Freddy had finished he didn't say anything for a long time. Then he opened one large yellow eye and looked at the pig.

"Garble," he said. "I know him. Shot my grandfather and had him stuffed. Has him over the mantel. Stuffed owl not cheerful to contemplate, even when not your own grandfather. H'm. Daresay Garble'd like a stuffed pig, too. Only on a platter. Hey?"

"I didn't s-say anything," said Freddy miserably.

"Better to face these things," said Old Whibley. "Then we know where we are. Well, maybe we'll have Garble stuffed instead. Not that anybody'd want him on the mantel." He thought for a little while. "When's the trial?" he asked.

Freddy said he thought it was a week from Friday.

“Got a lawyer?”

“Why, I—no, I hadn’t thought about that.”

The owl sighed. “Have to defend you myself. Well, can’t be helped. Now, listen carefully. First thing you do, demand a jury trial. Then, the day of the trial, you bring all your friends—Jinx, Hank, Mrs. Wiggins—all of ’em. Specially that secretary of yours—what’s his name?”

“Ernest, Jr. But he won’t be any use; he just goes to sleep.”

“All right, all right!” said Old Whibley irritably. “I give up; I wash my hands of you. No use my taking the case if you’re going to object to everything.”

“I’m sorry,” said Freddy humbly. “I’ll do just as you say.”

“Very well. I’ll tell you the rest of what you have to do later. Good afternoon.” And the owl flew back into his hole.

Freddy would have liked to ask some more questions, but he didn’t dare. He had a lot of faith in Old Whibley, but he did wish the owl would tell him what he planned to do. It was pretty scary to be on trial for your life and not know what your lawyer was going to say in your defence.

The week dragged slowly by. Freddy had forgiven Bill, and the goat was so grateful that he insisted on staying on at the jail to act as Freddy’s bodyguard. Luckily, Freddy was so busy writing stuff for the *Bean Home News* that he didn’t have much time to worry.

He wrote a long piece defending the sheriff, and urging his reelection. But Mr. Bean had objected so strongly to any politics in the paper, that he decided not to print it. He hated to leave it out, but the sheriff agreed that Mr. Bean’s wishes must be respected.

And then one afternoon Mr. Bean came to see him.

“Come to tell you not to worry,” said Mr. Bean gruffly. He stared at the pig in an embarrassed way for a minute, then lugged a copy of the *Home News* out of his pocket and held it out. “But what I want to know is this,” he said. “Your friends are standing up for you; why ain’t you standing up for them?”

“Why, I do. I am,” stammered Freddy.

“Ain’t standing up for the sheriff,” said Mr. Bean. “Ain’t a word in here about him.”

“You said you didn’t like politics in the paper,” replied Freddy. “So I thought I oughtn’t to put anything in.”

“Don’t like castor oil,” said Mr. Bean, “but there’s times when you have to use it.”

“Well, my goodness,” said Freddy, “I’ve got something all written, but I left it out because I thought it was politics and you wouldn’t like it.” And he got the piece and let Mr. Bean read it.

“That’s the ticket,” said the farmer. “That’s just what I’d have written myself if I could write anything like that, which I can’t.” And Freddy thanked him and hurried over to help Mr. Dimsey set it up in type.

On the day of the trial, all the Bean animals who were big enough to make the journey came into town. They stopped at the jail for Freddy and Bill and the sheriff, and then marched down to the courthouse. They filed in and took seats in the courtroom, and Freddy and Old Whibley and the sheriff and Ernest, Jr. went forward and sat down at a table in the railed-off space just in front of the high desk on a platform where the judge was to sit. Old Whibley perched on the back of Freddy’s chair and whispered in his ear.

“Everybody has his instructions,” he said, “and everything will go as I planned it. There’s only one thing for you to remember. Keep your eye on Mr. Garble. And yawn. Yawn every time he looks at you.”

Freddy was rather mystified, but there was no time to wonder what the owl was up to. The courtroom was filling rapidly. Freddy saw many Centerboro friends. Mr. Dimsey was there, and Mr. Weezer, and Mrs. Peppercorn, and yes, there were the Beans, just coming in the door, with Hank’s head peering over their shoulders. Down in the very front row sat Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk. She kept looking around at the animals seated near her. She would glare for a moment, then uncork her smelling salts bottle and take a sniff. It wasn’t very polite of her.

When the room was nearly full, Mr. Garble came hurriedly in and sat down in the railed-off space, on the other side from Freddy and his friends. Mr. Garble was never a handsome man, but this morning he was less handsome than ever. His face was pale and his eyes were red, and he looked as if he hadn’t combed his hair. Then everybody stood up, and Judge Willey came in, in a long black gown and took his seat at the desk.

Mr. Garble jumped up. “Your Honor,” he said, “I suggest that these animals be ordered to leave the room. A courtroom is no place for cows and cats and chickens.”

“I object, Your Honor,” said Old Whibley. “The prisoner on trial is an animal. I submit that if all animals are cleared from the courtroom, the prisoner must be included. Moreover, these animals are the prisoner’s friends. They have a right to be present at his trial.”

Judge Willey was a friend of Mr. Garble’s, but he was a fair and honest judge.

“The animals may stay,” he said, and Mr. Garble shrugged and sat down.

The jury was chosen quickly, and Mr. Garble got up and faced them.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said. “I shall prove to you beyond the shadow of a doubt that this prisoner, a pig named Freddy, is not only a nuisance and a disgrace, but that he has been guilty of rioting, of inciting to riot, of unseemly and violent conduct, and of assault and battery upon the persons of several residents of Centerboro. I know that you agree with me that disturbances of this nature cannot be tolerated. Centerboro is a law abiding town; there is no room in it for vicious and unmanageable criminals . . .” And he went on in this way for some time.

Ernest, Jr. sat at the end of the table nearest the jury. Every time Mr. Garble, as he paced up and down in front of the jury box, turned to walk back again, he came close to Ernest, Jr., and every time he did so, Ernest, Jr. yawned. At last Mr. Garble broke off and turned to the judge. “Your Honor,” he said, “if this pig here, this so-called secretary of the prisoner, cannot stay awake, I ask that he be expelled from the room.”

Judge Willey peered at Ernest, Jr. He was very near-sighted, but he never wore his glasses on the bench because he thought they made him look too good-natured.

“Is the secretary asleep?” he asked.

“No, I’m not, Your Honor,” said Ernest, Jr., who had just been poked by Freddy. “May be a little—ho, hum—drowsy, but I’m wide awake.”

“I see no reason why he should be removed,” said the judge. “Continue, Mr. Garble.”

Mr. Garble hesitated a moment, glowering at the two pigs, and they both yawned at him. He shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the jury, but as he did so, Freddy saw that he was himself struggling to suppress a yawn.

Mr. Garble concluded his speech and called his first witness, Mrs. Underdunk, who went up into the witness stand, which was a little box with a chair in it to the right of the judge’s desk, and between him and the jury.

“Now, Mrs. Underdunk,” he said, “will you tell us in your own words of the attack made on you by the prisoner?”

So Mrs. Underdunk told the story of her meeting with Freddy in front of the Busy Bee. Only instead of telling it as it had really happened, she made it appear that Freddy had deliberately leaped at her and tried to bite her.

When she had finished, Mr. Garble said: “Your witness,” and Old Whibley flew up and perched on the railing beside her.

“Now, madam,” he began, but Mrs. Underdunk jumped up and turned to the judge.

“This is outrageous!” she exclaimed. “Nathan Willey, I refuse to be cross-examined by a bird! No frowsy owl is going to ask me questions.”

The judge shook his head. “There’s nothing in the law that says that the counsel for the defence should *not* be an owl,” he said. “Furthermore, the owl is the symbol of wisdom, and frequently used as the emblem of the legal profession. I cannot rule against it.”

So Mrs. Underdunk sat down again.

“You state, madam,” said Old Whibley, “that the accused rushed at you and attempted to bite you. How did you know that he intended to bite you?”

“He had his mouth open.”

“I suggest,” said the owl, “that he had his mouth open for a different purpose. I suggest that he was about to beg your pardon for bumping into you.”

“He was about to bite me,” snapped Mrs. Underdunk.

“How do you know?” persisted the owl. “Have people often attempted to bite you, so that you know how such a person looks? Or have you yourself ever bitten anyone?”

“I object to this line of questioning as irrelevant, immaterial, nonsense, and just plain foolish,” said Mr. Garble, getting up.

“Objection sustained,” said Judge Willey. “Mrs. Underdunk has stated that in her opinion he was about to bite her. She need not answer the last question.”

“Well then, madam,” said Old Whibley, “did he bite you?”

“No.”

“So then, although he had not bitten you, although nothing had happened, you immediately called upon the sheriff to lock him up. Why?”

“Because Main Street is no place for pigs to be running wild. That pig cannot be trusted to behave himself.”

“Why? Because he didn’t bite you?”

The animals in the audience all giggled, and some of the people did too, and the judge banged with his gavel and called for order. Then he said: “Mrs. Underdunk need not answer that question.” And indeed Mrs. Underdunk was in no condition to answer it, for she had turned purple with rage and was sputtering at the owl.

“No further questions,” said Old Whibley. And she went back to her seat.

Then Mr. Garble himself took the stand and told of the attack made on him by Charles. But he said the attack had been made by a large crowd of animals, among whom he recognized Freddy.

This made Charles mad, and he jumped up on the back of the seat in front of him and started calling Mr. Garble a liar, but Henrietta grabbed him by the

tailfeathers and pulled him down. “You keep your bill shut,” she whispered, “or you’ll get something you don’t expect when you get home.”

Old Whibley didn’t cross-examine Mr. Garble much. He asked him a few questions about his newspaper. Mr. Garble was facing the two pigs as he answered, and they both yawned at him for all they were worth, so that he kept yawning in the middle of all his answers. The judge had to ask him to repeat nearly every sentence, and at last banged his gavel and said: “If the witness cannot refrain from howling I shall order him to stand down.”

“I’m not howling, Your Honor,” said Mr. Garble. “I’m just—O—ha!—yawning. Excuse me. Please bear with me, Your Honor. I didn’t sleep well last night.”

“That doesn’t excuse your doing imitations of wolves in my courtroom,” snapped the judge. “Counsel for the defence will continue.”

So Old Whibley asked Mr. Garble if it wasn’t true that he wanted to get Freddy out of the way because the *Bean Home News* was a better and more popular paper than the *Guardian*.

Mr. Garble said that it was not true. He said he welcomed competition, and if a pig could run a better paper than he could he’d retire from the newspaper business.

“And are you thinking of retiring?” asked Old Whibley.

“I am not!”

“No further questions,” said the owl. “And with Your Honor’s permission, I would like to call a few witnesses to my client’s character. I think that I can prove that he is neither wild nor ungovernable, but a sober and responsible citizen.” And he called Mr. Bean.

Mr. Bean testified that Mrs. Underdunk had called on him and threatened to have Freddy shot.

“Did she act in a wild and ungovernable manner?” asked Old Whibley.

“She acted pretty mad,” said Mr. Bean. “And when she started to go, she looked at herself in the shiny bottom of a frying pan, and when she saw herself, she keeled over in a dead faint.”

The frying pan was produced and passed around among the jury, and then the owl said: “I suggest that Mrs. Underdunk’s report of what she sees is not to be relied upon. She saw Freddy in Centerboro and thought he looked ferocious. She saw her own reflection in a mirror and fainted away. I suggest that neither she nor Freddy are as terrible looking as she would have us believe, or as she seems to believe herself.”

“Your Honor,” said Mrs. Underdunk, getting up, “I do not propose to stay here and be insulted.” And she would have swept out of the courtroom, but Mr. Garble

caught her by the arm and whispered in her ear, and at last she sat down again.

Then Old Whibley called a number of witnesses—the sheriff, Mr. Weezer, and then a number of the farm animals. He questioned them at length about Freddy, and they all agreed that he was a very kind and well-behaved pig, who certainly would never attack anyone.

During all this, Mr. Garble sat with his arms crossed. He was almost facing Ernest, Jr., and Freddy saw that every time Ernest, Jr. yawned or nodded, Mr. Garble would himself stifle a yawn, and then his eyelids began to droop, and his chin dropped on his chest. He recovered himself several times, but Freddy began yawning harder too, and finally Mr. Garble's head went down and didn't come up again.

As soon as Old Whibley saw this, he dismissed his last witness. "If Mr. Garble has no further questions to ask, Your Honor," he said, "the defence rests."

"Very well," said the judge, and after pausing a moment, he said in a sharp voice: "Come, Mr. Garble." For it was time for Mr. Garble to sum up his case for the jury.

"Mr. Garble," said the judge again, and Mr. Garble stirred slightly and mumbled: "Irrelevan' an' highly prej'dicial." But he did not open his eyes.

"What's that?" asked Judge Willey.

"He says he doesn't want to, Your Honor," said the owl.

The judge was too near-sighted to see that Mr. Garble had fallen asleep. "Dear me," he said, "this is very irregular. You understand, Mr. Garble, that if you refuse to speak, I can only instruct the jury that you feel your case too weak to bear further discussion. Very well then, Mr.—ah, Whibley."

Mrs. Underdunk looked very concerned, but Mr. Garble had his back to her, and so she did not see that he had gone to sleep either, and supposing that his silence was some sort of a legal trick, she didn't say anything. Old Whibley winked one large yellow eye at Freddy. "Keep it up five more minutes," he said, "and you've won." And he flew over and lighted on the corner of the jury box and addressed the jury in a low tone.

It was a short speech. He pointed out that the crimes of which Freddy was accused were not proven. "Even my worthy colleague agrees with me," he said with a glance at Mr. Garble. "Am I not right, Mr. Garble? . . . Ah! His silence gives consent. Well, then, there is nothing more to say. You can only bring in a verdict of not guilty."

So then the judge told the jury some things about the law, and the jury filed out.

There was a hum of conversation in the courtroom, and Mrs. Underdunk came forward and sat down beside her brother. She said something, then shook him by

the arm. Mr. Garble leaped up, and glared wildly about him. "I object, Your Honor!" he shouted.

"To what, Mr. Garble?" asked the judge.

"To the—to the—Why, where is the jury?" he demanded.

"The jury has gone out to deliberate on the verdict," said the judge.

"But they can't!" roared Mr. Garble. "I haven't summed up! I haven't—"

"You had your opportunity," said the judge.

"But he was asleep, Your Honor!" exclaimed Mrs. Underdunk.

"Asleep!" The judge leaned far over the bench and glared at Mr. Garble.

"Asleep in my courtroom! I ought to hold you in contempt. I ought—"

"Your Honor," pleaded Mr. Garble, "I am sorry. But I didn't get a wink of sleep last night, nor the night before either."

"Your sleeping habits are not within the jurisdiction of this court," said the judge.

"If you don't know enough to go home and go to bed the night before an important case, you don't deserve to win. No more, now. The jury is coming in."

Well, of course the jury had to bring in a verdict of "not guilty" and they did. Everybody rushed up to shake hands with Freddy and congratulate him—everybody, that is, except Mrs. Underdunk and Mr. Garble. Mr. Garble left the courtroom first, with Mrs. Underdunk following him closely and heaping reproaches on him with every step.

Freddy elbowed his way through the crowd in search of Old Whibley.

"Looking for your mouthpiece?" said Jinx. "He's gone back to the woods."

"But I wanted to thank him," said Freddy.

"You know he doesn't like to be thanked for anything."

"I know. But my goodness, he saved my life! I ought to send him up a box of mice or something. I don't see yet why Mr. Garble slept so hard. Yes, I do, too, because nobody can look at Ernest, Jr. and stay awake. But it's funny he didn't wake up when the judge called to him."

"Old Whibley knew that if he once got to sleep, nothing could wake him up," said the cat. "Because you see, Freddy, Peter and Robert and Sniffy Wilson and Randolph and I have spent the last two nights keeping him awake. It was true, what he said about not getting a wink of sleep. We thumped on the doors and yelled down the chimney and scratched on the window-panes, and Randolph got right inside the drawer in the table by his bed and gnawed. Boy, is that Randolph some gnawer! Funny what a lot of racket a beetle can make. It sounded like somebody was sawing wood. Old Garble was scared into fits. And when he finally got so sleepy that even ghost noises wouldn't keep him awake any longer, your pal Jerry Peters would bite

his toes. That's a brave ant, that Jerry. He might easy have got squashed. But he insisted on helping, and I guess he was the one in the end who really turned the trick."

"Well, my goodness," said Freddy, "how can I ever thank you? That was a wonderful thing to do. It's easy enough to do things for a friend in the daytime, but when you sit up after bedtime to do them, that's something different!"

"Well, if you really want to thank us," said Jinx, "there's one thing. You know our scrap drive has only a week to run. You haven't done much on it lately—Oh, I'm not blaming you. You couldn't. But we've checked up, and if we had just five hundred pounds more, we'd win the prize. Because the whole countryside has been scraped. The last time I sang,—that was over in Tushville last week—we only got wood, no iron at all. The farmers are all through, they've got all they can."

"Well, what can I do, then?" asked Freddy.

"You can figure out some scheme to get that iron deer on Mrs. Underdunk's lawn. Now wait a minute—don't tear your mittens. If we have that deer, Mr. Bean gets the prize. I know, I know—it looks impossible. But think it over for a day or so. Give Old Whibley a buzz, he might have some ideas. Gosh, Freddy, if anybody can dope out a plan, you can. We rely on you."

"We-e-ll," said Freddy, beginning to feel reliable, "I'll try."

Outside the courthouse a crowd was waiting, and when Freddy appeared they set up a cheer. He bowed and smiled, and then a little girl came forward and curtsied and handed him a bouquet of hothouse flowers. Freddy was so touched that he couldn't speak, but he kissed the little girl. Then he got into the phaeton beside Mr. Bean, and the small animals scrambled in too, and they drove off home.

Chapter 12

After the successful outcome of the trial, Freddy felt that his troubles were over. But both Mr. Dimsey and the sheriff warned him that he was still in danger. "Mrs. Underdunk and Herb Garble want to run this town," said Mr. Dimsey. "And with the *Guardian* behind them, they could do it, if it wasn't for the *Bean Home News*. There wasn't ever anybody to speak up against 'em before. They won't rest easy until they've put you and me out of business."

"Well then," said Freddy, "the thing to do is put the *Guardian* out of business first."

"That's not so easy," said the editor. "Of course, it's practically out of business now, for more than half the people in town have stopped taking it. But we'll have to watch our step. Mrs. Underdunk is busy with her party this week, but as soon as that's over, look out for trouble."

Freddy had heard about the party. It was to be given in honor of Senator Blunder, a relative of Mrs. Underdunk's late husband, who was coming for a short visit. He was the most distinguished guest she had ever entertained, and so she was anxious to get all the glory she could out of him, and she had invited nearly everyone in town.

Of course none of the Bean animals had been invited. But Freddy felt that he ought to go hide somewhere so that he could look on, for although Mrs. Underdunk was his enemy, the readers of the *Home News* would expect to find in its pages some description of such a gay social event. Some of the other animals thought they'd like to get a look at the party too.

"I haven't ever attended a real high-up society affair," said Mrs. Wiggins. "I guess it's a good thing. I'm too big and clumsy to take much ease in one of those little gilt chairs, and I'm kind of short on fancy talk, too. But I'd like to go look on."

So on the night of the party, every bush in the grounds of the Underdunk mansion had one or two animals behind it. It was easy to see what was going on, for it was a warm evening, and the long French windows of the drawing room were wide open. For a time the guests stood about in groups, and Freddy, peeking out through a syringa bush with Jinx and Mrs. Wiggins, saw many old friends—though it was sometimes hard to recognize them with their company manners and their best clothes on. Then an orchestra, which was hidden behind potted palms at one end of the room, struck up a waltz, and soon the cream of Centerboro society were whirling sedately about the room in time to the music.

They saw Mr. Weezer dancing with Miss Biles, and Judge Willey footing it with

Miss Halsey, and then the sheriff flashed by with his arm about old Mrs. Peppercorn's waist. The sheriff had on a dress suit with his star pinned to the lapel, and he had waxed the ends of his mustache so that they stood up like tusks on each side of his nose, and at every turn old Mrs. Peppercorn was whirled right off her feet. But she didn't seem to mind. And then they saw Mrs. Underdunk sweep majestically past in the arms of Senator Blunder. Mrs. Underdunk glittered with diamonds as she revolved, and she was a head taller than her partner, who was a short heavy man with a noble brow over which a thick lock of iron gray hair fell in a statesmanlike sweep. The senator was doing a rather tricky step which Mrs. Underdunk seemed to have some trouble in following, and as they came around again they stopped dancing and walked out through the window.

"I can teach you the step better out here," said the senator in his booming voice. "It is the latest thing in Washington." And he began solemnly capering in front of her. "Two to the left, kick, two to the right—"

But at that point Mrs. Wiggins began to laugh. She didn't laugh out loud, but she shook so hard that the syringa bush rocked and quivered.

"Senator!" Mrs. Underdunk clutched her escort's arm. "There's somebody behind that bush!"

The senator stepped quickly behind her and standing on tiptoe peered over her shoulder. "Ha!" he exclaimed. "So there is! But fear nothing, madam. We statesmen go always in peril of our political enemies. I shall know how to cope with the rascals. But first—" and he seized her arm and pulled her towards the house, "—first let me conduct you to a place of safety."

But Mrs. Underdunk shook him off. "Please go in, senator," she said, "and send my brother to me."

"A Blunder, madam," said the senator backing towards the window, "never retreats. Too often have we bearded the assassin's knife, to quail at the trembling of a bush. And yet," he said, as the bush trembled again, "should I be struck down, into what hands would fall the reins of the ship of state? Alas, madam, I must abandon you, in the interests of our country. I will call your brother." And he disappeared into the house.

"I like Charles's line of talk better," whispered Jinx. "What'll we do, Freddy?"

But before Freddy could make up his mind, Mr. Garble appeared. Mrs. Underdunk pointed out the bush and he walked towards it. "Come out of there," he said.

If the animals had bolted and run for it, they could certainly have got away. But Mr. Garble would chase them; he would scare up other animals behind every bush

they passed, and even if he didn't catch any of them, he would know that they were the Bean animals. And that would mean trouble for Mr. Bean.

So Freddy decided to take a chance. "Keep under cover," he whispered, and stepped out from behind the bush.

"Great Jumping Jerusha!" shouted Mr. Garble. "You!" And he made a rush for the pig.

But Freddy knew what he had to do. He dashed at Mr. Garble, darting between his legs and upsetting him, and then ran down along the house towards the back.

As he turned the corner he found himself in a sort of paved court. To his left was the house, to his right, the garage, and in front was a low glassed greenhouse or conservatory. The chauffeur was sitting in the garage door, and jumped up as Freddy rounded the corner of the house. The conservatory door was open, and Freddy darted in.

It was steamy-warm in the conservatory, and smelt nice. But you do not stop to smell flowers when you are fleeing for your life. Freddy looked around. There were only two doors—the one that he had come through, and one at the far end, which was ajar. He made for the latter, pushed through it, and found that he was in a back hall surrounded by closed doors. From behind the first came voices and a clatter of dishes. He tried the second, found a stairway, went up it, then along a hallway at the end of which was a door. No light came through the keyhole, and Freddy went in. Footsteps were coming up the stairs, and the chauffeur's voice said: "He must have gone into one of the rooms."

Freddy was so scared that his tail had lost its curl. But Freddy himself had not lost his presence of mind. He closed the door quietly and switched on the light. On a chair was a suitcase, marked in large gold letters: SENATOR A. P. BLUNDER. On the bed was a long black coat, and a wide brimmed black hat. Freddy quietly put them on, then sat down at a little desk with his back to the door. He had barely done this when someone knocked.

"Who is there?" said Freddy, in a deep voice.

The door opened and Mr. Garble stuck his head in. "Sorry to bother you, Senator," he said, "but have you seen a pig anywhere around?"

"A pig!" boomed Freddy. "Sir, I am writing a speech which will shake the country. What have I to do with pigs? Go away."

"Whee!" said Freddy. "I must get out of here before he finds the real senator, and comes back up again." He listened a moment at the door, but could hear nothing, so he tiptoed out into the hall. Perhaps in his disguise he could escape by the way he had come in. And he was just starting down the back stairs when he heard

the siren down at the fire house begin to blow.

When the siren blew for a fire it blew just short blasts, but now it went up the scale to its highest note and just stayed there, so Freddy knew it was blowing for a blackout. Downstairs the music stopped, and he heard someone shout: "Lights out! Everyone just sit down until the blackout is over!" And then the lights all over the house went out at once.

He was starting down the back stairs, but somewhere below him he heard Mr. Garble's voice. It would probably be safer to go down the front way. He would have to get through the crowd in the drawing room, but he was sure that no one would be looking for him there. And the blackout would last for at least twenty minutes.

He felt his way cautiously to the front stairs, and down them. There was a good deal of confusion in the hall and the drawing room. Word had got around that Mr. Garble had been chasing a burglar and some of the more timid guests had become frightened in the darkness, and were getting hysterical, and only a few of them had sat down quietly; the rest were rushing around, apparently trying to get out. As Freddy hesitated at the foot of the stairs someone bumped into him, then a hand touched his shoulder, and Mrs. Underdunk's voice said: "Is that you, Senator?"

"Yes, madam," said Freddy in a deep voice.

"Goodness," she said, "I'm glad I found you. We've got to keep these people quiet. They're getting very excited. Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, as there was a crash and a chorus of screams at the far end of the drawing room, "there goes Grandfather Underdunk's marble bust! Say something to them, Senator. I'm sure your voice will calm them."

I guess it was at this moment that Freddy's big idea came to him, although he didn't yet know quite how to work it out. "Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted. "Quiet, please! Our gracious hostess asks that you all remain quietly where you are, and listen to an important announcement . . ."

The crowd indeed became quieter, but as Freddy hesitated, they began moving around again.

"Oh, be quick," said Mrs. Underdunk. "Can't you think of anything to say?"

"Blunder is never at a loss for words," said Freddy. "But there is no use just telling them not to be frightened. We must take their minds off it. We must make an announcement—I have it! We will announce that you are making a generous gift of some kind to the war effort. They'll applaud, and then they'll forget all about being frightened."

"Well—" said Mrs. Underdunk doubtfully. "I'm not a rich woman, you know,

Senator.”

“This won’t cost you a cent,” said Freddy. And raising his voice, he shouted: “Ladies and gentlemen! Our hostess has been trying to persuade me not to make this announcement publicly. But in these troubled days, I believe that unselfish patriotism should receive its due need of praise. We cannot allow Mrs. Underdunk to conceal her good deeds, and while I appreciate her modest desire to avoid the limelight, I must insist that her generous gift be made known, to serve as an example to us all.

“I have to announce, ladies and gentlemen, that Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk is contributing to the scrap metal drive one of her most cherished possessions, a work of art which any museum would give its right wing to possess, the cast iron deer which stands on her lawn.”

The applause drowned Freddy’s voice.

“Oh, Senator!” shouted Mrs. Underdunk. “How could you! That deer was poor Humphrey’s wedding gift to me!”

“I think poor—er, Humphrey would have wished you to dispose of it in this way,” said Freddy. “And listen to them!” For through the continuing applause came cries of “Speech! Speech from Mrs. Underdunk!”

“Tell them,” said Freddy quickly, “that you can’t of course move it yourself, and that anyone can take it away who will turn it into the scrap drive.” And he slipped away from her and began squeezing through the crowd to the open windows.

Freddy’s idea had been a good one. He felt sure that Mrs. Underdunk would not be able to go back on her offer, even though she had not made it herself. She would certainly find out that the senator had not made it either. But it had been made publicly, and she was already receiving so much praise and such hearty congratulations for her generosity, that she would certainly not raise any objections now. Indeed, as he edged towards the window, he heard her make the announcement he had suggested to her. “It is a very heavy piece of iron,” she said, “but I do hope that someone here will arrange to cart it away, so that it can be put to use. I ought to say,” she went on, “that I had no intention of making a public announcement about it. It seems to me too small a sacrifice to make any fuss about. But since Senator Blunder insisted on speaking for me—”

“I beg your pardon, madam,” interrupted the senator’s voice. “I made no announcement.”

“You—what?” said Mrs. Underdunk. “But you were right here beside me.”

“No, madam. I was over here by the piano.”

“That’s right,” quavered old Mrs. Peppercorn’s voice. “He was under the piano. He just came out, and he’s right beside me now.”

Everybody started talking at once, but Freddy had at last pushed through the crowd and reached the window. And as he stepped outside, the fire siren blew the all clear, and a second later the lights went on.

“Good land, Freddy, what have you been up to?” said Mrs. Wiggins, as he joined her again behind the bush.

Freddy tugged off the senator’s coat, and dropped it with the hat on the ground. “Come on,” he said. “Jinx, round up the others and bring them down to the side gate.”

Chapter 13

From their hiding place outside the high iron fence that surrounded the Underdunk estate, the animals watched the hunt for Freddy. Mr. Garble and the chauffeur had searched the house, and now were turning the beams of their flashlights behind every bush and tree. Freddy had disappeared, but presently came back dragging a long heavy rope which he had found in Judge Willey's garage, down the street.

A flashlight beam swept along the fence and the animals all ducked. "I wish they'd go in," said Freddy. "Now's the time, while the party's still going on, to get that deer."

"Oh, if that's all you want!" said Sniffy Wilson, and got up and went to the gate. He strolled across the open lawn towards the house. Pretty soon the chauffeur said: "Mr. Garble, I think there's a skunk out here. I'm going in."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Garble. "Your orders were to search the grounds, Smith. You'd better do as Mrs. Underdunk tells you."

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur. "But my orders don't include skunks. I'm a chauffeur, not a wild animal tamer. I ain't got any ambition to bring 'em back alive; I'd rather get back alive myself."

"Oh, don't talk so much," snapped Mr. Garble. "Get on with the job."

But the chauffeur had gone into the house.

"Darned coward!" said Mr. Garble, and just then his flashlight picked up Sniffy Wilson. He stopped still, and Sniffy looked at the light a moment and then started walking towards it, as unconcerned as if he was in his own parlor. Mr. Garble dropped the flashlight and ran.

Sniffy went over to it and turned off the light. "No use wasting the battery," he said. Sniffy was always very careful of other people's things.

The animals hurried in across the lawn. But they had hardly got the rope looped around the deer's neck when Mrs. Underdunk, followed by her brother, came out on to the lawn. "Back to the hedge," whispered Freddy. "They can't see us until their eyes get used to the dark."

"It's all that wretched pig," Mrs. Underdunk was saying. "It was he that made that announcement about the deer; not the senator."

"He wants it for their scrap pile," said Mr. Garble. He peered nervously out into the darkness. "It is still there."

"And it's going to stay there," said Mrs. Underdunk. "I have no objection to giving any old iron that we have no use for, but I certainly don't intend to give up that

deer, whether the government needs it or not.”

“You shouldn’t have offered to give it up, then,” said Mr. Garble.

“How could I help myself after that announcement, and everybody praising me for being so patriotic!”

“Well,” said Mr. Garble, “they won’t praise you if you don’t give it up now.”

“You’ve got to get it, Herbert, before anybody else does,” said Mrs. Underdunk, “and hide it in the barn. You can say you sold it to the junk man. When the war’s over I can bring it out again. I’d like to *kill* that pig!”

“I *intend* to kill that pig,” said Mr. Garble.

“Well, go ahead and kill him,” said Mrs. Underdunk. “You talk a lot about it, but people are beginning to laugh at us. Even Judge Willey says now that he guesses you wouldn’t make a very good sheriff if you can’t get the best of a pig.”

“You can’t get the best of him yourself,” said Mr. Garble. “He’s got your iron deer away from you.”

“He hasn’t got it yet,” said Mrs. Underdunk, and turned and went back into the house, and after a minute Mr. Garble followed her.

“All right, animals,” said Freddy, and they rushed back to the deer. Mrs. Wiggins and her two sisters, Mrs. Wurzbarger and Mrs. Wogus, hooked the rope around their horns and the deer went over with a crash.

“We ought to have waited till the music starts again,” said Jinx. “I bet they heard that. Pull, girls! Out through the gate.”

Mrs. Underdunk had indeed heard it, for she came to the window and looked out, then turned and called: “Herbert! Herbert!”

There was a pile of small branches at one side of the lawn where someone had been trimming the trees. Freddy rushed over to it and pulled out several small ones. “Here, Hank,” he said. “You’ve got to be the deer. We’ll tie these on for antlers. No, no time to tie them. Take ’em in your mouth.”

The cows, assisted by all the smaller animals who could get their teeth on the rope, were dragging the deer out of the gate. Hank took some of the branches in his mouth and Freddy arranged them so that they did indeed seem to sprout out above the horse’s head like a pair of antlers.

“Now, hold your head up,” said Freddy. “And stand perfectly still.” He giggled. “You make a wonderful deer, Hank. You look just like that picture in the Beans’ dining room, of the *Monarch of the Glen*.”

“Looks more like the *Monarch of the Milk Wagon*,” whispered Sniffy Wilson. “Psssst! Here they are.”

Mrs. Underdunk and Mr. Garble came hurrying out on to the lawn. They

stopped, peering through the darkness at Hank.

“Why . . . it’s there!” exclaimed Mrs. Underdunk. “But when I looked out the window I was sure it had gone.”

“Well, it’s there now,” said Mr. Garble crossly. “I keep telling you: Those animals couldn’t possibly take it away.”

“But it looks—different, somehow,” she said. “It looks white, instead of brown. And—surely it never had a long tail! No deer has a tail like that. Where’s your flashlight?”

“I lost it. But why do you worry so? It’s there, whatever kind of tail it’s got. Look at it in the morning.”

“I’m going to look at it now,” said Mrs. Underdunk, and started across the lawn.

“Well, I’m not,” said Mr. Garble. “There are skunks around tonight.”

“Don’t be vulgar, Herbert,” said Mrs. Underdunk. “There are no animals of that nature in my grounds.” And she went on.

Sniffy Wilson started out from behind the bush where he and Freddy were crouching. He looked over his shoulder at the pig. “Shall I, Freddy?”

“No, no, Sniffy,” whispered Freddy. “Better not.”

“Oh, rats!” said Sniffy. “What’s the good of being a skunk anyway?” But he went out into the middle of the lawn.

Even at night it is easy to see a skunk because of the broad white stripe down his back, and as soon as Mrs. Underdunk saw Sniffy she stopped. “Shoo!” she said.

But Sniffy kept right on coming.

“Well, dear me!” said Mrs. Underdunk, and stepped to one side to go around him. But Sniffy moved to the same side and blocked her. Several times they did this, and Freddy saw that Sniffy was doing the dance step that the senator had tried to teach Mrs. Underdunk: two to the right, kick, two to the left—he began to giggle.

Up to that moment Hank had been standing perfectly motionless, and it hadn’t been easy, either, with Mrs. Underdunk and Sniffy dancing a minuet right in front of him. But when Freddy giggled, Hank broke down and laughed. And when he laughed he opened his mouth and the branches fell out of it, and then he wasn’t a deer any more, he was just an old white horse, and Mrs. Underdunk turned and ran back to the house.

“Herbert!” she cried. “Get the station wagon. They’ve got the deer!”

In three minutes the station wagon swung out of the gate with the chauffeur driving and Mr. Garble sitting beside him with a shotgun in his hands.

The cows had dragged the deer a little way down the road, and when they saw the lights of the station wagon behind them they tried to pull it off into the ditch and

out of sight. But they were overtaken before they succeeded. They dropped the rope and galloped off across the fields. And Mr. Garble got out and tied the rope to the rear bumper.

When the station wagon got back to the gate, dragging the deer behind it, it stopped, and the two men got out and tried to lift the deer into it. They heaved and tugged and panted, but it was a big deer and they could only get one end of it an inch or two off the ground.

Freddy had been watching from behind a gate post. He saw that they had left the engine running; and he knew that this would be the last chance to get the deer. He had never driven a car, but he had ridden in one often enough. “Just push a few levers around and step on the gas,” he said to himself, “and off you go. Nothing to it.” So he rushed out and made a flying leap into the driver’s seat. And then I don’t know what happened, but I guess he must have pushed the wrong levers around, for the station wagon gave a sort of jerk forward as if someone had stuck a pin in it, and let out a roar like a wounded lion. The jerk threw Freddy on the floor, and the next thing he knew the chauffeur was sitting on his head and Mr. Garble was tying his legs together with a piece of cord.

“There!” said Mr. Garble, getting up. He smiled wolfishly at Freddy. “I guess that finishes the *Bean Home News!*”

Chapter 14

Freddy stood on top of a rickety table and looked out through the iron bars of the little window. There wasn't much to see. A yard full of weeds, and a fence overhung by straggling lilac bushes, and beyond the fence, a field that sloped up to the top of a ridge beyond which, as far as Freddy was concerned, there was nothing. He didn't recognize any of it. He knew he must be within a mile or so of Centerboro, for the station wagon hadn't driven far before it had stopped, and Mr. Garble and the chauffeur had carried him down the stone steps into this cellar and untied him. Then they had got poles and pried at the deer, levering it along until it had slid down the steps after him. And then they had closed the flaps of the cellar door and he had heard them drive away.

Freddy hadn't been able to do anything in the dark, and he had very sensibly tried to sleep. But the earth floor was hard, and he had had a pretty bad night. As soon as daylight began to come through the little barred window, he got up and explored his prison. There were no stairs up into the house above him; the only ones were those down which he had come from the outside. And the door was either locked, or had had stones piled on it; he pushed with all his might but couldn't lift it. Besides himself and Mrs. Underdunk's iron deer, there was nothing in the cellar but the rickety table and a tattered easy chair. He had tried to sit in the chair, but his weight made the broken springs poke up through the upholstery, and he got up faster than he had sat down. So he pulled the table under the window and climbed on it, and looked out.

There were a number of goldfinches and warblers flying around in the lilac bushes, and Freddy thought if he could only attract their attention, he might get one of them to fly up to the Bean farm and tell his friends where he was, so they could come rescue him. They were flitting about and chasing one another and chattering at the top of their lungs, and at first they paid no attention to him. And then suddenly they all seemed to catch sight of him at the same moment, and the whole flock flew over and perched on weeds and twigs and peered at him.

Freddy stuck his nose out between the bars. "I beg your pardon," he said politely. "I wonder if you would be good enough to—"

But none of them would listen to him, for they all began chattering at once.

"What is it—an animal? Do you suppose he lives in that cellar? Isn't he *quaint*, girls? Honestly, did you ever see anything so funny!" And they laughed until they rocked back and forth on the weed stalks.

"He looks ferocious to me," said a song sparrow. "Maybe he eats birds."

At this, with a whirl of wings, the flock burst from the weed patch and took refuge in the lilacs. But in a minute or so they were back, giggling and poking fun at Freddy, until their silly chattering laughter so enraged him that he abandoned politeness and shouted at the top of his lungs: "Shut up!"

At that, they quieted down. "You don't have to lose your temper," said the sparrow.

"I'm sorry," said Freddy. "But I was simply trying to ask you a civil question—"

"Civil," he calls it!" chirped a goldfinch. "Telling us to shut up!"

Freddy apologized again. "I just wanted to find out where I am," he said.

"That may be a civil question," said the sparrow, "but it's a very silly one. You're in the cellar. Where did you think you were—on the roof?" And they all laughed again.

Freddy kept his temper as well as he could. "You don't understand," he said. "Of course I know I'm in the cellar. What I want to know is—where is this cellar?"

"That's easy," said a yellow warbler. "It's right behind you."

"You're very witty," said Freddy when the laughter at this sally had died down, "but I need help, and I'm willing to pay for it. Listen. Do any of you know where a farm is that is owned by Mr. William Bean?"

"Is he one of the Boston Beans?" said the warbler, and nearly fell off his mullein stalk in appreciation of his own wit.

"He has a farm a few miles northwest of Centerboro," said Freddy. "And if one of you would fly up there—it can't be far—and tell his animals—"

But again the birds interrupted him. "Well, of all the nerve! Telling us to shut up and then asking us to do him a favor! Why doesn't he run his own errands—not ask perfect strangers?" They were as noisily indignant as they had been noisily derisive a minute earlier.

And then as Freddy was about to make the final effort, they all went up into the air with a rush, swooped over the lilacs and vanished. And Freddy heard the hum of a car approaching.

A few minutes later Mr. Garble appeared in front of the window. He looked at Freddy with a satisfied smile and rubbed his hands. "Well, pig," he said. "I guess you're sorry now you tried to buck Herbert Garble, eh? I guess you wish you'd stayed on your farm where you belong."

Freddy didn't say anything. He jumped down from the table and went over into a dark corner of the cellar where Mr. Garble couldn't see him. After a minute he heard the stones being rolled off the cellar door, and then the door was lifted up and the chauffeur began backing down the steps, tugging a big crate after him.

"I'll stand guard up here with the gun, Smith," said Mr. Garble's voice. "As soon as you've caught him, I'll come down and we'll put him in the crate."

"O. K.," said the chauffeur. "Watch out he don't slip past you." He knocked off one end of the crate, which was nailed on lightly, then laid down his hammer and started for the pig.

Freddy knew that he didn't have much chance to escape, but he was not going to be caught without putting up a fight. He dove for the chauffeur and upset him, but the man got hold of one hind leg and was dragging him towards the crate, when suddenly he let go with a yell, stood up, and began slapping at the back of his neck with both hands. "Wasps!" he yelled. "Help! Ouch! let me out of here!" And he dashed up the stairs, almost knocking over Mr. Garble who was stationed at the top with his gun. And then the door was slammed down.

Freddy got up from the floor and looked at an express tag that was fastened to the crate. "Mr. Orville P. Garble," it read, "Twin Buttes, Montana." Another tag said: "Livestock. Rush." And a third said: "Fragile. Do not crush."

"My goodness!" said Freddy. "I wonder—" And then he saw a wasp sitting on the crate. "Jacob! How'd you get here?"

"Hi, Freddy," said the wasp. "Nice little place you've got here. Oh, the gang sent me down to keep an eye on old Garble, and see if I could find out where you were. I hitched a ride on the station wagon. Now I'll go back and tell 'em, so they can come rescue you."

"Well, I was never so glad to see anybody in my life," said Freddy. "They're going to ship me off to Montana in that crate. I'd never get back from there. But where is this place, anyway? I haven't any idea where I am."

"You're on the old Cassoway farm, on the hill east of Centerboro. They know nobody would ever look for you here, because it has been abandoned so long everybody's forgotten about it. They're going to send you to Garble's uncle. He has a stock farm out in Montana. Garble wanted to shoot you, but Mrs. Underdunk thought this was a better plan. But I spiked that."

"You sure did," said Freddy. "You must have jabbed that chauffeur good."

Jacob shook his head. "I don't like this hit and run stuff," he said. "It's never very satisfactory. I like to settle down easy and pick out a good tender spot—the back of the neck, for preference—and then, zip! give 'em the works. It's an art, Freddy. It's like—well, it's like you writing one of your poems. You do a good careful job and then folks remember it. A poem by Freddy, a sting by Jacob—well, it makes an impression. But I mustn't stay here talking shop. I must get back and tell the animals where you are."

“Maybe you ought to stay,” said the pig. “If they come back again—”

“Nobody’s going to come back into a cellar where there are wasps. It’ll take ’em some time to figure out a way of getting you into the crate without being stung. Listen, there they go now.” And indeed the station wagon had started up, and was now driving away.

“I don’t see how anybody can rescue me,” said Freddy. “Not with Mr. Garble around with a gun. And don’t let them tell Mr. Bean, if he hasn’t missed me yet. I don’t think he ought to be mixed up in it. Oh dear, today’s Friday and I ought to be setting type with Mr. Dimsey. I’m afraid the *Bean Home News* won’t come out tomorrow. Look, Jacob, get hold of Rabbit No. 23, and have him bring me some paper and a pencil. He can get through all right without being seen. The bigger animals might get caught. And then you come back too, with some of your family, just in case Mr. Garble tries to come down here again.”

Jacob had been polishing his sting on the edge of the crate. Now he put it away and nodded his head. “O. K., Freddy,” he said. “Don’t you worry. We’ll get you out of here if we have to stick old Garble so full of stings he looks like a porcupine.” Then he took off, circled the cellar once, and shot out through the window.

Freddy knew that it wouldn’t take Jacob more than fifteen minutes to reach the farm, but he was sure that it would take the rabbit a couple of hours to cover the same distance. No. 23 had held the record for the County Inter-farm Crosscountry Run for Quadrupeds for three years in succession, but he would have to keep off the main roads and detour around Centerboro, and Freddy was surprised when, less than an hour later, the rabbit appeared at the window.

“Old Whibley brought me,” he said, in answer to Freddy’s question. “He thought he could get me here quicker. And he did, all right. Boy, can he fly!”

Freddy thought it was pretty nice of the owl, and said so.

“You can save your thanks,” said Old Whibley, hopping up to the window. “Move aside, pig, and let me in. This light hurts my eyes.” He squeezed between the bars and perched on the chair, in the darkest corner of the cellar. “Didn’t do it for you. Don’t like stupid people. Never did.”

“Well, I suppose it was stupid of me to get caught,” said Freddy, “but—”

“You can leave out the ‘but,’” interrupted the owl. “It’s always a waste of time explaining to people that you’re not as big a fool as they think you are.”

“Look,” said Freddy crossly. “If you just came here to bawl me out, why don’t you go back again? I can get along without that kind of help.”

The owl gave a hooting laugh. “That’s better!” he said. “Quit making excuses and get to work. You know what’s happened? Jacob’s been checking up on Garble.”

They're coming after you tonight, with head nets and gloves and high boots, so the wasps can't sting them. In the meantime the chauffeur's patrolling the entrance to this farm with a gun. Any animal that comes across to rescue you will be driven off. That's why no one told Mr. Bean you were locked up. They were afraid he might try to rescue you and get shot."

"I don't want him to rescue me, and I don't want the animals to, either," said Freddy. "I've got a better idea."

"Your newspaper?"

"Yes."

"I wondered if you'd think of that," said Whibley. "Well, write your stuff, I'm going to sleep."

Freddy ordered No. 23 to hide in the bushes and report if anyone approached the house, and then he sat down with his pencil and paper. "The attempts of Mr. Herbert Garble to put the *Bean Home News* out of business," he wrote, "have culminated in an act so dastardly, that we believe that the good people of Centerboro will not only wish to know about it, we are confident that they will call upon the sheriff and the state police to see that justice is done. Although the editor of this paper was cleared in open court of all charges against him, Mr. Garble, aided by one Smith, a chauffeur employed by Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk, has kidnapped him and imprisoned him in the cellar of the old Cassoway house, on the hill above the village. This is a clear case of kidnapping, theft, and conspiracy in restraint of trade. We call upon all law-abiding citizens to come to the rescue before the criminals have time to carry out their wicked and inhuman plan of depriving the editor of this paper permanently of the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, certified to him by the Constitution of the United States. Though a pig, he has his privileges. Though a pig, he is a good American. Though a pig, he deserves your help. Nay, he demands it. The proof of his words will be found at the Cassoway farm. Send the police there, at once!"

When he had finished he called No. 23. "Take this to Mr. Dimsey," he said, "and tell him to get out an extra as soon as he can set it up in type. Tell him to see that everybody in town gets a copy this afternoon."

Old Whibley flew over to the window. "Give it to me," he said, and snatching the paper, squeezed through the bars and flew off towards town.

Freddy sent 23 back to his post, and sat down to wait. By and by Jacob came back with half a dozen of his cousins. They lined up on the windowsill, and every little while one or two of them would make a short reconnaissance flight. For a time they had nothing to report beyond the presence of Smith, who was sitting under a

tree down the road with his gun. But then one of them, who had circled off to the north, on the side away from Centerboro, brought word that a number of animals were working their way up the far side of the hill under cover of the woods. So Jacob went out to see.

“It’s the Bean animals,” he said when he came back. “They were going to try a rescue, but I talked to Mrs. Wiggins and told her there wasn’t a chance of breaking into this cellar, and some of ’em would get shot. Now they’re going to take up positions as close to the house as they can get. Then when Garble comes and opens the cellar door, they’ll try a rush.”

“Tell ’em to be careful,” said Freddy. “If there’s a chance, I’ll give a loud squeal as a signal. But I hope that won’t be necessary.”

A little after noon, however, Mrs. Wiggins herself came boldly up the hill and sat down in front of the window. “I can’t help it, Freddy,” she said. “I had to come up and see with my own eyes that you were all right, Garble or no Garble. And I know that when you’re in trouble it is good to see a friend’s face—even if it’s only a cow’s. I was going to smuggle a file in to you, hidden in a loaf of bread, the way they do in stories about people escaping from prisons, but Mrs. Bean doesn’t bake until tomorrow so I couldn’t get the bread. It’s too bad, because you could have filed through those bars and got out.”

“I’m afraid it would take several days to file the bars,” said Freddy. “But I don’t quite see . . . well, I mean you could have brought the file anyway, couldn’t you?”

“Land sakes, what a ninny I am! Of course I could! And just because I couldn’t get the bread I didn’t even bring it! Well I *am* provoked with myself.”

Freddy consoled her as well as he could, and presently she went back down.

The afternoon dragged slowly on. “By now,” Freddy thought, “Mr. Dimsey will be printing the extra . . . By now he will be giving it to people all over town. Oh, I hope he hurries!”

And then about four o’clock, Jacob called down and lit on an iron bar by Freddy’s nose. “They’re coming for you. Earlier than they intended to. That chauffeur got hold of one of the extras, and they want to sneak you out before anybody comes to rescue you.” And Freddy heard the hum of the station wagon coming up the road.

This time, Jacob and his relatives had no chance to do anything artistic in the way of stinging. They whirled and dove, they lit and prodded for openings, but Mr. Garble and the chauffeur wore heavy gauntlets and high boots, and their heads and necks were protected with nets such as bee keepers wear, and the wasps couldn’t do a thing. Freddy fought and struggled, but he was seized and bundled into the

crate. Then the side was nailed on, and the two men started to carry it up the stairs.

“When they get me to the top, I’ll give the signal,” Freddy thought.

But before they reached the top there was a humming outside, and the humming grew to a roar, and as the crate was slid out on the grass, Freddy saw through its bars two troopers on motorcycles sweep in a long curve into the weed-grown barnyard, and behind them, a dozen cars. The troopers jumped off their motorcycles, and the people piled out of the cars and rushed over and surrounded the kidnapers.

Nearly all of them, Freddy saw, had copies of a single sheet newspaper in their hands, and he saw the big black letters: “Extra! Well-known Editor Kidnapped.” Among them were nearly all the people he knew in town: Mr. Dimsey and the sheriff and Judge Willey and Mr. Muszkiski and Mr. Weezer and old Mrs. Peppercorn and a dozen others. And they were all shouting angrily and talking at once.

Mr. Garble and the chauffeur might have come in for some rough handling, but Judge Willey stepped in front of them. “Quiet, everybody!” he said. Then he turned to Mr. Garble. “What are you doing in that ridiculous disguise, Herbert? Take off that veil.”

“It isn’t a veil,” said Mr. Garble, pulling it off. “It’s a head net.”

“Well, if you called it your new Easter bonnet it would still look very silly,” said the judge.

“I told you we’d get in trouble, doing this, Mr. Garble,” said the chauffeur, who looked as if he was going to cry.

“Oh, shut up,” replied Mr. Garble. “We’ve got a perfect right to get rid of this pig. He’s Centerboro’s public enemy number one.”

“Let’s hear the law, judge,” said the sheriff. “Just looks to me as if Herb, here, had stolen Mr. Bean’s pig.”

And somebody on the outskirts of the crowd began to sing:

*“Herb, Herb, the Garble’s son
Stole a pig and away he run.”*

“Another interruption of that kind,” said the judge severely, “and I will have this barnyard cleared. There are several laws bearing on this case,” he went on. “First, as the sheriff has so ably suggested, there is a law against stealing. Under that law I now direct the sheriff to arrest Herbert Garble and this chauffeur for the theft of Mr. Bean’s pig.”

“Oh, come, judge,” said Mr. Garble. “According to the new Centerboro law, any animal unaccompanied by his owner becomes the property of the town. He isn’t

Mr. Bean's pig; he's the town's pig."

"In that case," said Judge Willey, "you are stealing him from the town, and I accordingly direct the sheriff to arrest you over again for the theft of the town's pig."

"This hurts me more than it does you, Herb," said the sheriff with a grin, as he snapped a pair of handcuffs on Mr. Garble's wrists.

"Furthermore," went on the judge, "there is a law against interfering with the freedom of the press, and another law against kidnapping, and another law against conspiracy in restraint of trade, and my goodness, there must be a dozen other laws you have broken in trying to get this pig out of the country."

"Haven't done anything of the kind," broke in Mr. Garble angrily. "I wasn't really going to ship him out of the country. I was just trying to scare him so he'd behave."

"There's a law against scaring people, too," said the judge.

Some of the others had been prying off the front of the crate, and now Freddy came out. "Excuse me, judge, but may I make a suggestion?"

"No," said the judge. "Since you are unaccompanied by your owner, you are the property of the town, and I direct the sheriff to take charge of you until the town decides what is to be done with you."

There was an angry murmur among Freddy's friends at this, but the judge was firm. "That's the law," he said.

"Well, if that's so," said Freddy, "there's another animal down in that cellar and the owner isn't here either. I think the town should take charge of it too."

"He means the iron deer," said Mr. Dimsey, who was peering down the cellar stairs. He and some of the others went down and pulled it up onto the grass.

"That isn't an animal," protested Mr. Garble. "It's just a piece of iron and it belongs to my sister, Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk. You'll leave it alone if you know what's good for you."

"The law is no respecter of persons," said the judge.

"I guess it's no respecter of the facts," said Mr. Garble.

"Come, come, no impertinence," said the judge. "However, I will interpret the law to you. The law merely says: No animal. It does not say what the animal shall be made of. A wooden animal, an iron animal, a flesh and blood animal, they are all the same in the eyes of the law, unless otherwise distinguished. This animal is not accompanied by its owner and is therefore the property of the town, and I direct the sheriff to take charge of it. Sheriff, do your duty."

"Guess I'll have to take you along, Freddy," said the sheriff. "Come on, Herb, and you too, Smith."

Mr. Garble glared at Freddy. “Anyhow, pig, you won’t get off this time when you come to trial.”

“He will not be tried again,” said the judge. “It is the law that nobody can be tried twice for the same crime.”

At that moment a buggy came dashing into the barnyard, drawn by Hank, and Mr. Bean jumped out. “What’s going on here?” he demanded, pushing through the crowd.

The judge explained. “And as you are the pig’s owner,” he concluded, “he is no longer unaccompanied, and I accordingly direct the sheriff to release him.”

Everybody cheered at that, and Freddy said: “There’s just one thing, Judge Willey. I don’t specially want to have Mr. Garble sent to jail or anything like that. If he’ll just stop interfering with me—that’s all I want.”

“Oh, don’t be so noble,” said a deep hooting voice, and everybody looked up to see Old Whibley sitting on the edge of the roof and blinking at them. “Your Honor,” he continued, turning his large yellow eyes on the judge, “this pig, though a good deal of a fool, is still my client. May I make a suggestion which will save time and trouble, not only for the honorable court, but for everybody concerned?”

The judge nodded. “Your legal talents, my respected colleague,” he said, “are held in too high esteem for me to wish to deprive either myself or these good people of the opportunity of hearing them displayed. Pray continue.”

“I thank Your Honor,” said the owl. “It will not, I think, be necessary, for me to review facts which are well known to all present. Mr. Garble says that in sending this pig out of the country he was trying to do a public service. That is not true. He was trying to get rid of a business rival. He was trying to get rid of the *Bean Home News*. Now the fair way to get rid of the *Home News* would be to make his own newspaper better, so that people would want to read it. Why, Your Honor, what would it be like in Centerboro if all the grocers and butchers and doctors started kidnapping and shooting each other in order to get each other’s business?”

“Might be rather fun for a while,” said the judge absently, then he pulled himself up. “No, I quite see what you mean. Continue.”

“Well, Your Honor,” went on the owl, “I suggest that the fairest settlement of this case would be to release Mr. Garble, but only on condition that he and Mrs. Underdunk return the *Guardian* printing press to Mr. Dimsey and promise to stop persecuting my client.”

“I won’t agree to that,” shouted Mr. Garble. “And neither will Mrs. Underdunk.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Judge Willey. “I think she will. Rather than have the disgrace of a brother in jail for stealing a pig—yes, I think she will.” He looked up at

Old Whibley. "You have stated the case very clearly, my learned friend," he said, "and this court rules accordingly. Have you any further suggestions?"

"Only one more," said the owl. "Regarding this iron deer, which is now the property of the town. My client has suffered both bodily discomfort and mental anguish during his unjust imprisonment. He would have a right to sue Mr. Garble for heavy damages. But Your Honor, he is a poet and a patriot. As a poet, he does not want to collect money for the suffering he has undergone. But as a patriot, he does want to make a success of the scrap drive which ends, I believe, tomorrow. Mrs. Underdunk offered this iron deer publicly to anyone who would cart it away. It was in attempting to do so that my client was captured. I suggest therefore that he be permitted to continue what he had set out to do, that he be allowed to add it to his own scrap pile."

"An excellent suggestion," said the judge. He looked around. "Mr. Weeser, what do you say? Dr. Winterpool?" They both nodded. "Very well. The town board has voted to agree."

"I thank Your Honor," said Old Whibley. "And now, if you will excuse me, I have business elsewhere." And he spread his wings and floated off in the direction of his home.

"Dear me," said the judge, "a most able advocate. I wonder if this other business he speaks of is of a legal nature."

"No," said Freddy. "He's just going back home and go to sleep."

"A most extraordinary knowledge of the law," said the judge thoughtfully. "I hope I shall be able to consult with him more frequently in the future."

"What about my pig, judge?" put in Mr. Bean.

"Oh, he's free to go," said the judge. "But good gracious, who are all these other animals?" For Freddy's friends, as soon as they had seen Mr. Bean arrive, had felt that it would now be safe to come out of hiding, and they had crowded in among the people, and two of the cows were already starting to drag the iron deer back down the hill.

Freddy explained, and then went over to where Mr. Dimsey was talking to Mr. Garble and the sheriff. Mr. Garble was sullen but he had at last agreed to the terms offered him.

"I've promised to pay back the money I owe Mrs. Underdunk, Freddy," said Mr. Dimsey, "in return for the press. And now you and I can run the *Guardian* together. '*Centerboro Guardian & Bean Home News*. Freddy & Dimsey, Props.' Eh? And if we can't reelect the sheriff this fall, we're no good. Even the folks that wanted to stand well with Mrs. Underdunk could hardly vote for a man that would

steal a pig.”

The chauffeur had brought the station wagon up, and Mr. Garble was getting in. A few wasps were buzzing about them, but wasps seldom bother people in the open air, and they weren't paying much attention. But as Freddy looked, he saw one wasp light on the back of Mr. Garble's collar. It walked up to Mr. Garble's hair, then it turned and walked half way back to the collar, and after a moment's hesitation it lifted up on its hind legs and deliberately plunged in its sting. Another wasp had evidently applied the same treatment to the chauffeur at the same moment, for there were two loud yells, and the station wagon went bounding and skidding out of the barnyard.

“Well, for goodness sake!” said Mr. Dimsey. “I don't see what they've got to be so happy about.”

Chapter 15

The animals dragged the deer home right through the main street of Centerboro, and almost the whole town turned out to cheer and congratulate them. Weighing the deer when they finally got it home, was quite a job. They got it on one end of the plank all right, and then Mrs. Wurzburger and Mrs. Wogus got on the other end, and as many of the smaller animals as could stand under the cows got on, and at last Mr. Bean got up and sat on Mrs. Wiggins' back. The deer began to go up off the ground, and then there was a sharp crack, the plank broke, and Mr. Bean and the animals went down into a struggling heap. The other animals sorted themselves out and got up slowly, but Mr. Bean and Mrs. Wiggins remained on the ground. They sat there and just looked at each other, and then the cow began to laugh.

When Mrs. Wiggins laughed you could hear her halfway to Centerboro. You'd have thought somebody was tickling a giant. And pretty soon Mr. Bean began to laugh too. They sat there just looking at each other and laughing, and the animals, who had never heard Mr. Bean laugh before, stared and stared. And then they began.

When Mrs. Wiggins had started laughing, Mrs. Bean hadn't even looked up from her work in the kitchen, because she had heard that sound often enough. But when Mr. Bean started, it was a sound the like of which she had never heard before in her life, and she ran to the door.

"Good grief, Mr. B.," she called, "what ails you? You sound like an old rusty gate."

Mr. Bean stopped laughing and got up, and his expression might have been a little sheepish if anybody could have seen it.

"I was taking a cake out of the oven," said Mrs. Bean, "and when you made that noise it just fell flat."

"What's the harm?" said Mr. Bean. "Cakes are better that way; got more body to 'em."

Mrs. Bean smiled and went back in the house.

"Got to get the chores done," said Mr. Bean, and went off to the barn. But every now and then as he worked he kept making strange fizzing noises in his beard, and the animals decided he was still laughing.

"Got started and can't stop," said Mrs. Wogus. "But how he holds it in, I can't see. Land of love, if I tried to hold in when I wanted to laugh, I'd burst wide open."

Two days later the heap of scrap iron was hauled away, and then the next day the sheriff came out and presented Mr. Bean with the pennant and the box of cigars.

For the deer had won the prize for the Bean farm, whose pile was just ten pounds heavier than the next highest contestant, Zenas Witherspoon, whose farm was over the hill. Mr. Bean didn't put the pennant on the house; he said the animals had won it, so he put up a little flagpole on the gable end of the barn, and the animals were pretty proud when they saw the blue pennant with its white S flying gaily in the breeze.

Late one afternoon Freddy was busy in his study. He was writing a poem for the *Guardian & Bean Home News*, and Jerry Peters was helping him. It went this way:

*“Little sparrow, wren or crow,
Little singing vireo,
Little robin on a twig,
Don't you wish you were a pig?*

*You can fly among the trees,
Chase the buzzing bumblebees;
You can swoop about the sky,
Very low or very high.*

*Such a life is very fine,
But it's not as nice as mine.
Don't you sometimes wish that you
Had four legs instead of two?*

*You have bugs and things to eat;
I am fed on proper meat.
You must live—”*

“Hey, Freddy,” said Jerry, “don't you ever write about anything but yourself?”

“H'm,” said Freddy. “I don't know why it is that almost every poem I write, no matter what I start with, does seem to be mostly about me.”

“Well, I know,” said Jerry. “It's because you're stuck on yourself.”

“I don't think that's a very nice thing to say,” said Freddy. “I write about myself because—well, I know more about myself than anything else.” He thought a minute. “I'll try another and keep myself out of it. Let's see—

*“Under the spreading maple tree
The Bean farm scrap pile stands.
Indeed, a mighty pile to see
Of wheels and frying pans,
Of stoves and horseshoes, nails and bolts,
Of springs and iron bands.*

*Week in, week out, from morn to night
You see the scrap pile grow.
One brings an iron bed, one a sledge,
One brings a rusty hoe.
And the pig, he weighs them carefully
When the evening sun is low.”*

“There you are in it again,” said Jerry.

“Isn’t that funny!” said Freddy. “Let’s see . . .”

*“The shades of night were falling fast
When up through Centerboro passed
A pig, who bore ’mid shouts and cheers,
A banner on which this appears:*

The Bean Home News.

“No, there I am again. Well, by gracious, I’m going to get one that I don’t come into.

*“Oh, the bulldog on the bank,
And the bulfinch on the twig;
The bulldog called the bulfinch
A green old water—”*

I guess it was a good thing that somebody called him at that minute, for he was certainly just about to come into that verse, too. He and Jerry went to the door of the pigpen to see a long black car drawn up in the barnyard, and Mrs. Bean talking to someone on the back porch. She beckoned to him, and he ran over, to find that the arrival was Mrs. Underdunk.

“Here is Freddy, Mrs. Underdunk,” said Mrs. Bean.

“Yes, I see,” said Mrs. Underdunk, and she looked at Freddy but didn’t say anything more. Mrs. Bean smiled at the pig and turned and went into the house.

“Don’t let her put anything over, now, Freddy,” Jerry cautioned him. The ant was

sitting on the tip of the pig's ear.

"You—you wanted to see me, ma'am?" asked Freddy.

"Yes. I have come to tell you that you need not be afraid that any member of my family will interfere with you again. I have learned what happened at the Cassoway farm. I find that I am indebted to you, since it was at your suggestion that my brother was not arrested. So you have nothing to fear from us in the future."

"Why, thank you," said Freddy. "That is very fair-minded of you."

"No, it is not," said Mrs. Underdunk stiffly. "I am not a fair-minded woman. It is simply that I dislike being indebted to a—to a pig."

"I don't think anybody likes being indebted to anybody else," said Freddy. "But I still think you're fair-minded. Because you just said you weren't, and that shows that you *are*."

"I have said that I'm *not*, and if that shows anything, it *shows* that I'm not," said Mrs. Underdunk firmly. "Furthermore, I am not accustomed to having my statements questioned."

"Oh, dear," said Freddy; "I'm not questioning your statement, honestly. But look, Mrs. Underdunk. Some statements mean just the opposite of what they say. Suppose I say that I never tell the truth. Well, if that is true, then I always lie. But if I always lie, then I'm lying when I say I never tell the truth. So my statement really means that I am truthful."

But Mrs. Underdunk was not entertained by this notion. "I daresay," she said coldly. "However, it is not necessary to apologize to me for your untruthfulness."

"You misunderstand me," said Freddy. "I'm not apologizing for anything. I was just—oh, well, never mind."

There seemed to be nothing further to say, but Mrs. Underdunk did not go. She appeared to have something on her mind. And finally she said: "I came out to see you today partly at Senator Blunder's request. He is anxious to meet you, and—well, he has asked me to invite you to dinner. Tonight, if it is convenient."

Freddy saw that she was greatly embarrassed at having to invite a pig to dinner, and he thought maybe he ought to be angry. But he was pretty kind-hearted, and when people were embarrassed he was always sorry for them, even if they were enemies. So he thanked her in a dignified way and said he was sorry he wouldn't be able to come.

"The senator will be disappointed," said Mrs. Underdunk, but she looked relieved.

"I don't see why he wants to meet me," said Freddy.

Mrs. Underdunk hesitated a moment, then she said: "Perhaps he had better tell

you that.” She turned and beckoned towards her car, and the senator himself got out and came over to the porch.

“Ah, my young friend,” he said cordially. “A great pleasure to meet you. A great piece of work you did the other night, getting around our good friend Mrs. Underdunk and making her give up her iron deer.” He laughed a deep, well-oiled laugh. “Well, well, I am glad to see that there are no hard feelings between you. Everything all pleasant now, eh? And you’re coming to dinner, I hope? I think it will be to your advantage.”

“Well,” said Freddy, “I’m afraid—”

“Wait!” said the senator. “Don’t decide till you’ve heard more. You see, I am planning to run for governor next year, and I’d like to have you with me. I’d like the support of your newspaper, of course, but there’s more than that. You’ve the makings of a good politician. I could offer you a good position.”

“I couldn’t support you in the campaign,” said Freddy. “There won’t be any politics in my newspaper; Mr. Bean doesn’t approve of it.”

“It seems to me you have had nothing but politics in it,” said the senator. “No doubt that could be arranged. But I think very highly of your ability, and—well, I might as well tell you now—I might even consider you for a position on my staff.”

“My goodness!” said Freddy. He saw himself, sitting behind a large mahogany desk in the state capitol in Albany, pressing buttons for subordinates at whom he barked a string of crisp orders, and no nonsense, either! He would have a uniform—dignified, not too fancy; a blue uniform with epaulettes and a sword and a medal or two; with perhaps just a touch of red. Major Freddy, of the governor’s staff! And at banquets, he would sit at the governor’s right . . .

But this vision was interfered with by Jerry, who was pouring excited advice into Freddy’s ear. “The senator’s playing you for an easy mark. He just wants you to print nice things about him in your paper. You don’t think he’d really put a pig on his staff, do you?”

But Freddy didn’t stop to think whether he would or not. All his thoughts were taken up with the glittering picture of himself as Major Freddy. Perhaps even Colonel Freddy. Standing on a platform beside the governor, facing the cheering populace. He signaled with a wave of his trotter, and at once the massed bands crashed into the national anthem. And Brigadier General Freddy led the singing . . .

The senator, who had been waiting for his answer, smiled. “Well, well, I think we can come to an agreement.” And Mrs. Underdunk said: “We’ll expect you for dinner, then.” “We can talk over the staff appointment,” added the senator.

“For goodness’ sake, Freddy,” pleaded Jerry, “don’t accept. They’re just trying

to make a fool of you.”

Freddy shook his head irritably. “I’m not as easy to make a fool of as all that,” he said crossly. “I wish you’d shut up and keep your long nose out of my affairs.” Unfortunately he forgot that the others could neither see nor hear Jerry, and he said it out loud.

Of course Jerry didn’t have a long nose, and for that matter, neither did Senator Blunder, but the senator very naturally thought Freddy was addressing him. “Well, of all the impertinence!” exclaimed Mrs. Underdunk. And the senator scowled. “Of course,” he said stiffly, “if you feel that way about it—”

It suddenly came to Freddy that he did feel that way about it. Jerry was right; they were trying to make a fool of him. “I’m sorry to have put it just that way,” he said, “for my remark wasn’t really intended for you. I thank you for your dinner invitation, but I really can’t accept. And as for the position on your staff—well, I have a position on Mr. Bean’s staff, and that’s all I want.”

Mrs. Underdunk was going down the steps, sputtering like a pack of firecrackers, and the senator followed her.

When the car had gone, Jinx came out from under the porch. “Well, pig,” he said, “you’re moving in high society these days, I must say. What’s the matter—you look as if you’d swallowed a moth ball.”

“I’ve just turned down a chance to be a brigadier general,” said Freddy.

“Pooh! Who wants to be a general? Generals can’t lie around in the shade all day, and write poetry, and take naps. Generals have to get up early in the morning—my goodness, they have to fight battles!”

“Well, I guess it wasn’t much of a chance anyway,” said Freddy. “I guess the senator just wanted me to print his speeches in the *Bean Home News*. And when it came to putting me on his staff, he’d have sneaked out of it. Even if he hadn’t, I’d have been sick of it in a week. I have a pretty nice life here on the farm. I wonder why I’m always wanting something different?”

Jinx, who didn’t enjoy discussing such questions, said he didn’t know and didn’t care. The two friends walked together up along the brook. They waved to Alice and Emma, who were doing their usual imitation of two powder puffs on the glassy surface of the duck pond, then found a cool fence corner under the shadow of the woods and stretched out in the long grass.

“Ah!” said Jinx, yawning luxuriously, “this is the life! Bet you don’t want anything different now.” And he began to purr.

“No,” said Freddy, “I don’t want a thing.”

For a little while neither of them said anything. Then Jinx raised his head and

looked curiously at the pig, who was making a sort of snoring noise. “For Pete’s sake, Freddy! I thought you’d gone to sleep, but your eyes are open. Do you have to make that racket?”

Freddy stopped it and sat up. “I was just thinking,” he said, “how nice it would be if I could purr like you do. It’s such a comfortable happy sound—”

“Well, that snorting you were doing isn’t very happy,” said the cat. “Sounds like somebody tearing up carpets.”

“I never tried it before,” said Freddy. “Maybe I need practice. Maybe you could give me purring lessons, Jinx. How about it?”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake!” said the cat exasperatedly. “Can’t you be quiet ten minutes? You just said you didn’t want anything different, and then you suddenly aren’t happy because you can’t purr. Now pipe down.”

So Freddy put his nose down and closed his eyes. But he went right on thinking. And half an hour later, when Jinx woke up from his nap, Freddy was gone. He was down at the duck pond, trying to get Emma to teach him how to quack.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Because of copyright considerations, the illustrations by Kurt Wiese (1887-1974) have been omitted from this etext.

[The end of *Freddy and the Bean Home News* by Walter Rollin Brooks]