

JERRY TODD
AND THE
FLYING
FLAPDOODLE



BY LEO EDWARDS

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Title: Jerry Todd and the Flying Flapdoodle

Date of first publication: 1934

Author: Edward Edson Lee (as Leo Edwards)

Date first posted: Aug. 20, 2018

Date last updated: Aug. 20, 2018

Faded Page eBook #20180875

This eBook was produced by: Stephen Hutcheson & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

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LEO EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF
THE JERRY TODD BOOKS
TEE POPPY OTT BOOKS
THE ANDY BLAKE BOOKS
THE TRIGGER BERG BOOKS
THE TUFFY BEAN BOOKS

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GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS : : NEW YORK

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TO
HOWARD HOADLEY
FINDLAY

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THE JERRY TODD SERIES

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JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE
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JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG
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POPPY OTT AND THE FRECKLED GOLDFISH
POPPY OTT AND THE TITTING TOTEM
POPPY OTT AND THE PRANCING PANCAKE
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ANDY BLAKE

ANDY BLAKE'S COMET COASTER

ANDY BLAKE'S SECRET SERVICE

ANDY BLAKE AND THE POT OF GOLD

JERRY TODD AND THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE

CHAPTER I HORSE FOOT

Horse Foot and I were sitting on the front porch steps.

“H-h-hey, Jerry Todd,” says he, spitting at a knot-hole in the top step, “l-l-let’s do somethin’.”

“I know what I’d like to do,” says I, with a meaning look at him.

“W-w-what?” says he cheerfully, as he took another crack at the knot-hole.

“I’d like to put an express tag on you,” says I, “and ship you over to Honolulu.”

“I d-d-don’t even k-k-know her,” says he.

“Know who?” says I, staring.

“H-h-hannah Lulu,” says he. And then he brightened. “B-b-but I know H-h-hannah Beecher,” says he. “S-s-she’s got warts. And her p-p-pa sells fish.”

The big apple! I’ve known him all my life. For he and I live beside each other in the little town of Tutter, Illinois. But this was the first time that I ever had to have him sitting around under my nose. 2

“I didn’t say Hannah Lulu,” says I. “I said Honolulu.”

“W-w-where does she live?” he quizzed.

“She don’t live,” says I. “She’s a city on the other side of the world.”

“I like k-k-k-k-k——”

He got all tangled up on that one. And finally I let out a yap at him.

“For the love of mud!” says I. “What do you think you are, anyway?—a cuckoo clock?”

For that’s what he sounded like, with his crazy k-k-k-k-k stuff.

“Go ahead and say it,” says I, “and quit rehearsing.”

“K-k—ketchup,” he finally got it all out in one hunk.

“Ketchup what?” says I, staring.

“K-k-ketchup and b-b-beans,” says he.

I figured I better get out of his reach. It was safer. So I slid over to the other side of the steps.

“You’re crazy,” says I.

And all the time I was wishing to myself that a nice friendly cyclone would come along and carry him off. Ketchup and beans! Nobody had said anything about ketchup and beans till *he* spoke up. But that’s his way. He’s liable to start talking about anything. And the way he talks! Oh, oh! K-k-ketchup and b-b-beans!

His real name is Sammy Rail. But don’t get the silly idea that he looks like a rail. Far from it. He’s built like a sofa pillow with a rag tied around it. And when he talks his red cheeks puff out like lopsided tomatoes. To hear his ma tell it, he’s the smartest thing that ever walked around on two legs. He says *this*, and he says *that*. And, of course, as soon as he says it she starts touring the neighborhood to repeat it. He’s so clever! Only *nine* too! And he says the *drollest* things!

3

But the Tutter kids don’t tell about him being droll. I guess not! They say he’s plain dumb. And we all call him Horse Foot because he acts as though it hurts him to move his feet around.

And to think that I had to put up with him for the next two

weeks! Ouch!

His little sister had the measles. And to escape them himself he had lugged his toothbrush and pajamas over to my house. He was going to stay with me, he said, till his sister got well. It was his ma's idea. And then he stopped stuttering long enough for me to applaud. But the only applause he got was a dirty look.

Mum stepped in then. She was very glad, she said, in her kindly way, to accommodate a neighbor in distress. So Horse Foot's striped pajamas were put to roost in my bedroom closet. And here I was gorging myself on his intelligent society.

4

If only I could paint some spots on him to look like fresh measles! Then he'd have to go back home and live with the rest of his measly tribe. It was something to think about, all right.

"L-l-let's do somethin'," says he again.

"Pickled pigs feet," says I, giving him some of his own crazy stuff.

"Huh?" says he, staring.

"Liver and onions," says I.

"Huh?" says he again.

"Ketchup and beans," says I.

He was beaming now.

“My p-p-pa brags on me too,” says he. “H-h-he says I’m the b-b-best spitter for my age that h-h-he ever saw. When I f-f-first started spittin’ I c-c-couldn’t spit any higher than our b-b-bay window. B-b-but now I c-c-can spit clean over our garage.”

Suffering cats!

“I’m glad,” says I, “that your little sister hasn’t got the seven-year itch.”

It was a swell summer morning. The trees were full of robins. I could hear bees too. They were chasing around in search of honey. One stopped to explore the big honeysuckle vine at the end of the porch. I saw the bee buzzing in and out among the blossoms. And suddenly I got to thinking how lovely it’d be if it took a buzzing trip down Horse Foot’s dirty neck. He needed something like that to stir him up. And maybe if he got a move on himself he’d get some sense.

5

“L-l-let’s do somethin’,” says he.

The same old record!

“What do you know,” says I, “besides ketchup and beans?”

“Um-yum-yum,” says he, patting his stomach.

Two weeks! And I even had to sleep with him too!

“I wish I knew some nice easy way to get into jail for two weeks,” says I.

“L-l-let’s,” says he brightly.

“Let’s what?” I grunted.

“Go fishin’.”

And over I went against a porch post.

“I give up,” says I weakly.

Mum was standing in the front door.

“Did you notice the robins this morning, Jerry?” says she.

“Yes,” says I, “and I noticed the bees. But they don’t light where I want them to.”

She saw me looking at Horse Foot’s neck.

“Remember,” says she, with a smile. “No tricks.”

I got up and went inside.

“Mrs. Rail had her nerve,” says I, “to send *him* over here to pester me.”

Mum ran her fingers through my hair in that nice chummy way of hers.

“We mustn’t forget,” says she, “how Mrs. Rail helped us last winter, when we all had the flu. And it was Sammy himself

who took care of our furnace.”

“Just the same,” says I, “I hate to think that I’ve got to have him around here for the next two weeks.”

“I think he’s rather cute myself,” says mum. “Don’t you?”

Cute!

“He’s got a face like a fried fish ball,” says I. “And every time he talks he twists his Adam’s apple around his shins.”

“But he can’t help his speech, Jerry. He was born that way. And now that he’s staying here with us, the very least we can do is to treat him kindly. I’m sure I’ll do *my* best. For I know how well Mrs. Rail would treat *you*, if I sent you over there to escape a contagious disease.”

“I’d never go,” says I. “For I’d rather have seventeen contagious diseases than to live with *him*. Why, he’s only nine! And look how big *I* am! He doesn’t fit into my gang at all. For Peg Shaw alone would make two of him. And we’re all four grades ahead of him at school.”

“It won’t hurt you,” says mum, “to give him a little attention for a few days. So quit growling about it.”

7

“Nursemaid!” I snorted.

“Yes,” says mum, with a firm air, “and I’m going to take the nursemaid across my knee and warm him up, if he doesn’t behave.”

And all the time Horse Foot was aiming at the knot-hole.

“Maybe I better get him a funnel,” says I.

Mum handed me a dime.

“Take him downtown,” says she, “and buy him an ice-cream cone.”

“It’s a shame,” says I, pocketing the dime, “to waste perfectly good ice cream on him.”

There was a sudden racket outside.

“What’s the matter now?” says mum, with an anxious air.

“Oh,” says I, “he just rolled down the steps.”

“Goodness gracious!” she cried.

And out she flew.

“Did you hurt yourself, Sammy?”

“N-n-no,” says he, picking himself up. “B-b-but I b-b-bet I could, if I d-d-did it over ag’in.”

I started to sing.

“Tra-la-la-la-la,” says I, getting mum’s eye. “Spring, beautiful spring. And then poor little Eva breathed her last, and went up to the angels.”

“Don’t be silly,” says mum, as she helped Horse Foot get

his left elbow out of his right pants pocket. “And don’t wander off at dinner time. Mrs. Meyers and I are going over to Ashton this afternoon. And I don’t want to wait dinner on you. For the sooner we get started the more time we’ll have for shopping.”

Horse Foot heard the word “dinner.”

“K-k-ketchup and b-b-beans,” says he promptly.

“Yes, yes,” says mum, with an impatient gesture, “I’ll see that you get plenty of ketchup and beans. You needn’t remind me.”

“L-l-liver and onions,” Horse Foot further added to the bill of fare.

“But you can’t have both,” says mum.

“P-p-pickled pigs feet,” continued Horse Foot.

And then he laughed.

“J-j-jerry said it. S-s-so I said it too.”

“Well,” says mum, kind of stiff-like, “you mustn’t pay too much attention to what Jerry says. For he can be just as silly as anyone else.”

Here Mrs. Rail came out on her front porch to shake a rug.

“Hoo-hoo!” she called to mum.

“Hoo-hoo!” mum called back.

“I heard you’re going over to the county seat this afternoon.”

“Yes. Mrs. Meyers and I are going over in her car.”

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“Is Sammy going with you?”

“I hadn’t planned on it,” says mum. “But he’s welcome to go, if he wants to.”

“Well, see that he washes his ears. Make him dig with the rag. And don’t give him any money. For the last time I took him over to Ashton he almost ate himself to death in the dime store. I had to keep a hot-water bottle on his stomach for two days. And I might have used the water bottle longer, if he hadn’t chewed a hole in it.”

“There’s a big sale on bedroom curtains,” says mum. “Only thirty-two cents a pair. I can’t buy the material and make them for that.”

“Oh,” wheezed Mrs. Rail, in her fat way (for she and Horse Foot are built just alike), “how I wish I could go with you.”

“Do you need new curtains?” says mum.

“No. But it’s so nice to look at ’em. . . . And if you have pancakes for breakfast, Mrs. Todd, don’t give him more than two. For they make him break out something awful. Watch his handkerchief too. He’ll carry it around for the next six months, if you don’t yank it away from him.”

“What I’d like to get,” says mum, “is a plain pattern for the front bedroom. Something to match the wall paper.”

“Pink?” wheezed Mrs. Rail.

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“No. Blue.”

“But I thought the wall paper in your front bedroom was pink”

“I just had the room repapered.”

“Oh, dear! And I won’t be able to see it for two weeks. But that’s what you get when you start raising children. If it isn’t measles it’s mumps; and if it isn’t mumps it’s whooping cough, with a few cracked collar bones mixed in. Still, as I told my husband last night, when he was gargling his throat in the bathroom, what is home without little ones? Certainly, I wouldn’t give up either of *my* two darlings for all the money in the world.”

“Do you think they’d look better with ruffles?” says mum.

“Goodness gracious!” wheezed Mrs. Rail, with big eyes.

“Who are you talking about?”

“My new curtains—that I’m going to buy.”

“Oh! . . . How silly of me. I thought you meant Sammy and Jane.”

Mum laughed.

“How is Jane?”

“Just about the same. She’s cutting out pictures now—an old mail-order catalog, you know. And she has genuine six-dollar seal-skin coats and double-jointed hayforks stuck all over the headboard of the bed. But the poor little lamb has to do something. She can’t just lay there and stare. And what’s a few hayforks to scrape off? As I told my husband last night, when he was gargling, children are an awful chore—there’s no two ways about that. But they’re a blessing as well.”

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There was a lot more talk about ruffled curtains and family blessings. But Horse Foot and I didn’t stay to hear it. For a gang of boys had just come into sight in the sunny village street. They were pulling a baby airplane.

And who do you suppose was sitting in the cockpit!

No. You’re wrong. It wasn’t Lindbergh. It was little old Red Meyers himself!

“Hot dog!” I yipped.

And down the street I went, lickety-cut, with Horse Foot trailing behind (as usual) like a comet’s tail.

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CHAPTER II

THE INTENDED FLIGHT

Red Meyers is the noisiest kid in Tutter. Everyone who knows him says that. Boy, the way he can bellow when he gets that bazzoo of his cranked up is nobody's business. Oh, oh! Dad laughingly calls him the little squirt with the big squawk.

I used to hate him at first—when we were little kids. For every time I passed his house, in the middle of the block, he pitched stuff at me. His aim was almost perfect too. But we sort of patched things up after a bit. And now we're the best of pals.

His pa runs a picture theatre. So I see a lot of free shows. And in the same way we often trade meals back and forth. For instance, if he has fried chicken at his house he always lets me know about it, so that I can hang around. And in the same way I always invite him over to my house when we have something special in the oven. Mum and dad like to have him come over too. They think he's all right. And he is all right. He's one of the best fighters in my gang. But I'll have to admit that he's nothing to look at, unless you like red hair and freckles. And when I say freckles don't imagine either that I mean a skimpy little spot here and there. Not him! He's got enough freckles for ten ordinary boys. And his hair

is so red that you can almost hear it sizzle, like his temper. But, just the same, he's a swell kid.

Other members of my gang are Scoop Ellery, the leader, and big Peg Shaw. Scoop has a lot of clever ideas. And when we get mixed up in a mystery it's usually him who gets us out of it. Peg is better at fighting. He's big and strong. So we always let him take the lead when we get into a fight with the Stricker gang. Boy! One time we even put on a gunboat battle in the big canal wide-waters at Oak Island. I told about that in my "Pirate" book. And did we have fun! Oh, oh! But the best part of all was where we plastered the Strickers with rotten eggs.

The final two members of my gang are Poppy Ott and Rory Ringer. But you won't find them in this story. For they went off on a hiking trip. And the stuff that I'm going to tell you about happened while they were gone.

And now just a word or two about mum and dad. Gee! I suppose every boy thinks that he's got the best ma and pa in the whole world. That's natural. But I can't conceive that *any* boy, rich or poor, could have a better home, or better parents, than me. It isn't a swell home. It's just an ordinary home, like the most of the homes that you'll find in small towns like ours. There's an upstairs and a downstairs. And outside there's a big grassy yard filled with trees and bushes. But it isn't the upstairs or the downstairs that makes my home what it is. It's my swell dad himself. And my swell ma. When I get up in the morning I know they're thinking about me, and sort of wondering what they can do to make that day happier for me. They think about me all day long. And if I'm away from home at night, on a detective case, or something like

that, I know they're wishing I was there. But they never stop me if I've got work to do. For they trust me. And that's why I always try to do the square thing.

Dad owns a brickyard on the west side of town. He got it from his father. And that's where I'll be some day. But just now I'm more interested in detecting than I am in brick-making.

The first mystery that I helped to solve (under Scoop's leadership) was about a strange "Whispering Mummy."

15

Next we got mixed up with a lot of cats. An old man hired us to help him start a cat farm. Then along came that strange "Rose-Colored Cat!" Gee! We never dreamed at first that this cat was in any way connected with Mrs. Kepple's stolen pearls. Solving that mystery, my chums and I fixed up an old clay scow, so that we could run it up and down the Tutter canal. We put on a show too—a boat show. It went over so well that we decided to take a canal trip to Ashton, ten miles away. And from there we went on up the canal to Oak Island, where we hid a treasure. In the dead of night, mind you!

After that we solved the mysteries of the "Waltzing Hen" and the "Talking Frog." The hen belonged to a circus; and the frog was a radio toy, which would have been stolen from its inventor if we hadn't stepped in. Then came more mysteries—the "Purring Egg" and the "Whispering Cave" (that's another Oak Island story). Nor was that all. The strangest mystery of all came to light in the "Bob-Tailed Elephant" case. A boy vanished into mid-air. It sounds like magic. After that we got mixed up with a crazy newspaper man—"Editor-in-Grief" is the title of that story. And then, not satisfied with our earlier adventures on Oak Island, we went back there, as

“Cavemen,” to solve the mystery of a “singing tree.” Which also sounds like magic. But you’ll find there’s no fairy-story stuff in any of these stories.

And now to get back to the baby airplane.

Red saw me coming.

“Hi, Jerry!” he yelled happily.

And then he did something in the cockpit that set the back edge of the wings to flapping.

16

“Is it yours?” says I, wonderingly, as the airplane came to a halt in the middle of the street, with kids milling all around it.

“Sure thing,” says he proudly.

And then the rudder started to jiggle.

“When I turn it that way,” says he, “it flies to the right. And when I turn it that way, it flies to the left.”

“How do you do it?” says I.

“With my feet. See? There’s a couple of bars down there.”

I peeked into the cockpit. But I didn’t get much of a peek. For just then a gust of wind caught the left wing of the little ship and socked it against the back of my head.

“Ouch!” I squawked.

Peg Shaw pulled me back.

“What do you think of it, Jerry?” says he, with dancing eyes.

“Is it really Red’s?” says I, with growing wonderment.

“He says it is.”

“Where did he get it?”

“From his pa.”

“I didn’t know that his pa had an airplane,” says I.

“It isn’t an airplane, Jerry—it’s just a glider.”

“But where’s the motor?” says I.

“It hasn’t got a motor—yet.”

17

“But what good is it,” says I, “without a motor?”

“It flies like a kite.”

As though I *would* believe that!

“Oh, yah!” says I, turning up my nose.

“Honest, Jerry. We’ll have to pull it to get it up. But once we get it up in the air the wind’ll keep it up—just like a kite.”

“I’ll have to see it,” says I, “to believe it.”

“Well, you come with us,” says he, “and you’ll see plenty.”

“And do you mean to tell me,” says I, like one in a dream, “that Red is actually going up in that blamed thing?”

“Nothing else but.”

“Then I better go over and kiss him good-by,” says I, “while he knows about it.”

For I had sense enough to realize that a kid like Red Meyers couldn't fly an airplane or glider or anything else like that. It takes experience to fly. And if Red dared to try it, he'd probably end up in a neat little pine box with a fancy glass top.

Peg gave me a confidential nudge.

“Between you and me,” says he, with a broad grin, “I don't think Red'll even get off the ground. But he says he's going up. So I'm helping him all I can.”

The street was full of cars now. They were honking to get by. And pretty soon along came Bill Hadley, the village marshal, in his old car.

18

“What's the matter up there?” he boomed, in his gruff way, as he started through the jam.

And then, as he caught sight of the glider—sitting right there in the middle of Main Street, mind you!—he almost swallowed his tonsils.

Red was jiggling up and down like an itchy jumping jack. And every minute or two the wind would catch the glider and

swing it around like a top. For it was balanced on a couple of baby-buggy wheels. Boy! It sure was a nifty little outfit, all right. And I didn't blame Red for being all puffed-up about it.

The kids had told him that they'd pull him down hill, so that he could take off into the wind. But they skinned out when the marshal came. And for a minute or two I felt like skinning out myself. For Bill was madder than a wet hen.

But Red was too happy to notice that.

"Hi, Bill!" he yelled. "You're just in time to see me go up."

"Yep," growled Bill, "an' you'll go up on the toe of my boot too, if you don't git that confounded thing out of here, an' quit blockin' the street."

"It's a glider," beamed Red.

"Wa-al, try your hand at glidin' it back into your own yard," growled Bill, "an' see that you keep it there."

19

Red gave a squawk.

"Aw, heck! I can't make it go up there. I've got to have a hill."

The cars were still honking to get by. So Bill took the glider and stood it on end. For it didn't weigh more than a hundred pounds.

And out tumbled aviator Meyers on his snoot.

“You big crumb!” he bellowed, in his fiery way. “If I had a brick I’d heave it at you.”

Bill held the glider up till the cars all got by. And then he towed it down the street and heaved it into Red’s front yard.

That brought Mrs. Meyers out.

“Goodness gracious!” says she, as the glider took a header into her pet pansy bed. “Where did that thing come from?”

“It’s mine,” cried Red. “And that old buzzard tried to wreck it on me.”

“The street ain’t no place fur flyin’ machines,” says Bill, as he started back toward his own car.

“But how can I fly it,” squawked Red, “if you don’t let me get a hill?”

“Git a balloon,” says Bill.

And jumping into his car he drove off.

Red followed him with blazing eyes.

“I’d like to get a baseball bat,” says he, “and cripple a couple of flies on that thick dome of his.”

20

“Why pick on the poor flies?” laughed Scoop.

“Huh!” Red further growled. “He thinks he’s a king—with that police badge of his. And he skinned my nose too—the big

egg!”

Mrs. Meyers stopped beside the glider.

“Of all the foolishness,” says she. “An airplane without a motor. It’s a wonder you wouldn’t rig up a coaster wagon without wheels!”

“It’s a glider,” says Red, as he lifted it out of the pansy bed.

“But where did you get it?” quizzed his mother. “And what are you going to do with it?”

“I’m going to fly it, of course.”

“Did you make it?”

“No. Dad got it off a guy who owed him money.”

Mrs. Meyers thought that the glider was just a toy. She hadn’t the slightest idea that it would really fly, or that Red would try to go up in it, as he said. For he often bragged that way around the house.

“I don’t mind roller skates sittin’ around,” says she, as she repaired the damage in the pansy bed. “And I can even stand a pup tent in the front yard. But I can’t see the sense of having *that* silly thing stand around.”

Red gave me a wink.

“Help me carry it around in back, Jerry.”

“Yes,” says Mrs. Meyers, “take it around in back and keep it there.”

Horse Foot tagged behind as usual.

“W-w-what is it?” says he, when we set the glider down beside the barn.

“A Norwegian pancake,” says Red.

Horse Foot looked at the glider on one side. And then he labored around to the other side.

“I thought it was a a-a-airplane,” says he.

Peg jumped into the cockpit.

“All aboard for the grand take-off,” says he, as he jiggled the levers around.

We all took turns then working the levers back and forth. There was a stick, right in front of the pilot’s seat, that made the glider go up or down. The stick worked an elevator near the rudder. And when the same stick was pushed sideways, it worked the ailerons. Red knew the names of everything.

“Do you think you’ll ever be able to fly it?” says I.

“Why not?” says he, in his chesty way.

“I’d hate to be you,” says I, “if you caused another traffic jam on Bill’s beat.”

“Yes,” put in Scoop, “and I’d hate to be you if the blamed thing ever turned upside down in the air.”

“Why should it?” says Red. “For the guy who made it took it up. So why can’t I? All you’ve got to do is to sit there and move the levers. There’s nothing hard about that.”

22

“I bet you’d be scared stiff,” says I, “if you saw the ground dropping out from under you.”

“I don’t think so. For I’ve always liked airplanes. I’ve told you all along that I was going to be a pilot. So why not start in now?”

I took another look at the glider.

“Whoever made it,” says I, “certainly did a swell job on it.”

“You know the guy, Jerry—that cross-eyed operator of dad’s—in the moving-picture booth.”

“And did your pa really take it away from him?” I quizzed.

“I’ll tell the world! For he took money on us at the theatre.”

“I didn’t know that he was an aviator,” says I.

“He took the glider out last Sunday. A friend of his towed him in a car. And he was up for more than ten minutes.”

“Gee!” says I, as I stood back and looked at the glider. “It doesn’t seem possible.”

Red then showed me some brackets over the cockpit.

“He was getting ready to put a little motor up there. And that’s what got him into trouble. For he had to snitch money out of the safe to fix the motor over—it was an old bicycle motor. And then is when dad caught him.”

“But why did he want a motor,” says I, “if he could stay up for ten minutes without one?”

23

“A lot of gliders have little motors. They’re easier to fly that way. And you can stay up longer.”

“Did you get the motor too?” says I.

“No. But I know where it is. It’s down in old Emery Blossom’s rag shed. He’s got some machines down there, you know. For he’s pretty handy with machinery. He makes more money that way—tinkering with stuff—than picking up rags. And if I had the price I bet I could get the motor and install it myself.”

“Gee!” says I, as I reached into the cockpit and pulled the stick back and forth. “I wish we *could* try it out.”

“I’m going to,” says Red, with increased determination. “But we’ve got to be mighty quiet about it. For dad would have seventeen cat-fits if he thought for one moment that I’d really try to fly it.”

“But if he didn’t want you to fly it,” says I, “why did he give it to you?”

“To tell the truth, Jerry, he doesn’t know yet that it really will fly. He thinks it’s a big lemon. But he was so mad at that fellow over the money, that he took it anyway. And I suppose he thinks I’m going to put it on stilts, like a two-year-old. But instead, I’m going to slip it out of town to-night in the dark. That’ll fool Bill Hadley. And when the sun comes up to-morrow morning, and there’s nobody around, I’m going to take off in old Emery’s pasture. For there’s a slick hill there. And if you fellows’ll pull me down, I know I can go up, just as easy as pie. For that’s where the cross-eyed guy took off.”

“Who told you?” says I.

“Old Emery. He and the fellow were working together. Sort of secret-like. Thought they could get a patent, I guess. But the cross-eyed guy had to skin out when dad took after him about the money. And now the glider is mine.”

Peg was listening.

“Does old Emery know that you’re going to take off in his pasture to-morrow morning?”

“No. But he told me that I could use his pasture to-day. So what’s the difference if I wait a few hours?”

Peg laughed.

“If I remember right,” says he, “there’s a big bull in that pasture.”

“Poof!” says Red. “Who’s scared of a bull?”

There was a sudden squawk from the barn. And when I ran inside I found Horse Foot hanging by his head through a crack in the hay-mow floor.

“I always thought that my h-h-head was bigger than my f-f-feet,” says he, when I finally got him down.

“Yes,” says I, “bigger and *emptier* too.”

25

Scoop was standing in the doorway.

“What happened?” says he, with a grin.

“Oh,” says I, “Horse Foot wanted to find out which was the biggest, his feet or his head, so he dropped through that crack up there.”

“And did you take him down?”

“I had to. For I’m his nursemaid now.”

And I told the other fellows what a mess I was in. Jane Rail had the measles, I said. And Horse Foot was going to live with me till she got well.

We spent the most of the day in Red’s back yard. For it was fun to fool with the glider. And all the time I kept wondering to myself if he really would be able to take it up.

It was our plan now to run the glider out of town just as soon as it got dark. We were going to carry blankets, too, and sleep in old Emery’s rag shed. For, of course, we wouldn’t dare to leave the glider down there all alone. That cross-eyed guy

might come back and steal it. Or old Emery himself might slip it out of sight for his own use. It was better, we agreed, to watch it. And then, when daylight came, we'd try it out.

We often sleep out like that. So our parents thought nothing of it. But you can bet your boots that Red was mighty careful not to mention the glider to his mother.

Mr. Meyers himself was too busy to think about gliders. For he had to run his own picture machine now. He buzzed in at six o'clock for his supper; and out again at six-fifteen. The only thing he talked about was his own hard luck. And the only thing that Mrs. Meyers talked about was her trip to Ashton. She and mum had a big time, I guess.

26

And now I'll tell you what happened in old Emery's pasture.

Gosh! We expected to see a grand take-off. But what we saw instead was a crazy bull fight. And the wonder is that poor Red didn't get a horn punched clean through him.

27

CHAPTER III

THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE

We almost lost Horse Foot at supper time. For he tried to bite the top off the salt shaker. He got it mixed up with his cake. But we finally got the salt shaker out of him. And then he and I meandered down the street to meet the other fellows.

They were playing croquet in Red's front yard. So I took a hand in the game. And when it got too dark to see the arches, we went around in back, where the glider was.

Horse Foot in the meantime had completely disappeared.

"Where is he?" says I, looking around.

He had followed me into the yard. But he was nowhere in sight now.

Then I heard a squawk in the barn. It sounded familiar! And when I ran in, as before, there hung the Family Blessing by his ears.

In the same crack, mind you!

I thought that Peg would split.

“Let’s tie a weight on his heels,” came the giggling suggestion, “and stretch him out.”

“I would,” says I grimly, “if I thought we could squeeze any brains into the top of his head.”

28

Horse Foot thought we were really going to weight him down.

“Hel-lup!” he squawked. “Hel-lup!”

I got a stepladder for him to stand on. And then I went outside and left him, thankful for once that I knew where he was and didn’t have to worry about him.

It wasn’t quite dark enough yet for us to start for the rag shed. So we sat down beside the glider to wait. And all the time Horse Foot was yelling bloody-murder.

Someone “hoo-hooed” in the distance.

“Suffering cats!” says I. “It’s his ma!”

And into the barn I went to shut him up. For I knew very well what I’d get from her if she found him hanging there.

But I learned, when I got inside, that he wasn’t hanging at all! He was sitting on the top of the stepladder with an all-day sucker.

“I t-t-thought it was the same c-c-crack,” says he, as he ran his tongue up one side of the sucker and down the other. “But I g-g-got through this time.”

I didn't know what to do at first. For, of course, I didn't dare to do what I wanted. There's a law against stuff like that. But I figured that the very least he deserved was a good tumble. So I gave the stepladder a kick and left him.

The fellows were piling their blankets into the cockpit.

29

“Let's get going,” says Red.

“What time is it?” says I.

“Nine-thirty.”

A car whizzed by out in front.

“We'll be all out of luck,” says I, “if anybody runs into us in the dark.”

“I've got plenty of flashlights,” says Red.

We had to cross the canal. For the rag shed was on the south side of town. And to keep out of sight as much as possible, we finally decided to use the railroad bridge near dad's brickyard. From there we'd follow the switch-track to the cement mill, and then cut off to the left. Once we got to the cement mill, we'd have everything to ourselves. For the people down there don't roam around much at night—especially on a dark night like this.

If you'll look on the [map](#) in the front part of this book, you'll see how we got to the railroad bridge. We went down Main Street to Treebury Street. There we turned the corner to the left. Pretty soon we came to the brickyard. It was easy then to

get to the bridge.

Scoop looked off into Zulutown.

“Let’s hope,” says he, “that we don’t bump into the Stricker gang.”

“Yes,” says Peg, as we stopped at the bridge, “and let’s hope we don’t lose Horse Foot through these railroad ties. For they’re a foot apart.”

30

I looked around.

“Good night nurse!” I squawked. “We’ve lost him already.”

Peg turned his flashlight into the inky canal.

“I don’t see any rifles,” says he.

I was good and mad now.

“Give me that flashlight,” says I, “and I’ll find him.”

There was a splash at the other end of the bridge. And tearing across, at the risk of my own neck, I found Horse Foot rolling rocks down the embankment.

“He’s all right,” I yelled back to my companions.

“Well,” Peg yelled in turn, “for Pete’s sake tie him up to something, and then come back and give us a hand. For we’ll have to carry this blamed thing on end to get it across.”

I took Horse Foot by the neck and set him down.

“I don’t want to get the name of picking on little kids,” says I. “But, bu-lieve me, if you aren’t here when I get back, there’s going to be something doing. And you needn’t be surprised either if I boot you all the way to the mill.”

“My p-p-pa brags on me too,” says he, in his brainless way. “H-h-he says I’m the b-b-best spitter for my age _____”

31

“Aw, shut up,” says I. “You give me a pain in the neck.”

Red was yapping at the other end of the bridge.

“Don’t let him get away from you, Jerry. For I’m going to punch the stuffing out of him.”

“What’s the matter now?” says I.

“Oh, he went and put paint all over the side of my glider.”

I ran across.

“Look!” says Red, turning his flashlight on the fuselage.

This is what I saw:

THE FLYING FLAPDOODLE

“I c-c-couldn’t spell Norwegian p-p-pancake,” Horse Foot

called across the bridge. “So I n-n-named it Flapdoodle. F-f-for flapdoodles are like p-p-pancakes—kind of.”

He meant flapjacks!

“When did he do it?” I asked Red.

“While we were playing croquet, I guess. But I never noticed it till now.”

I took a deep breath.

“If this keeps on,” says I, “I’m going to put that kid in a cage and lock him up.”

“You should have left him at home,” growled Red angrily.

32

“Where is he?” says Scoop.

“I left him on the other side of the canal,” says I. “But he may be halfway to Halifax by now.”

Peg laughed in his jolly way.

“If you were to ask me,” says he, “I think that’s a pretty slick name. ‘The Flying Flapdoodle!’ That’s a funny name.”

“But look at the way he printed it,” growled Red in an ugly manner.

“Shucks! That makes it all the funnier.”

There was another splash across the canal.

“I hope it’s him,” Red spoke spitefully.

“Quit picking on him,” says Peg. “There’s worse kids than him.”

“Yah, in the cuckoo house!”

“He makes me think of you, a couple of years ago.”

“I never acted like that,” growled Red.

“No,” laughed Peg, “you acted worse.”

We picked up the glider then and carried it across the bridge. It was kind of risky work—in the dark and everything. But we made it. And finding Horse Foot safe and sound, we roped him to one of the wings, to keep track of him, and hurried on in the direction of the rag shed.

So far we hadn’t met a soul. But old Emery Blossom came out, when he heard us fiddling with his pasture gate. He had a lantern. And I thought for a minute or two, as he raised the lantern to look us over in turn, with those sharp, deep-set eyes of his, that he was going to send us home. But he finally let us pass.

Like most stooped old men he has shaggy gray hair and deep wrinkles in his face and neck. He limps too, for years ago, when he had a wife, he let something drop on one of his feet. His wife died. And since then he’s lived all alone, in a shabby little house near his big rag shed. The house itself isn’t worth

much. Nor the rag shed either. But he has a swell big pasture in back, which he rents out to people with cows and horses.

The old man knew, of course, that the glider had changed hands. And I don't think he liked it very well. I think he wanted it for himself. But he didn't say so.

"When did Collins skin out?" he inquired.

Collins was the picture-machine operator.

"Early this morning," says Red. "He robbed our safe. And he had to skin out."

"Pshaw! You don't say."

"Pa couldn't get the money back," Red continued. "So he took the glider. And if you don't mind, we'd like to keep it in your big shed overnight."

"Oh," old Emery spoke hastily, with a greedy look at the glider, "that's all right; that's all right."

"I don't want you to tell anybody," says Red. "But I'm going up to-morrow morning."

34

"Pshaw!" says the old man, with a surprised air. "Not *you*?"

"Nobody else but," was Red's cocky reply.

"But s'pose you fall?"

"I'll chance it."

“I was goin’ to try it out myself,” says the old man, “when we got a motor on it. But I reckon it won’t be worth puttin’ a motor on, when you git through with it.”

I thought Red would resent that. But he had his mind on the motor.

“Is the motor ready?” he spoke eagerly.

“Yep.”

“Let’s put it on to-night.”

“No,” the old man firmly shook his head. “You can smash up your own part, if you want to. But you can’t smash up my motor. Fur if what I read about in the Bible is true, I’m goin’ to be needin’ it right soon.”

He was acting kind of queer now. Sort of breathless and excited-like. He kept looking up at the sky too, as though he expected to see something. But all I could see, when I looked up, was a few scattered stars.

“I’ve bin tellin’ my neighbors fur weeks,” the old man went on, in a low, mumbling voice, “that the day of judgment is at hand. But they say I’m an ol’ gilly. An’ when I got ’em out of bed last night, to listen, they jest laughed at me. Crazy Emery! Crazy Emery! He reads his Bible too much. That’s the way they talk to me. I didn’t hear anything last night. But I *did* hear somethin’ the night before—right up there in the sky. An’ I know what it was too.”

Gosh! I began to wish that I was home in my own bed. For I

don't like to mix up with people like that. It was blamed dark too—dark and spooky. That's what made me so uneasy-like.

We were close to the rag shed now. It was just inside the pasture gate. And when we got there we opened the big end door and took the glider inside, old Emery in the meantime having disappeared into his cottage.

“I wonder what he heard?” says I, with an anxious air, as we spread our blankets among the rag bales.

“He's been telling the neighbors,” says Peg, “that it's the angel Gabriel.”

“The guy with the trumpet, huh?”

Peg nodded.

“Old Emery is a dandy mechanic,” says he. “And you can't beat him on a rag deal. But he gets all woozy when he starts talking about the Bible.”

“Maybe he never heard anything at all,” says I hopefully.

For I didn't like the idea that there was something hanging around overhead that I couldn't see.

36

“Probably not,” says Peg.

Red was prowling around in another part of the big shed.

“Hey, gang,” he called. “Come here.”

“What do you want?” Peg called back.

“I’ve found the motor.”

So we went over. And sure enough, there on a rack, amid a group of greasy machines, was a small air-cooled gasoline motor with a wooden propeller fastened to it. The whole thing didn’t weigh more than thirty pounds. And it was hard for me to believe that a little engine like that would do much good in the air. But Red said that all a glider needed was a couple of horse power to keep it going.

“Gee!” says he, as he turned the motor over. “I wish I owned it.”

“So do I,” says Peg. “But we don’t. So let’s leave it alone.”

“I bet I could start it,” says Red, as he gave the neat little propeller another turn.

“Cut it out,” says Peg, as he glanced anxiously at the door that old Emery used in going back and forth between the rag shed and his home, a few yards away.

But Red kept right on.

“There’s the magneto—see? It’s built into the flywheel. And there’s the coil.”

We finally had to pull him away.

“To-morrow,” says he, “I’m going to try and make a deal with old Emery. For I’ve got some money in my bank. And I can

easily work some more out of ma.”

Horse Foot was sound asleep. For kids of his age go to sleep easy. And as I looked down at him, with a flashlight, I kind of felt sorry for some of the mean things that I had said to him. He wasn't such a bad little kid, after all. He hardly ever cried. He laughed instead. Besides, there *was* something droll about that dumbness of his.

Take the way he named the glider. “The Flying Flapdoodle!” Gee! It probably would be a “flat” doodle all right, I told myself, when Red got through with it.

He had an alarm clock. For you know how boys are! It takes something with a lot of noise fastened to it to wake them up at daybreak. And setting the alarm for three-thirty, he lay down beside me.

“Just think,” says he, “in another two or three hours I'll be an aviator.”

“If—” says I.

“If what?” says he.

“If you aren't a corpse.”

“Crêpe hanger!”

“By the way,” says Peg, from his place on the floor, “what kind of flowers do you want us to buy you? Calla lilies? Or turnip-tops?”

“Make it pumpkin blossoms,” says I.

Something came up to the door and whiffed.

“What’s that?” gurgled Red, as he popped up in bed.

“Maybe it’s Gabriel,” says Scoop.

Peg laughed.

“It sounds more like an old bull to me.”

I went to sleep then, with the bull pawing at the door, and the smell of old rags in my nose. I could smell grease too, from the machinery at the other end of the shed. It wasn’t a good sleeping place at all—it was too smelly. But I figured that I could stand it for one night.

CHAPTER IV

RED HOPS OFF

Horse Foot got switched around during the night. His head was near mine when I went to sleep. But when I woke up, the next morning, with the alarm clock jingling in my ears, there he lay with his feet in my face. Oof! No wonder I couldn't smell the dirty old rags any more.

Red was wedged in on the other side of me. But he jumped up in a jiffy when he heard the alarm. For this was the day of days for him.

“Come on, fellows,” he called. “It's time to get up.”

The rag shed was as black as pitch when we turned in. But the cracks were full of new daylight now—a sort of pinkish-yellowish daylight, with a lot of dew and fresh growing smells fastened to it. And more daylight, of the same kind, streamed in when we opened the big door.

The bull had gone off to the lower part of the pasture to eat his breakfast. So we didn't have *him* to worry about—not then! And taking the glider out of the shed, just as quiet as we could, we started up the grassy hill.

“How about the wind?” says Scoop, when we got to the

top of the hill.

“I was just wondering,” says Red, as he looked down the hill, “if there’s enough wind to keep me up.”

Peg was grinning as usual.

“I suppose,” says he, “that we *can* get a fan, if necessary.”

“Shall we try it?” says Red, with another look down the hill.

“Why not?” says Scoop.

So Red got into the cockpit. And when he was all set, with his feet on the rudder bars and his hands on the stick, we started off down the hill lickety-cut.

The tow rope was fixed so that it would drop down of its own accord when the glider got high enough. But it hadn’t dropped down when we came to the end of our run. And when I looked around, there sat Red in the cockpit, just the same as when we started out.

Peg let on that he was surprised.

“Look, fellows!” says he. “He’s back already. Quick work, huh?”

“Sap!” says Red. “I haven’t been up yet.”

“What’s the matter?” says Peg, with dancing eyes. “Did you forget to turn on the gas? Or were your feet too big for the pedals?”

“It wasn’t me—it was you. You didn’t run fast enough.”

Gosh! I was winded already. But I wanted to get him up if I could. So I helped pull the glider back to the hilltop. And then, when everything was ready, we started off again.

41

There was a sudden squawk from Red as he bounded along behind.

“Look out, fellows! Here comes the bull!”

And now comes the funny part. For what do you know if the bull didn’t run into the long tow rope. The rope got tangled up in his horns. And when I looked around, as I streaked it for a fence, there was Red hopping along behind the bull like a big toad.

“I’m flying!” he screeched. “I’m flying!”

And then, as the bull gained speed at the foot of the hill, the glider shot up just as pretty as you please.

The bull was after Peg now. For he had on a red sweater. And having gotten away myself, without a scratch, I jumped on the wooden fence to see the fun.

Around and around went Peg. And around and around went the bull, with the glider flying behind like a huge kite. And every time it took a dip, or a hop, Red let out a squawk. He was crazy to fly. But he didn’t think it was so hot, I guess, to be towed around by a mad bull.

He tried to let on afterwards that he clung to the stick

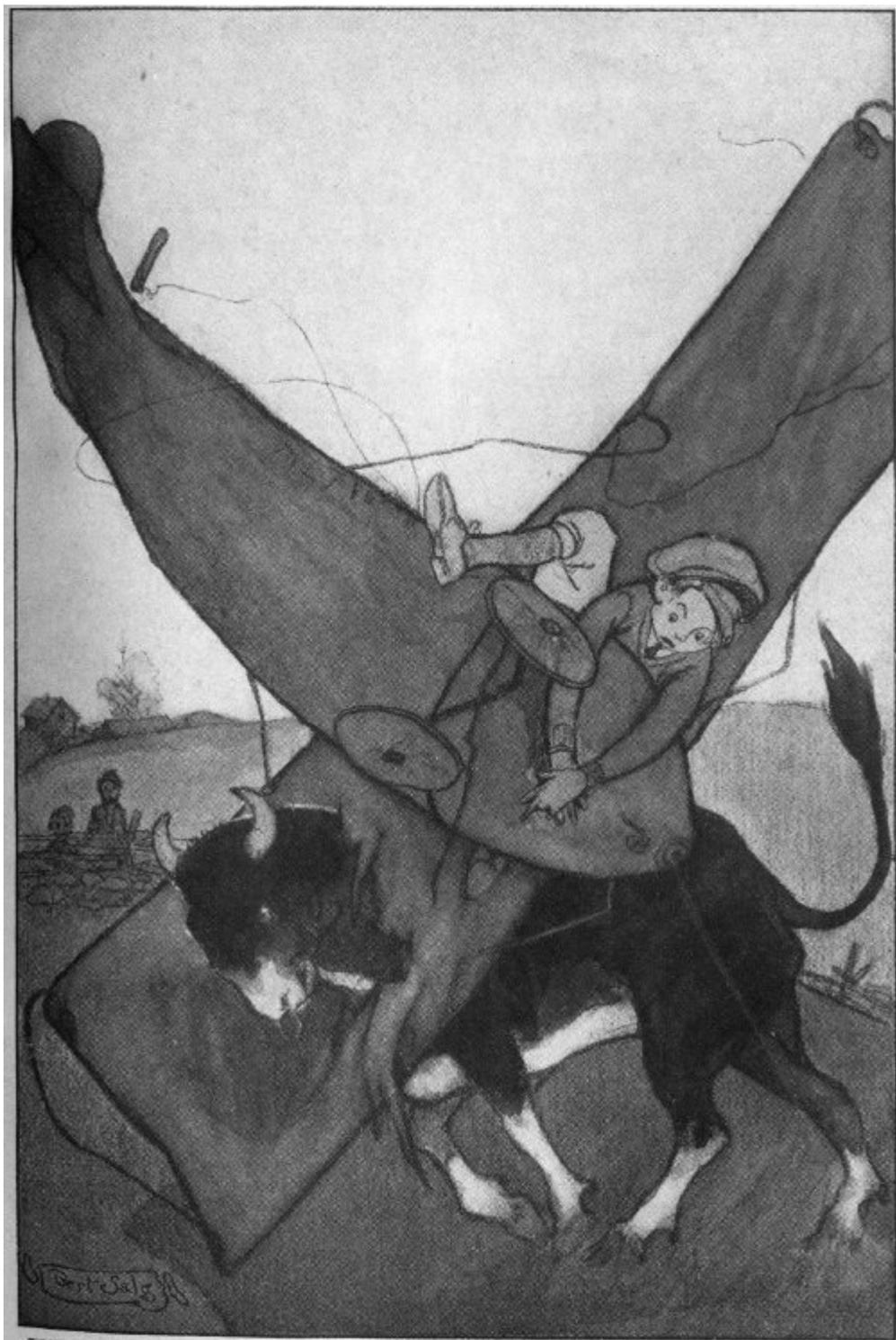
42

like grim death. Lindbergh number two! But every time I got a peek at him, as he bobbed up and down in the cockpit, he was waving his arms like a runaway windmill. Gee! No bucking broncho ever yanked its rider around any worse than *he* got yanked around in that bucking glider. For every time the bull gave a lunge the glider shot straight up. Then as the rope tightened, and the glider leveled off again, Red got a yank in the neck that almost popped the eyes out of his head.

Peg went by us like a shot from a gun. And after him came the bellowing bull. Peg was hoping, I guess, that the glider rope would free itself. But it didn't. So finally he jumped the fence. And down came the glider on the bull's back!

The bull felt pretty big when he was scooting around the pasture. But now he was scared stiff. He thought some kind of a demon had jumped down on him, I guess. And away he went, as tight as he could go.

He had his head through one of the wings. That took the glider with him. And, of course, wherever the glider went Red went too. For he was still strapped in his seat.



HE HAD HIS HEAD THROUGH ONE OF THE GLIDER WINGS.

I thought it was funny when he was riding the bumps at the end of the tow rope. But this was funnier still. Boy! Did *he* ever yap! I thought I'd bust.

The bull finally freed itself by plowing through a thicket at the lower end of the pasture. And when we got there, Red was weaving around like an old toper with a whiskey-bottle nose.

He thought at first that he had landed on Mars. And when I tried to tell him that he had been riding around a pasture on a bull, he just laughed at me. *Him* ride on a bull! Poof! Poof! It was too silly to mention. But he got his senses back in a hurry when we dragged the broken glider into sight. And instead of "poof-poofing" he started to howl.

43

Old Emery saw us coming across the pasture.

"I knowed it," he growled, as we set the glider down beside him. "I knowed you'd smash it."

"Can we leave it in your rag shed," says Red, "till we get time to fix it up?"

"Humph! You better let me have it. Fur you'll never be able to do anything with it."

But Red wouldn't give it up. And having put it away, in one corner of the big rag shed, we started gloomily for home.

Mum was just getting up.

“Well,” says she, with a yawn, as Horse Foot and I tumbled hungrily up the back steps, “did you have a good time last night?”

“Swell,” says I.

And dropping my blanket I jumped for the faucet to get a drink.

“Where did you sleep?” says mum, with another yawn.

“In old Emery Blossom’s rag shed.”

“Goodness gracious!” she sputtered. “Whatever possessed you to sleep in a buggy place like that—with everybody’s old rags!”

44

And then she took our blankets and threw them outside.

Red had two breakfasts that morning. He fried something for himself when he first got home. And when I went over there at eight o’clock, he and his ma were eating cornflakes in the kitchen.

“How about some more cream, ma?” says he, as I came in and sat down near the door.

“What?” says his ma, as she peeked into the pitcher. “Have you used up all that cream?”

Red measured with his finger on the side of the pitcher.

“There wasn’t much,” says he. “Just up to there.”

That set his ma to sputtering.

“Honest to goodness, Donald Meyers! If all the cream that you ate turned into fat, you’d be as big as an elephant.”

Red snickered.

“As big as my Aunt Pansy, huh?”

His ma didn’t like that. For she’s kind of big herself!

“Donald!” she spoke sharply. “That’s no way for you to talk about your aunt. And I want you to hush up.”

But it takes more than that to stop Red.

“Say, ma,” says he, as he started in on another wad of cornflakes, “is Aunt Pansy going to live with us for the rest of her life?”

“She may.”

45

“Huh!” came the disgusted grunt. “I wish she’d get another husband and move her old truck out of here. She’s got the attic full of stuff—old chairs and sofas and everything else.”

His mother gave him a sharp look.

“Donald!” says she. “Have you been up in the attic lately?”

“No.”

“Your Aunt Pansy told me the other day that you had been

fooling around her dead chest.”

Dead chest! What was that?—a coffin?

I was glad when Red kept on talking about it. For I was curious.

“Say, ma,” says he, “where’d Aunt Pansy get that chest anyway—and what’s she got in it? It’s as big as a young barn.”

“Her husband made it for her.”

“Uncle Patsy?”

“Yes. And it’s full of keepsakes.”

“What kind of keepsakes?”

“Oh, old wedding gowns and old photographs and things like that—stuff that different members of the family left behind them when they died.”

So that’s what a dead chest was!—a chest full of dead people’s things! I never had heard of one before.

But I knew all about Uncle Patsy, and how he had gone down in the Illinois River. He fell out of a fishing boat. And that was the end of him. Since then his widow had made her home with the Meyers family. For she and Mrs. Meyers are sisters.

I’ve often mentioned Aunt Pansy in my books. It was her

parrot, you know, that Red took to Oak Island in the “Caveman” book. And it was in front of her beauty parlor, downtown, that we plastered Chester Ringbow with soft laundry soap. That happened in the “Freckled Goldfish” book. Yes, I knew Aunt Pansy well. But I never heard before that she had a dead chest in the attic.

“Say, ma,” Red then inquired, “is it all right with you if I shake some money out of my bank?”

“What for?” came the quick inquiry.

“I want to buy something.”

“Candy, I suppose.”

“No,” Red shook his head. “It isn’t candy. It’s something important.”

I knew what he wanted the money for. He wanted to get his glider fixed up. And he couldn’t do it till he bought a lot of new canvas for the wings.

“Can I, ma?” he coaxed.

“No.”

“Aw, shucks!” he bellowed. “It’s my money. I don’t see why I can’t spend it. You spend your money any time. So why can’t I?”

I spoke up then.

“Maybe your ma’ll let us mow the lawn,” says I.

Red jumped at that.

“Will you, ma?” says he eagerly.

“But the lawn doesn’t need mowing. For your father just mowed it yesterday afternoon.”

“Then we’ll wash the windows. Won’t we, Jerry?”

“Sure thing,” says I.

“What windows are you talking about?” says Mrs. Meyers.

“Why, *our* windows, of course—the big bay window, where you’ve got the cactus plant, and all the other windows.”

“But I didn’t tell you that our windows needed washing.”

“We’ll wash ’em anyway. Won’t we, Jerry?”

“Sure thing,” says I again.

“But they don’t need washing,” Mrs. Meyers declared.

And all the time she kept looking at us as though she had a pain in her head. For it was a new thing to her to have Red coax for a job. And it puzzled her.

“How about the porch floors?” he then inquired.

“Yes,” his mother stiffened, “I’d be likely to let you wash the porch floors—after the way you slopped

around last week.”

“I didn’t slop so very much,” says he. “Just a little bit in front of the door.”

“I suppose you’ve forgotten how I had to bail out the whole front hall. And for a minute or two I was even scared that the piano would start floating around.”

Red grinned.

“I’ll be careful, ma. Honest. And I’ll do it cheap too—only a dollar.”

“*Cheap? A dollar?* Why, I never paid you more than ten cents.”

“But I need a dollar.”

“What for?”

Red blew up then.

“Oh, gee-miny crickets!” he bellowed. “There you go again! What for? What for? Is that the only record you’ve got?”

He needed a good shaking up for that. But he was saved by Horse Foot, who came into sight tooting on a police whistle.

“I’ve got b-b-bugs,” he told Mrs. Meyers.

“*Bugs?*” says she.

She looked kind of puzzled at first. And then she got a worried look. For women think it's an awful disgrace for a bug to creep up on them. I've already told you how mum acted about the blankets. And that, of course, is where Horse Foot got the idea that he had bugs.

Red knew what the "bug" talk was liable to lead to. So he started for the door.

"Come on, gang," says he. "Let's get out of here."

But his ma headed him off.

"No," says she firmly, "you can't leave here till you tell me what you want to buy. And I want to get at the bottom of this bug business too."

"They're rag-shed b-b-bugs," says Horse Foot.

Red gave him a kick.

"Shut up, you dumb cluck!"

Mrs. Meyers took Horse Foot into the pantry.

"Have a cookie," says she sweetly.

"Um-yum-yum!" gurgled Horse Foot, as the cookie did a disappearing act into his big mouth.

Nor did he notice that Red had pocketed his whistle.

"And now let's hear about the bugs," says Mrs. Meyers in the

same sweet way.

“We slept in a r-r-r-r—” Horse Foot began.

He was trying to say rag shed. But Red stopped that.

“*Tra-la-la-la-la-la!*” he boomed at the top of his voice, thus drowning out everything else. And then, as his ma bounced out of the pantry with a switch, he made a break for the door.

“Come on, Jerry,” he yelled.

He was in such a hurry to get away that he never noticed a loose pile of magazines on the floor. And down he went in a heap, with magazines all around him.

50

“It serves you right,” says his ma, as he got up whimpering.

And then she made a jump for the telephone. For it was clattering to beat the cars.

“Hello!” says she. “Oh! . . . Is that you, Mrs. Todd?” There was a short pause. “Why, of course—I’ll be over right away. Good-by.”

“Was it my ma?” says I.

“Yes. She wants me to help her with a dress that she’s making. And I told her I’d be over right away. You can gather up the breakfast dishes, Donald. And then tie up those old magazines that you tripped over. For I told Mr. Blossom that I’d have them ready for him this morning. When he pays you, put the money in the cupboard in that old sugar bowl. I must

hurry now. For Mrs. Todd is waiting for me. Be a good boy till I get back.”

And out she went, with the screen door banging behind her.

Red started to dance.

“I know now how I can make some money,” says he.

“How?” says I.

“Selling old magazines.”

I searched his eyes.

“What do you mean?—that you’re going to keep your ma’s money, and not put it in the sugar bowl, like she said?”

51

“No,” he shook his head. “That’s her pile of magazines on the floor. I’m going to get mine out of the attic.”

And turning, he tore up the stairs.

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CHAPTER V

THE DEAD CHEST

Horse Foot and I took after Red as tight as we could go. Up the stairs we went to the second floor, where the bedrooms were. And from there we tore up another flight of stairs to the attic, where we got out a big pile of old magazines, tied in bundles.

We worked Horse Foot to carry the magazines downstairs for us.

“Boy!” says Red, as Horse Foot disappeared down the stairs with the last bundle. “It’s plenty hot up here. But I don’t dare to open a window on your side. For ma’s got eyes like a hawk. And you heard how she jumped on me for fooling around up here. Boy! She’d come home on the tear if she saw an open window.”

“What’ll she say about the magazines?” says I, kind of anxious-like. For I don’t like to fool around in a place like that, where you’re liable to get caught.

“I’m hoping,” says Red, “that old Emery gets here before she sees the magazines.”

“It’s funny,” says I, “that she didn’t sell them herself.”

“They’re Aunt Pansy’s—that’s why. They belong with the rest of this old truck.”

I looked around. And what a mess! Old chairs and rolled-up rugs and everything else.

“This would make a swell attic,” says I, “if it didn’t have so much stuff in it.”

“I tried to get Aunt Pansy to clean it out,” says Red, “so that I could put on a play. And I told her I’d let her be little Eva. You know—in ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ I thought she’d jump at that. But instead, when I started to tell her how I’d fix up a block and tackle for her to go to heaven on, she got mad—just like I had insulted her, or something.”

“Are you going to tell her about the magazines?” says I.

“And get another jawing?” snorted Red. “I guess not.”

“But it isn’t right,” says I, “for you to sell her old magazines without telling her.”

“Shucks!” says he. “She’s forgotten that she ever owned any old magazines—with that beauty parlor on her hands.”

“How’s she getting along?” says I.

“Swell.”

“You ought to let her try out some of her beauty clay on you,” says I.

“Now was that nice?”

I laughed.

“If she could make *you* beautiful,” says I, “it would be a swell advertisement for her.”

“I never saw any beauty medals hanging around *your* house,” says he.

54

“I’m modest,” says I, with another laugh. “I keep them out of sight.”

A bell jingled below.

“There goes the phone,” says Red.

And he yelled down the stairs.

“Hey, Horse Foot. See who it is.”

But there was no reply.

“Hey, Horse Foot,” Red yelled again. “Go to the phone. What’s the matter with you anyway?—can’t you get those big feet of yours untangled?”

And still no reply.

“Blame it!” grumbled Red. “He *would* sneak out on me, just when I needed him. I guess I’ll have to go down and answer it myself, Jerry.”

“I’ll go with you,” says I.

And then, as I caught sight of a big black chest, I stopped.

“Is that the dead chest?” says I curiously.

“Sure thing.”

“Gee! I’d hate to have a thing like that setting around in *my* attic,” says I.

“Why?” says Red.

“It’s too much like a coffin,” says I.

“I think myself,” says Red, “that it’s a lot of hooley—55 keeping old wedding dresses and stuff like that. But you know how ma and Aunt Pansy are—two peas in a pod. If one sneezes, the other coughs.”

“And are they really as touchy as you say about the dead chest?” I quizzed.

“*Touchy?*” snorted Red. “Say, you ought to hear some of the stuff around here. One day last winter I stood on the chest to reach my skates—they hung up there on that nail—and ma almost yanked me bald-headed. The dead chest, she said, was sacred—just like the family Bible.”

There was another jingle below. Then a door slammed.

“Gosh!” says Red, with scared eyes. “That sounds like ma.”

I listened.

“It *is* your ma,” says I. “And she’s coming up the stairs.”

“Suffering cats!” says Red.

“I wonder if Horse Foot told her about the magazines,” says I.

“The little sap!”

“She’s getting closer,” says I.

“Let’s hide,” says Red.

“Where?” says I.

“Behind the dead chest—that’s a good place.”

I took a peek.

“We can’t both get in there,” says I. “There isn’t room.”

It was do or die with Red.

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“Come on, Jerry,” says he excitedly. “Help me give the chest a pull. That’ll make plenty of room. And ma’ll never dream that we’re hiding back there.”

So I took hold of the chest, expecting to pull a lung out. But to my surprise the chest moved just as easy as anything.

“I thought your ma told you that it was full of stuff?” says I.

“She did,” Red spoke wonderingly.

“Then it must be feathers,” says I.

Red tried the lid.

“It’s unlocked,” says he, with added wonderment.

“Yes,” says I, peeking into the chest, “and it’s as empty as Horse Foot’s head.”

Mrs. Meyers was just outside the attic door now. We could hear her wheezing. So into the chest we went headfirst. Nor were we a moment too soon.

“Phew!” sniffed Red, in my ear. “I don’t like the smell in here.”

“Old clothes always smell like that,” says I. “It’s a dead smell.”

“Are there any clothes under you, Jerry?” Red further whispered.

“No,” I whispered back.

“Not anything at all?” he followed up.

“No.”

We could hear Mrs. Meyers talking to herself.

“That’s queer,” says she, as she came toward the chest. “I thought sure I heard Donald up here. But he’s nowhere in sight.” She raised her voice. “Donald!” she called. “Are you

hiding on me?”

“Yes,” Red whispered in my ear.

And then he giggled.

“Cut it out,” I whispered back.

“Donald!” came the repeated cry.

But this time Red didn’t even whisper in my ear. For his mother wasn’t more than a foot or two from us.

We had plenty of room in the chest. So we weren’t troubled that way. But it *was* blamed hot. The dead smell wasn’t so nice either. But it was better, we figured, to inhale a few bad smells than to get caught.

And how foolish we’d feel if Mrs. Meyers looked into the chest, and found us sitting there like a couple of two-legged sardines! And what a scare *she’d* get! Oh, oh!

Evidently there was dust on the chest. For we could hear her wiping it off. And all the time she was talking to herself.

“This chest has always been a great curiosity to Donald. And if I’ve ordered him away from it once, I’ve ordered him away a dozen times. But it doesn’t do much good. And that’s why I thought I better come up here, when I heard voices. For it would be like him to go snooping around the chest while I was away.”

58

Her voice got stiffer.

“But if I ever catch him rummaging around in that chest,” she sputtered, “it’ll be a sorry day for *him*. I’ll shake him out of his pants. I didn’t tell him this morning, when we were talking about the chest, that I had a strange dream about it last night. I saw Grandpa and Grandma Drummond go to it and take out their wedding clothes. It’s strange how you’ll dream of dead people like that. And I saw others too—and when they had emptied the chest, they went off and left it unlocked. I could see the key in the lock. Why! . . .” came the startled cry. “There’s the key now—just like I saw it in my dream! But I’m not going to be frightened. Not a bit of it. That chest never was unlocked by dead people. Probably Pansy was up here last night. And in her hurry she forgot to take the key away with her.”

I could hear the phone again. For the doors were all open between the attic and the kitchen.

“Goodness gracious!” says Mrs. Meyers. “That must be the phone. I wonder who it is.”

There was a sharp “click.” She was locking the chest! And then, before we could stop her, she hurried out of the attic and down the stairs, closing all of the doors behind her, and locking the attic door.

So we really were locked in double—we were locked in the chest, and we were also locked in the attic.

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Red was ready to risk any kind of punishment now, to get out.

“Ma!” he yelled. “Hey, ma! Come back and let us out.”

I yelled too. And I pounded on the chest. But all Mrs. Meyers heard, when she got to the phone (where she probably stood with the receiver in one ear and her finger in the other), was the voice at the other end of the wire.

Blah, blah, blah, blah! She talked for an hour—more or less! And, of course, by the end of that time Red and I were so done up that we couldn't even twiddle our front teeth.

Locked in a dead chest! It was bad enough to be locked in any kind of a chest—on a hot day like that. But to be locked in a *dead chest*—with the smell of dead people all around us! Oh, oh!

There was a mystery about the chest too. Mrs. Meyers thought that it was full of dead people's things. But it wasn't, though the smell proved it *had* held dead people's things till very recently. Except for us, it was now completely empty.

And I found myself wondering, as the minutes dragged along, and the air in the chest got hotter and hotter, if it actually had been emptied by dead people, as Red's ma had dreamed.

You'll find out about that pretty soon. But now I'm going to let Horse Foot tell *his* part of the story. For he's the guy who rescued us.

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Remember—it's Horse Foot that you're listening to now. But I'll be back again, after the next two chapters.

And then comes the part about the ghost.

Br-r-r-r!

CHAPTER VI

WHAT I DID FIRST

(By Horse Foot)

My name is Samuel Horace Butterfield Rail. My ma's name was Butterfield before she got married to my pa. That's how I got the Butterfield part of my name. For when I was being named after people my ma thought she ought to get in on it and not let everybody else have all the honor. The Samuel Horace part of my name I got from my two grandfathers—my ma's pa and my pa's pa—who worked together in a boloney factory. My ma says I take after *her* pa. And my pa says I take after *his* pa. But Jerry Todd says I take after the boloney factory.

Always kidding! He makes me laugh.

The Rail part of my name I got from my pa. Besides my ma and my pa I've got a sister and six warts. Three of the warts are on my feet. And the other four are on my neck.

My ma calls me Sammy. So does my sister. My pa calls me Sam. And the kids call me Horse Foot. My ma thinks that Horse Foot is an awful nickname for a smart boy like me. But I like it. The best part of a horse is its feet. Any horse can get along without a tail or ears. But a horse can't get along

without feet. Even if it had a head and everything, and stuff to eat with, it can't get over to where the oats are without feet. Of course not. So now you know why the kids call me Horse Foot. It's an honor.

Let's see—what am I supposed to tell next? Oh, yes! How I got Jerry and Red out of the dead chest.

Well, here's how I did it:

I'll start in the attic. Red had some old magazines up there. And when I got there he had the magazines piled near the door.

He and Jerry got to talking about how they were going to get the magazines downstairs. And pretty soon they got to feeling of the muscles in my arms.

I've got big muscles. And I'm the best spitter in our block. I go to Sunday school too.

“Look at that!” says Jerry, feeling of my right arm.

“And look at that!” says Red, feeling of my left arm.

“I never knew he had muscles like that,” says Jerry.

“I didn't either,” says Red.

“I bet he could carry one of those bundles just as easy as anything,” says Jerry.

Red cocked his head on one side.

“I don’t know about that,” says he. “They’re pretty heavy.”

Jerry gave me a nudge.

“Go ahead and show him,” says he.

So I picked up one of the bundles and started off with it.

“W-w-where do you w-w-want it?” says I.

(You see, I put in the stutter part and everything. Jerry told me to.)

“W-w-where do you w-w-want it?” says I.

“Down in the kitchen,” says Red. “But I don’t think you can carry it that far—not a little squirt like you.”

Jerry gave me another nudge.

“Don’t let him kid you,” says he.

So I says: “D-d-don’t let him k-k-kid you—I m-m-mean you c-c-can’t kid me.” And off I went with the first bundle.

It was pretty heavy. But I got downstairs all right. I put the bundle in the kitchen like I was told. And then I went up to the attic again.

Jerry and Red were sitting on a sofa. It belonged to Red’s aunt.

“I feel all tired out,” says Jerry.

“You and me both,” says Red.

And then they saw me.

“What!” says Red, sort of surprised-like. “Are you back already?”

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

“I bet you never carried that bundle all the way to the kitchen,” says he.

“I d-d-did too,” says I.

“Down *both* flights of stairs?” says he.

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

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“Well, I declare!” says he, sort of weak-like. “And so *quick* too. I hardly got a chance to sit down. And here you are all ready to start out with the next bundle.”

“No,” says Jerry. “I don’t think we ought to let him carry any more.”

“I guess you’re right,” says Red. “I don’t think he can stand more than one bundle. You and I’ll have to carry the rest.”

But I showed ’em! I picked up another bundle. And off I went.

They were still sitting on the sofa when I got back.

“You can’t fool me,” says Red. “I know blamed well that you never carried *that* one all the way to the kitchen.”

“I d-d-did too,” says I.

“As quick as *that*?”

“Remember about those muscles,” says Jerry. “He’s strong.”

“Just the same,” says Red, “I don’t think he can do it again.”

“I bet he can,” says Jerry.

“I bet he can’t,” says Red.

“What do you bet?” says Jerry.

“I bet anything you want to bet,” says Red.

“Well, I bet two gumdrops that he can,” says Jerry.

“I bet six gumdrops against your two gumdrops that he can’t,” says Red. “And if you win I’ll kiss a cat.”

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They kept on betting back and forth. And then Jerry took me aside.

“Horse Foot,” says he, “did you ever hear of Jack London?”

“S-s-sure thing,” says I. “That’s where the k-k-king lives, over in England.”

“Of course,” says Jerry. “That’s *one* London. But the one I’m talking about wrote a book. He had the same name—Jack

London. And the book was about a dog.”

“Rin T-t-tin Can?” says I.

“No. I don’t remember the dog’s name,” says Jerry. “But he was a good faithful dog. He loved his master.”

“R-r-rover?” says I.

“Never mind his name,” says Jerry. “That isn’t important. You can call him Fido if you want to. But the point is, he won a bet for his master. Jack London bet that *he* had the best dog in the camp—it was up in Alaska some place. A lot of other men bet. They said *they* had the best dog. But when it came to pulling—Fido won the bet. For he out-pulled all the other dogs in the camp. And that’s what you’ve got to do for me. I’m betting on you, old kid. So don’t go back on me. You’ve got to win that bet for me.”

So I let him load me up. And off I staggered.

He gave a happy yip when I got back.

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“I win the bet,” says he.

And then he patted me on the head.

“Good old Fido,” says he.

“H-h-horse Foot,” says I.

“Of course; of course. I forgot. Good old Horse Foot.”

Red took me aside.

“I know how we can have some fun with Jerry,” says he.

“H-h-how?” says I.

“You let on that you’re all tuckered out. Of course I know you aren’t—not with muscles like *that*. But you let on—see? Make him think you’re all in. Then I’ll bet the other way. He’ll say you *can’t* carry the last bundle downstairs. And I’ll say you *can*.”

I was good and strong, all right. But I didn’t feel like carrying any more bundles just then.

“W-w-why don’t *you* c-c-carry it?” says I.

“But I want to win the bet,” says he.

“What bet?” says Jerry. “Are you going to make another bet?”

Red gave me a nudge.

“We know, huh?” says he.

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

So I let on that I was all in. And then, when Red got Jerry to bet the gumdrops back that I couldn’t carry the last bundle, I grabbed it, and off I went.

Boy! I sure fooled Jerry that time.

Then along came old Emery Blossom, just as I dropped the last bundle in the kitchen. He weighed up the magazines. He took Mrs. Meyers' pile first. He owed her forty cents, he said. Then he weighed up Red's pile. That pile came to sixty cents, he said. But he couldn't make change. So I went off with him, in his old rag cart, to get the money.

When I got back to the house Mrs. Meyers was in the kitchen. She had some stuff in a bowl. And she was stirring it up with an egg beater. There was no sign of Red or Jerry. So I didn't know whether they were still in the attic or not. I thought first I'd ask Mrs. Meyers if they were still in the attic. Then I thought I better not ask right out.

So I tapped on the screen door. And when Mrs. Meyers looked around, I says: "Say, Mrs. M-m-meyers. I've some m-m-money here for you."

That kind of surprised her. And she stopped the egg beater to look at me through the screen door.

"*Money?*" says she. "*For me?*" And then she laughed. "Well, that's good news. I can use a lot of money."

"I g-g-got it from old Emery Blossom, the r-r-rag man," says I. "H-h-he couldn't make change when h-h-he come for your old magazines. So I rode downtown with him and g-g-got the m-m-money."

But I didn't tell her that I had some money for Red too.

"Well," says she, kind of sharp-like, "don't stand there and hold the door open. Look at the flies! Come inside."

Which I did.

“Here I-I-I am,” says I, as I stopped beside the table where she was working.

“How much did old Emery pay you for the magazines?” says she.

“F-f-forty cents,” says I.

“Well,” says she briskly, “suppose you put it in the cupboard for me. For my hands are sticky.”

I looked around.

“Which c-c-cupboard?” says I.

“That one,” says she, pointing.

There was an old sugar bowl on the lower shelf. So I put the money in the bowl, like she said. And then I went back and sat down by the table.

“W-w-what’s that?” says I, pointing at the stuff in the bowl.

“Cake batter,” says she, as she went to beating again. “And I’ve got to keep stirring it with this egg beater for the next ten minutes. But never mind that. Go ahead and tell me how old Emery happened to pay *you*, instead of Donald.”

I kept looking at the stuff in the bowl.

“I b-b-bet it’s a whipped cream cake, huh?” says I.

For I like whipped cream cakes.

“No,” says Mrs. Meyers. “It’s a marble cake.”

I couldn’t see any marbles.

“W-w-where are they?” says I, letting out my neck.

“What?” says she.

“The m-m-marbles,” says I.

She looked at me as though she thought I didn’t know much.

“It’s just called a marble cake,” says she. “It doesn’t have real marbles in it.” And then she started to jaw. “I haven’t the slightest idea,” says she, “what Donald wanted that dollar for. But he certainly will never get it from *me*—not after the way he ran off and left the breakfast dishes. You heard what I told him, Sammy. Just as plain as anything, I said: ‘Donald, gather up the breakfast dishes.’ That’s *exactly* what I said. But did he gather up the breakfast dishes? He did *not*! And did he stay here till my old magazines were sold? He did *not*!”

“D-d-did you see him when y-y-you got home?” says I quickly.

“No,” says she. “I haven’t seen him since Mrs. Todd called me over there. And that was more than an hour ago.”

I was pretty sure now that Red had skinned out, like his ma thought. And I got up to go. But I stopped when the phone rang. I thought maybe it was Red calling up to find out

about his money.

Mrs. Meyers wiped her hands.

“Oh, dear,” says she, on her way to the phone. “I hope it isn’t Mrs. Todd again. Not that I don’t like to help my neighbors. But with this cake on my hands——”

And breaking off, she took down the receiver.

“Hello!” says she. Then she got as nice as pie. “Oh! . . . I kind of thought it was you, Mrs. Todd. What’s the matter?—are you having more trouble with your dress?” There was a short pause. “Oh, you are. That’s too bad. I’m stirring up a cake myself. But, of course, if you need me—” There was another pause. “All right. I’ll be over right away. Good-by.”

I waited at the door.

“If you w-w-want me to,” says I, “I’ll stir your c-c-cake for you while you’re g-g-gone.”

For I could see that she hated to go off and leave it. Besides it’s fun to stir a cake. A fellow gets a chance to lick up the splatters too. My ma says she never has to wipe up the table when I’m around.

“And do you really think you can do it, Sammy,” says Mrs. Meyers, “without getting cake batter all over the kitchen floor?”

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

And to prove it I grabbed the beater and started to work.

“H-h-how’s that?” says I.

“Fine!” says she. “But you better let me put this apron under your chin. For you’re liable to splatter. And I don’t want you to get it all over your shirt.”

I cranked the old beater to beat the cars.

“And one thing more,” says she. “Don’t you *dare* to take the beater out of the bowl and lick it.”

“I w-w-won’t,” I promised. “H-h-honest.”

For why should I lick the beater when I had the table to lick?

“Mrs. Todd had sleeve trouble the first time she called me over. But now it’s the neck. I told her I’d be over right away. You can watch the clock, Sammy. And if I’m not back in eight minutes, you better put the cake batter in the ice box. For I don’t want you to beat it to death. Are you listening?”

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

“What did I say?” says she.

What *did* she say? I kind of forgot.

“About the ice b-b-box?” says I.

“Yes,” says she. “What did I say about the ice box?”

I remembered then!

“In e-e-eight minutes,” says I, “I’m to p-p-put it in the ice b-b-box.”

“Put what in the ice box?”

“The b-b-beater,” says I.

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But the minute I saw her face I knew I was twisted up.

“No, no!” says she. “Not the *beater*. That stuff in the bowl—put *that* in the ice box.”

That’s what I thought all the time.

“O-k-k-k,” says I.

“I’m going now,” says she, as she started for the door.

“Remember, Sammy—watch the clock. And *don’t* lick the beater.”

“I n-n-never lick the b-b-beater,” says I. “For one t-t-time I got my tongue c-c-caught in it.”

“If Donald shows up, tell him to wait till I get back. For I’ve got a bone to pick with *him*, all right.”

And off she went.

Which is the end of what I did first. Now I’ll tell you what I did second—which is the part where I got Jerry and Red out of the dead chest.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT I DID SECOND

(By Horse Foot)

Mrs. Meyers had told me to watch the clock. But it was pretty awkward to watch the clock and jerk the beater too. And pretty soon a big hunk of cake batter jumped out of the bowl and flattened out on the table.

So I got busy. Um-yum-yum! It was kind of sticky. But it was nice and sweet. So I watched the clock some more, so that some more cake batter would jump out. And to give the batter a fair chance I fixed the bowl so I had to watch the clock over my shoulder.

Almost anything could happen then!

Pretty soon I heard a flop. So I stopped the beater and licked. Um-yum-yum! Then I jiggled the beater some more. And when I heard another flop, I stopped again and licked. Um-yum-yum!

It was harder to get the stuff to flop now. For there wasn't much left in the bowl. But I did the best I could. And every time there was a little flop—even just a drop or two—I got busy with my licker. Um-yum-yum!

Then, all of a sudden, I heard a whistle. It was sort of faint and far-away. I ran to the kitchen door. But I couldn't see any whistler. Then I ran to the front door. I tripped on a rug. But I got up again. And I looked out of the front door. But there wasn't any whistler out there either.

I remembered then about my own whistle. And I made a grab for it. But it wasn't in my pocket! I went back to the kitchen and looked on the table. Then I looked under the table. Then I looked on all the chairs. And then I looked in the cake batter. But I couldn't find my whistle.

Mrs. Meyers had told me to put something in the ice box. I thought maybe I had put my whistle in the ice box by mistake. So I looked in the ice box. And when I saw a dish of salmon sitting there, sort of lonesome-like, I ate it up. But I couldn't find my whistle.

I sat down then to figure out where that whistle went to. And I felt of my stomach to see if I had swallowed it by accident. I kind of gurgled too, thinking that maybe the whistle would bob up and down. But the only thing that bobbed up and down was the cake batter and the salmon. Being on top, the salmon bobbed the hardest. But I made it quit bobbing. And all the time I was trying to figure out where that blamed whistle went to.

I bought it in a dime store right after breakfast. And I had it in my mouth when I went over to Red's house. I *knew* I had it in my mouth when I went over to his house, because I played a tune on his back porch. Then I went inside. And Mrs. Meyers says: "What kind of bugs?" and I says: "R-

r-rag-shed b-b-bugs.” And then she took me in the pantry. She gave me a cookie. I couldn’t eat the cookie and blow my whistle too.

So I put the whistle on the kitchen table!

I remembered now, just as plain as anything. I put the whistle on the kitchen table. But it wasn’t there. It wasn’t anywhere near the table. And that meant just one thing—Red Meyers had snitched it on me!

That was him tooting probably. But where was he? He wasn’t in his back yard. And he wasn’t in his front yard.

Was he up on the roof? It sounded like it.

I went outside and looked. I looked on one side of the house, and then I looked on the other side. But he wasn’t on the roof. All I could see was the chimney and a pigeon. And the funny part was that when I went outside I couldn’t hear him at all. I could just hear him when I was inside.

I got to thinking then. He was up in the attic when I left him. His ma thought he had skinned out. But she didn’t *know* for sure. And the chances were he hadn’t skinned out at all. He was still there. And he was tooting for me to come up.

76

So up the stairs I went. But when I got to the top of the attic stairs I couldn’t get in. For the door was locked.

I banged on the door.

“L-l-let me in,” says I.

Red quit tooting then. And I could hear his voice. But I couldn't hear it very well. It sounded like he had his face in a pillow.

Then I heard Jerry.

"We can't let you in," says he, in the same muffled way.

"W-w-why not?" says I.

"We're locked in a chest," says he.

"W-w-whose chest?" says I.

"It's a dead chest," says he.

"W-w-when did it die?" says I.

I thought he was fooling. So I banged the door some more, yelling to him to let me in.

"But I *can't* let you in," says he. "Didn't I just tell you?—we're locked in a chest."

Sure thing, and the chest was dead! But I wasn't born yesterday, even if one of my grandfathers *did* get his whiskers caught in a boloney machine.

"K-k-ketchup and b-b-beans," says I.

If *he* could be smart, *I* could be smart too.

"Please, Horse Foot," says he.

“P-p-please what?” says I.

“Help us out of the chest.”

“L-l-liver and onions,” says I.

“Oh, you dumb cluck!”

“My m-m-ma brags on me too,” says I.

(That’s another bright crack of mine!)

There was a mat in front of the attic door. And I suddenly noticed a key sticking out. Was it the door key? It looked like the door key. But how could Red and Jerry lock the door on the inside and then put the key under the mat on the outside?

I couldn’t even do that myself!

I tried the key in the lock. It was the door key, all right. And having unlocked the door, I opened it. But I didn’t open it quick. I opened it kind of sly-like. For I figured there was a pail of water balanced over the door, or something like that.

But nothing fell down. So I went inside—still kind of cautious-like. And then, just as Jerry and Red had said, I found them locked in a big black chest.

Gee! I never expected anything like *that*. I thought all the time that they were kidding me. I thought they were getting ready to play a trick on me. But the trick was on *them*.

“Where’s ma?” says Red, in the chest.

“Over to J-j-jerry’s house,” says I.

“She locked us in, Horse Foot. And she’s got the key to the chest. But I think you can let us out by unscrewing the back hinges.”

I got to thinking then.

78

“That’s f-f-funny,” says I.

“What’s funny?” says Red.

“Your m-m-ma told me you skinned out. And you s-s-say she locked you in the c-c-chest.”

“She didn’t *know* we were in the chest. And she got away with the key before we could stop her.”

Jerry spoke up then.

“Hurry up and let us out,” says he. “For Red’s ma’ll give us Hail Columbia if she comes back and finds us up here.”

“B-b-but if she’s got the k-k-key,” says I, “how c-c-can I let you out?”

“Get a screwdriver and take off the hinges, like Red said.”

I gave the chest a kick. Then I thumped the cover.

“What’s the matter now?” says Jerry.

“I was j-j-just seeing how t-t-thick it was,” says I.

“What?”

“The c-c-cover.”

“What difference does that make?” says Jerry.

“M-m-maybe I can chop a h-h-hole in it,” says I.

Red gave a squeak.

“Say, you dumb dora! If you ever tried *that*, I would get into trouble. For this chest is ma’s pet. And you talk about chopping a hole in it! Oh, oh! She even has fits if a fly walks on it. So hunt up a screwdriver. And for Pete’s sake step on it. For the only air we get in here comes through a little crack.”

79

I got out my pocketknife.

“M-m-maybe I can turn the screws with m-m-my knife,” says I.

That made Red happy. He thought he was going to get out right away. And he thought I was pretty smart too, to think about the knife.

“Oh, Horse Foot!” says he, like he was talking sweetly to his best girl. “You’re a peach.”

I screwed at the hinges, trying first one and then the other.

“How does it work?” says Red.

“N-n-not so hot,” says I.

For the screws were tighter than the dickens.

“There’s a screwdriver in my room,” says Red, sort of eager-like.

I found then that I could move one of the hinge pins. You know what I mean—the pin that holds the two parts of the hinge together. One part of the hinge was screwed to the cover. The other part was screwed to the chest. And, of course, if I could get the pins out—in both hinges—that would be just as good as taking the screws out. For then the back of the cover could be lifted up, even though the front part was still locked.

Red gave another happy yip when I told him that I could move one of the hinge pins.

“Oh, boy!” says he. “Pull the pin out, Horse Foot.”

80

So I pulled. And I pried with my knife.

“Did you get it?” says Red.

“S-s-sure thing,” says I.

“Now try the other one. And if you can’t pull it out, get a nail and knock it out.”

I got it out.

“T-t-there,” says I, raising the back part of the cover.

“Don’t raise it too high,” says Red, “or you’ll break the lock.”

And then he crawled out. It was a tight squeeze. But he made it. And after him came Jerry.

“N-n-now,” says I, “g-g-give me back my whistle.”

“All right,” Red laughed. “There it is.”

“Yes,” put in Jerry, with a long face, “and it’s a mighty lucky thing for us that we had it. For I don’t think we could have lived in that chest much longer—it was so blamed hot in there.”

“I never thought about the whistle at first,” says Red. “Or I would have used it on ma. But I’m glad now that I didn’t. For it’s a whole lot better for us to get out of the chest without her knowing it.”

He and Jerry put the hinge pins back. And then they asked me about old Emery. They wanted to know if he had been around yet for the magazines. I said he had. And then I got out Red’s money.

81

“How much is there?” says he eagerly.

“S-s-sixty cents,” says I.

He started to yap.

“Only sixty cents for *that* big pile of magazines? The big gyp!”

“H-h-he couldn’t make change,” says I. “So I-I-I rode downtown with him to g-g-get the money. And when I-I-I got it I put your m-m-money in one pocket and your ma’s m-m-money in another pocket.”

Red was still yapping.

“Sixty cents! *Only* sixty cents! I thought sure I’d get a dollar or two. And even that wouldn’t buy half the stuff we need—with a hole in both wings. But a dollar or two was a good start. If I got that much I figured I could get more. And here I am with only sixty cents!”

“H-h-here it is,” says I, passing it over.

He counted it. And while he was doing that I picked up a book to look at. It lay on the floor beside the chest. It was an old book. It had an old look—kind of yellow-like. And it had an old smell.

Jerry wanted to get away. For he was scared that Mrs. Meyers would come back and find us there.

“Come on,” says he. “Put the money in your pocket, Red, and let’s get out of here.”

A coin fell to the floor. I heard it drop. And then I heard it roll.

82

“What the dickens! . . .” says Red. “Have I got a hole in my pocket?”

Jerry picked up the coin.

“It’s an old dime,” says he.

“Let’s see it,” says Red.

Jerry saw the date on it.

“1804,” says he. “That’s over a hundred years. I wonder if it’s any good.”

“It says United States on it,” says Red. “So it ought to be good for ten cents, if it isn’t a fake.”

Then another coin fell to the floor.

“Put your money in another pocket,” says Jerry.

“Suffering cats!” says Red, as he made a jump for the coin.
“That money never dropped out of my pocket.”

He took the coin and looked at it.

“And it’s another dime too,” says he. “Just like the other one.”

“Where did they come from?” says Jerry, sort of wondering-like.

Then he saw my book.

“Maybe they fell out of that old book,” says he.

A third dime fell at his feet.

“Look, Red!” says he. “There’s still another dime. It fell out of that old book, just like I said.”

Red counted.

“Sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety,” says he. And then he laughed. “Shake the book some more, Horse Foot. Maybe we’ll get enough money out of it to buy that motor of old Emery’s.”

“Let me shake it,” says Jerry, reaching for the book.

So I gave it to him.

And suddenly I noticed that there was something wrong with my stomach. I guess the cake batter and the salmon didn’t like each other. Anyway they were kind of shoving each other around.

Jerry and Red went through the book together, page by page, hopeful, I guess, that they’d find some paper money in it. They got another dime—just like the others. But that was all.

“Is it your book?” Jerry asked Red.

“No,” says Red. “I never saw it before. But I think I know where it came from.”

Here the cake batter kicked the salmon over backwards.

“Where?” says Jerry.

Then the salmon kicked the cake batter over backwards.

“Out of the dead chest,” says Red.

The cake batter tried to get away—but the salmon caught it and gave it another kick.

“You know what ma told me,” says Red. “She said the chest was full of keepsakes—stuff that her dead relatives left behind. Evidently this book is one of the keepsakes. Whoever owned it, years ago, put these dimes in it. And then the book was put away in the dead chest, dimes and all. But they’re my dimes now. Whoopee!”

84

That’s what the salmon said too—whoopee! For it was on top now. And it was socking the poor cake batter to beat the cars.

Jerry had a puzzled look.

“But, Red—” he began.

“I know what you’re going to say,” Red cut in. “You’re going to say that my ma lied to me. But *I* don’t believe it—not *my* ma. There’s something goofy about that chest. She *thinks* it’s full of dead people’s things. But someone took those things out. Now, who was it?—a human being or—or a ghost, like ma dreamed?”

I went down with the cake batter.

“Oh-h-h!” I groaned. “Oh-h-h!”

Jerry made a jump for me.

“What’s the matter with you?” says he.

“Oh-h-h! Oh—h-h!” I groaned again. “I g-g-guess I ate t-t-too

much cake batter. Oh-h-h! Oh-h—h!”

And that’s the end of what I did the second time.

Now, you’ll hear Jerry Todd again. I suppose you’d rather hear me. But it’s Jerry’s story. So I’ll have to turn it back to him, even if he doesn’t make it as good as me.

85

I’ll let him tell how he and Red filled me up with castor oil, and how we hid in the attic to watch the dead chest—at midnight, mind you!—and how we went to a fire, and everything.

Boy! We sure had a lot of excitement *that* night—after I got the cake batter and the salmon to shake hands and behave themselves.

This is the one and only Horse Foot now signing off.

Olive oil!

86

CHAPTER VIII IN DISGUISE

Were any of you readers mixed up with when Horse Foot and I switched places? I hope not. Anyway, I'm back.

Sure!—this is Jerry Todd again.

And now for the rest of the story.

Horse Foot told you how he ate the cake batter and salmon. And then he told you what happened in the attic. Boy! Was *he* sick! But he deserved it. For no one but a wooden-headed dumb-bell would have filled up on stuff like that.

Red and I helped him downstairs to the bathroom and dosed him with castor oil. Then we went off and left him in the porch swing. Later the neighbors saw him scooting down the street with hunted eyes. And back of him, on the porch, stood Mrs. Meyers with an empty bowl in her hands. I guess she told *him* a few things! For the easiest thing she can do is to jiggle her tongue. That's why I was so glad to get out of the dead chest without her catching me.

Mum had Horse Foot wrapped up in a blanket when I got home that noon.

“I can’t get him to eat a thing,” says she, with a worried air.

“I don’t see how he could,” says I, “with all that cake batter and salmon and castor oil inside of him.”

Mum gave me a quick look.

“What do you mean?” says she.

I didn’t tell her everything that had happened that morning at Red’s house. For I didn’t want it to get back to Mrs. Meyers. But I did tell about the cake batter and salmon. Mrs. Meyers, I said, had put Horse Foot to work stirring a cake. Then she went off and left him. And when she got home, there wasn’t enough cake batter left to line the hole of a doughnut.

“But where did he get the salmon?” says my mother.

“Out of the ice box,” says I. “He helped himself.”

“Dear me!” says mum. “I always knew he was a little glutton. But I never thought he’d eat cake batter.”

“A kid that’ll chew a hole in his ma’s hot-water bottle,” says I, “is liable to eat anything.”

Then I ran outside. For Red was whistling.

“Don’t ever tell me,” says he, with a shiver, “that my ma can’t jaw.”

“What’s the matter now?” says I.

“Oh, she still thinks that I skinned out this morning after breakfast. And what she told *me* when I got home this noon! Oh, oh! My ears are ringing yet.”

I grinned.

“What did she tell you about Horse Foot?” says I.

“Plenty,” says Red.

“You ought to see him,” says I, with another grin. “Mum’s got him wrapped in a blanket. And his eyes stick out like glazed teacups.”

“Yes,” says Red, “and if I had as much truck inside of *me* as he’s got, I’d expect my eyes to stick out like glazed soup bowls.”

“You aren’t such a poor eater yourself,” I told him.

“But I don’t eat truck like *that*,” says he. “Cake batter and salmon! The wonder is that his stomach didn’t turn completely inside out.”

“I was kind of scared,” says I, “that he’d blab stuff to mum. But he didn’t.”

“And doesn’t she know yet what’s the matter with him?”

“Oh, sure,” says I. “I told her that. But I didn’t say anything about the dead chest.”

That set Red to thinking.

“Jerry,” says he, with an earnest air, “there’s something goofy about that chest. Ma still thinks it’s full of stuff—for she told me so this noon. But it isn’t full of stuff. It’s completely empty. You and I know that. And I’m beginning to wonder if there isn’t a real ghost up there. For you know what she dreamt. And who but a ghost would rob a chest like that?”

“Aw, rats!” says I. “I don’t believe your dead chest was emptied by a ghost. I’d sooner think your pa sold the stuff to the rag man, like you sold your aunt’s old magazines.”

“Don’t kid yourself,” says Red. “If pa ever dared to take a thing out of that dead chest, ma’d yank his ears off. And boy, let me tell you—when she yanks, *she yanks*, and I don’t mean maybe. No, Jerry. It wasn’t pa who emptied that chest; and it wasn’t ma; and it wasn’t Aunt Pansy; and it wasn’t me. It was either a ghost or an outsider.”

“But why should an outsider rob your dead chest?” says I.

“That’s the mystery,” says Red. “I can’t figure out myself what good the stuff would be to anybody—a ghost or anybody else. But it’s a cinch the stuff didn’t walk off of its own accord. Somebody took it. And who more likely than one of the very same ghosts that ma dreamt about last night?”

Ghosts!

“You ought to know by this time,” says I, “that there’s no such thing as a real ghost.”

“Just the same,” says he, with a sharp bob of his head, “it’s

mighty queer where that stuff went to. And I'll always wonder about it."

I saw a chance to have some fun.

"If you really think there's a ghost in your attic," says I, "why don't you turn detective to-night and watch?"

90

He jumped at that.

"Will you?" says he eagerly.

"Sure thing," says I, "if you will."

So it was agreed that we were to disguise ourselves with false mustaches, in regular detective style, and hide in the attic. We'd go up there on the sly. And we'd stay there till something happened, even if it took till midnight.

Of course, I really didn't believe that anything would happen. I just talked that way for fun. You know how kids are. But Red himself clung to the idea that there was a real ghost up there. It had taken everything but the old book. And to-night probably it would come back for the book.

Red and I chased all over town that day looking for glider cloth. And finally we got track of an old tent. Someone told us that we could buy it for a dollar. But after one look at it (boy, was it rotten!), we decided to buy some malted milks instead. Then we bought some police whistles like Horse Foot's. We bought some candy too. And when we met Scoop and Peg, late in the afternoon, we all had ice-cream cones. So I wasn't very hungry when I got home that night.

Horse Foot was waiting for me.

“L-l-let’s do somethin’,” says he.

That sounded like old times! So I wasn’t surprised when he made a dash for the supper table. And the way he massacred the mashed potatoes and gravy! Oh, oh!

91

He was making up for lost time.

“But I never w-w-want any more c-c-cake batter,” he told me, with a wry face, when we started off together at dusk.

I had told Red that I’d meet him in his barn. So that’s where we put on our false mustaches. We stuck them on with gum. And then we all sat down on the front porch.

It wasn’t dark enough yet to do good detecting. Besides, Red’s ma was sitting in the parlor, near the stairs. Red’s pa was there too. It was his night off. And when the talk turned to Red, we all pricked up our ears.

Mrs. Meyers was having another one of her cat-fits.

“—and I says: ‘No, you can’t shake any money out of your bank.’ But you know how he is, Charley. When he gets a notion in his head, you might just as well try to move the Rock of Ages.”

Then we heard Mr. Meyers. He’s a little fellow, with sandy hair and snapping gray eyes. And when he talks, he sort of drags it out. Gee! He can say the *funniest* things.

“The Rock of Ages!” he grunted. “I don’t suppose you mean the Rock of Gibraltar.”

He had a newspaper in his hands—I could see it. And he was kind of grouchy, I guess, because his wife wouldn’t let him read it.

92

Mrs. Meyers jabbed at some fancywork in her lap.

“Either rock is good enough for me,” says she. “And then he asked me if he could wash the porch floors. He wanted to earn a dollar, he said. Well, naturally I asked him what he was going to do with the dollar—for you know how he eats, and I certainly wasn’t going to have him put *that* much candy inside of him—not if I could prevent it. So I says: ‘What are you going to do with the dollar?’ And he says: ‘I’m going to buy something.’ And I says——”

“Yes, yes,” Mr. Meyers cut in impatiently. “You says and he says, and he says and you says. But the point is, *did* Donald get the dollar, or didn’t he? And what’s it all about anyway?”

“He didn’t get it from me,” Mrs. Meyers ran on. “But tonight he came home with his pockets full of candy. I learned too that he and the boys had been eating ice cream—with *his* money, mind you! Well, I was right up on my ear. And I says: ‘Donald Meyers! Have you been shaking your bank?’ And he says: ‘No, I haven’t been shaking my bank.’ And I says: ‘What’s that on your face?’ And he says: ‘Skin.’ And I says: ‘There’s something sticky on your face.’ And he says: ‘Oh, *that*?’ And then he ran his tongue out about six or seven inches. ‘That’s candy,’ says he, giving it a lick. And I

93

says: ‘Where did you get the money for it?’ And he says: ‘I earned it.’ And I says: ‘How?’ And he says: ‘Never mind how.’ And I took him by the ear and I says: ‘Donald Meyers, you tell me how, or I’ll warm up the seat of your pants.’ And I was going to do it too. For I was right up on my ear. But just then the phone rang—it was you calling up to see if it was liver I wanted for supper or beefsteak. I said it was hamburg, with a bottle of ketchup. And when I turned around——”

There was an explosion from Mr. Meyers.

“Suffering codfish, woman! Don’t you ever run down?”

Mrs. Meyers stiffened.

“If you’ll give me a chance to say what I was going to say _____”

“All right, all right,” Mr. Meyers cut in, with a helpless gesture. “I can set here all night if necessary. I’m used to talkies anyway. So take your time. But if you get paralysis of the jawbone, don’t blame me.”

Gee! Mrs. Meyers didn’t like that for two cents’ worth.

“Charley Meyers!” says she stiffly. “That was *entirely* unnecessary.”

“And did you find out where Donald got the dollar?” Mr. Meyers spoke wearily.

“No. He said he earned it. That’s all I could get out of him. He’s got a police whistle too—I almost jumped out

of my skin when he blew it. And to-night, after supper, I caught him cutting hunks out of an old fur piece of mine to make himself a false mustache.”

“Ah-ha!” says Mr. Meyers. “The spot thickens.”

“What spot?” says Mrs. Meyers, with a dumb look.

“Never mind; never mind. Maybe I meant plot. But that’s all right. Go back to the mustache.”

“Well, I says to him: ‘What in the world are you doing with that old fur piece of mine?’ And he says: ‘I’m making myself a false mustache.’ And I says: ‘What for?’ And *now* comes the most mysterious part of all—are you listening?”

“Listening? Woman, I’m positively breathless.”

“Well, I says: ‘What for?’ And he says: ‘I’m going to disguise myself and capture a ghost.’ There now! That’s *exactly* what he said. And it shows plainly enough where his thoughts are. Detecting again! I tell you, Charley, you’ve got to talk to that boy. Or the first thing you know we’ll wake up some morning and find that he’s lugged off all the door knobs to look for finger prints.”

Mr. Meyers laughed.

“And is that all you’ve got to tell me?”

“Honest-to-goodness, Charley Meyers! I honestly believe you’d *like* to see your son running around after robbers and murderers. I haven’t forgotten that detective card

he printed a few weeks ago. ‘Donald Meyers, Juvenile Jupiter Detective No. 446. All kinds of detecting done at reasonable rates. Murders and robberies a speciality.’ Imagine! *Our* son! Murders and robberies a speciality! Ugh! It gives me the cold creeps.”

“I don’t see anything wrong with it,” says Mr. Meyers. “He’s just a kid. And you know how kids are. If he wants to be a detective, let him detect. In fact, I think it’s kind of nice to have a detective in the family. Maybe he’ll find that long-lost collar button of mine.”

“You *would* joke about it—and me all worked up.”

“Shucks! You’re making a mountain out of a molehill.”

“I think he’s been hanging around the dead chest too,” Mrs. Meyers resumed. “For he asked me all kinds of questions about it this noon.”

“Huh!” grunted Mr. Meyers. “I never could see the sense of that dead chest myself.”

“But, Charley! What else is there to do with things like that, when people die? Take that old wedding suit of Grandpa Drummond’s. Do you think that I’d give *that* away? —or burn it up! I should say not. And if I left it hanging on a peg, the chances are that Donald would make a scarecrow out of it.”

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Mr. Meyers laughed.

“It would make a swell scarecrow, with those long tails.”

Mrs. Meyers stiffened.

“Grandpa Drummond was a nice old man,” says she. “And do you know,” she added, with a mysterious air, “I saw him in my sleep last night, just as plain as anything.”

“Still dribbling gravy on his vest, I suppose,” Mr. Meyers spoke pleasantly. “He always did look good in everything he ate.”

That left Mrs. Meyers kind of high and dry.

“Dear me!” says she, with a vacant air. “We started talking about Donald. And now we’re talking about gravy.”

“You mean,” corrected Mr. Meyers, “that *you* started talking about Donald. I was trying to read the newspaper myself. But the play must go on, I suppose. Art is art.”

“The point is, Charley, *are* we going to let him go around with a false mustache on his face, or aren’t we? I hid the fur piece that he cut up to-night. But he’s just as liable to start on your fur coat as not. For detectives have got to have false wigs, you know, as well as false mustaches.”

That brought a growl from Mr. Meyers.

“He better leave that coat alone, if he knows what’s good for him.”

Mrs. Meyers got up then to answer the phone.

“Hello,” says she. “Oh, is that you, Mr. Todd?” There was a

short pause. “Yes, he’s here—I’ll call him. It’s you, Charley.”

Red gave me a nudge.

“Do you hear that?” says he. “It’s your pa, Jerry.”

“I wonder what he wants?” says I.

“Maybe he’s going to make you come home,” says Red.

“I don’t think so,” says I. “For mum told me that I could stay up till midnight.”

Mr. Meyers was talking now.

“Sure thing,” says he. “I’ll grab the old derby and come over right away.”

Then he turned to his wife.

“The Todds want us to come over and play bridge,” says he.

That set Mrs. Meyers to beaming.

“Oh! . . . How nice. I’ll have someone to talk to.”

It was dark now. So they didn’t see us when they came out. And as soon as they were gone, we tiptoed into the house and up the attic stairs.

CHAPTER IX

MIDNIGHT IN THE ATTIC

We had locked the attic door that morning, just like Red's ma had left it. But now we unlocked it. And having closed it behind us, with the key in the lock, we switched on a flashlight.

"Well," says Red, as the flashlight beam stopped on the big black dead chest, "there it is."

Gee! The chest looked more coffin-like than ever. And for a minute or two I began to wonder if I hadn't pulled a boner in coming here. It was my suggestion too!

Still, that was a foolish notion. There's a lot of talk about ghosts. But no one had ever seen a real one. So why should I get the shakes even if the dead chest *did* look like a coffin? Coffins themselves were harmless.

So I got all right again.

Horse Foot was having trouble with his mustache.

"It t-t-tickles," says he.

"I'll fix it," says I.

And yanking it loose I stuck it on his chin.

He liked that.

“I’ve got a g-g-goat,” he told Red.

99

He meant a goatee.

“Yes,” says Red, “and you’ll have a flat spot on the end of your beezers too, if you don’t pipe down. For how can we catch a ghost with you blatting around?”

“Not g-g-ghost,” says Horse Foot. “G-g-goat. S-s-see?” he stuck out his face. “On my c-c-chin.”

“Oh, shut up,” says Red.

We made a hiding place in the furniture. And then we all sat down on the floor. It was dark now. The flashlight was out. And except for the windows themselves I couldn’t see a thing.

Horse Foot yawned.

“S-s-six,” says he sleepily.

“Six what?” says I.

“P-p-pancakes,” says he.

“What are you talking about?” says I.

“B-b-breakfast,” says he.

And then he leaned against me.

“I g-g-guess I’ll go to sleep,” says he.

“Thank heaven,” says Red.

“Oh,” says I, “quit razzing him. He’s just a little kid.”

It was terribly quiet in the attic after that. And I began to nod myself. But I perked up in a jiffy when something zipped by the end of my nose.

“What was that?” says I, with a jump.

“What was what?” says Red.

100

“Something zipped by my nose,” says I.

“Well,” says Red, “if it zips again, grab it.”

He thought I was dreaming, I guess. But pretty soon he heard the same thing.

“It’s a bat,” he squeaked.

A bat!

“Oof!” says I. “I hope it stays over there by the window.”

A train whistled in the distance. Then an old owl came along. And shortly after that we heard footsteps on the front walk.

It was Aunt Pansy, coming home from her beauty parlor.

She turned on the radio to get the late news. Then she came upstairs to bed.

Horse Foot was snoring now.

“I wonder if I’ll have to carry him home,” says I.

“Carry nothing,” says Red. “Put him to bed up here and let him sleep it out.”

“Oh,” says I hastily, “I wouldn’t go off and leave him like that. For he’s a good little kid. And it won’t kill me to carry him as far as my house.”

Red got real generous then.

“He can sleep with me, if he wants to.”

But I shook my head.

“No,” says I. “His ma sent him over to my house. And she might not like it if I left him here.”

Red laughed.

101

“Do you know what I did, Jerry?”

“What?” says I.

“I fixed up a dummy in my bed to fool ma. It looks just like me from the hall. So I’ll be all right if she doesn’t get too close.”

I cocked my ears.

“Listen!” says I.

There was a murmur of voices in the front yard. Then we heard footsteps on the front porch, following which a door opened and closed.

“It’s ma and pa,” whispered Red.

Mrs. Meyers stopped at the foot of the stairs.

“Oh, dear!” says she wearily. “I hate to start up those stairs—I’m so tired.”

“Is that a hint for me to carry you?” says Mr. Meyers.

“Well,” says Mrs. Meyers, with a funny little giggle, “I’ve seen the time you would—when I was young and pretty.”

“Yes,” says Mr. Meyers, “and when you were young and pretty, you didn’t weigh two hundred and thirty-six pounds either.”

“Two hundred and *thirty* pounds,” corrected Mrs. Meyers.

“Well, what’s a pound or two among friends? I’m no Shylock.”

“Don’t forget to put out the cat,” says Mrs. Meyers, as she started up the stairs.

Evidently the cat didn’t want to go out. For we could hear Mr. Meyers chasing it from room to room.

Something fell over.

“Confound it!” bellowed Mr. Meyers.

And he said something else too. But I guess I won’t put it down.

“What’s the matter, Charley?” his wife called down the stairs. “Did you bump into a chair?”

“You and your pesky old cat!”

Then we heard the cat itself.

“Charley!” screeched Mrs. Meyers. “What are you doing to my cat?”

“Oh,” came the pleasant reply, “I’m just kissing it good night. Nice old pussy!”

There was another long-drawn yowl.

“It sounds to me,” says Mrs. Meyers, “as though you’re biting it.”

“Well,” says Mr. Meyers, “why not? It just bit me.”

A door banged. And that was the end of the cat.

Red giggled.

“I bet a cookie,” says he, “that pa threw it halfway to the barn.”

“Sh-h-h!” says I. “He’s talking again.”

“Are you all through down here?” Mr. Meyers called up the stairs to his wife.

“Yes, dear.”

“Donald in?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Then I’ll lock up.”

103

There was more talk when Mr. Meyers came upstairs. But finally everything quieted down. And then, just before midnight, the owl came back.

“I wonder if it’s a graveyard owl?” says Red. “The kind that goes around with ghosts.”

And then he clutched my arm.

“Look, Jerry!” he breathed. “It’s sitting on the window sill.”

Was the big owl peeking at us through the attic window? It would seem so. And then strangely it tapped three times on the window-pane with its beak.

“Shall I let it in?” says I.

“No, no!” cried Red. And then he pulled me down. “Quick, Jerry!” he gasped.

“What’s the matter now?” says I.

“I just saw something over there by the door,” says he.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

It was the owl at the window.

And at the same time, on the other side of us, someone, or *something*, was slowly opening the attic door.

Was the owl itself a ghost? I had read about such things. Or was it just an ordinary owl after all?

That part was settled when I heard the faint tinkle of a bell as the owl flew away.

It was a real owl, all right. But it wasn't a wild owl. It was a *trained* owl. And it had a bell on its neck.

104

Red was still staring at the attic door.

“What do you see?” says I.

But he didn't answer.

I was scared stiff now. For I realized that we were heading into something weird.

“Red!” I cried. “Why don't you answer me? What's the matter with you?”

He got his voice then. But it didn't sound like his own voice at all. It sounded like something out of a well—sort of hollow-like.

“Jerry!” he gasped. “*Look!*”

The door was open now. And we could see a long white arm. It carried a flashlight. And hitched to the other end of the arm was a big white body.

But it wasn't a ghost, as we both thought at first.

It was Aunt Pansy, in a long white night-gown!



IT WAS AUNT PANSY, IN A LONG WHITE NIGHT-GOWN!

I heard something go down Red's throat. It was his tonsils, I guess.

"Well, I'll be cow-kicked!" says he.

I thought his aunt would put us out. But instead, she passed us without seeing us.

Red gripped my arm.

"She's sleepwalking," says he, in a low voice.

"How do you know?" says I.

"I can tell by the dumb look on her face."

"Well, looks *do* run in the family," says I. "And she's your own aunt."

105

"Don't get funny," says he.

It was plain to be seen who had emptied the dead chest. Aunt Pansy had done it in her sleep. And now she was looking around for the final book.

She found it on the floor beside the chest. We saw her pick it up. Then she started for the stairs.

Red quietly took after her.

"Come on, Jerry," says he.

“How about Horse Foot,” says I.

“Leave him here till we get back.”

I couldn't get the thought out of my head that Aunt Pansy would turn around and see us on the stairs. But she didn't. And then to our further surprise, she disappeared into a storeroom at the end of the hall, where we heard her winding something.

Red was ahead of me.

“What is it?” says I. “A clock?”

“No,” says he. “It's a little music box.”

The phone rang downstairs.

“I bet it's your ma,” says Red. “For it's after twelve.”

Mrs. Meyers came into sight then, talking to herself.

“That pesky phone!” she grumbled, as she started sleepily down the hall. “This is a nice time of night for it to ring. But I suppose I've got to——”

106

That's where she saw us. And, boy, did *she* screech! Oh, oh!

“Charley! Come quick! There's burglars in the house.”

Red took after her.

“It isn't burglars, ma.”

That brought Mr. Meyers out.

“What’s the matter?” says he gruffly, as he stepped into the hall. “Who yelled?”

“It was ma,” says Red. “She saw Jerry and I in the hall. And she thought we were burglars.”

Mr. Meyers looked kind of stormy.

“But what are you and Jerry doing out here at this time of night? Why aren’t you in bed? And what have you got that hairy stuff on your face for?”

Hairy stuff! Gosh! I saw now why Mrs. Meyers screeched.

Red was dancing.

“We just solved a mystery, pa.”

Then in swung Mrs. Meyers.

“I knew it!” she cried. “I knew it! There now, Charley Meyers! I guess you’ll listen to me after this when I tell you a few things about our smart young son, and what’s good for him and what isn’t. That boy hasn’t been in his bed at all. Like as not he fixed up a dummy in his bed to fool me. And all the time he’s been gallivanting around the country with that silly mustache of his. Just like I told you. But this is the end. To-morrow that mustache goes into the fire.”

Then all eyes turned on Aunt Pansy, as she came out of the storeroom with the little music box in her hand.

“Why! . . .” says Mrs. Meyers. “That’s Pansy! And she’s got Grandpa Drummond’s old music box.”

Mr. Meyers quickly caught his wife’s arm.

“Don’t touch her,” says he, in a low voice. “For she’s walking in her sleep. And if you wake her up now, you’ll scare her into fits.”

A queer shivery feeling stole over me as the sleepwalker came on down the hall with the tinkling music box. A ghost itself couldn’t have looked spookier. I was mighty careful not to get in her way. And then, having passed us without seeing us, she turned into her own room and closed the door.

Mrs. Meyers was the first one to speak.

“Now I know what made me dream of the dead chest,” says she. “It was Pansy walking around in her sleep.”

“Yes,” says Red, “and I can tell you something else too.”

“What?” says his ma.

“Aunt Pansy took all the stuff out of the dead chest and hid it in the storeroom.”

“Huh!” grunted Mr. Meyers. “Maybe we better lock her in her room after this, or she’ll lug off the piano.”

108

“Don’t be silly,” says Mrs. Meyers.

“I wonder,” added Mr. Meyers, in that droll way of his, “if the

bathtub's still there. Maybe I better look."

"I always knew that Pansy wandered around in her sleep," says Mrs. Meyers. "But I never dreamed that she'd do anything like *this*."

Mr. Meyers gave a disgusted grunt.

"And now, I suppose, all those precious old wedding pants and hoop skirts have got to be lugged back to the attic again."

"Absolutely," says Mrs. Meyers, in a way that left no room for argument.

Red started down the hall.

"Come on, ma," says he. "I'll help you."

He wanted to see the stuff, I guess. But his ma told him that she was too tired to move it.

"Let it go till morning," says she.

Then who should come into sight at the head of the attic stairs but little Horse Foot.

"P-p-pancakes," says he sleepily.

Gosh! I thought that Mrs. Meyers' eyes would pop out of her head.

"Merciful heavens!" says she. "Are all the boys in town here?"

“No,” laughed Red. “Just three Juvenile Jupiter Detectives.”

“And have you three boys been in the attic all night?” says Mrs. Meyers.

“Sure thing,” says Red. “That’s where the mystery was. So we stayed up there till we solved it. And was Jerry ever scared when an old owl tapped on the window! He thought it was a trained owl. And I said it was a graveyard owl. But I guess it was just a common old owl after all.”

109

The owl had nothing to do with Aunt Pansy. I could see that. But I knew it wasn’t a common old owl, as Red said.

For common old owls didn’t go around with bells on their necks!

Right then I was close to the solution of one of the strangest mysteries that we ever tackled, as boy detectives. But I never realized it.

I thought the mystery was over! But I was soon to learn that the real mystery had scarcely begun!

Yes, you’re going to hear some more about that belled owl.

And how!

110

CHAPTER X

RED'S PREDICAMENT

The phone rang again.

"I'll answer it," says I, jumping down the stairs.

And sure enough, just as I expected, it was mum.

"Jerry!" says she. "Come home—quick!"

Gosh! I didn't like the sound of her voice. It had a bad sound.

"What's the matter?" says I quickly.

"It's your Aunt Emma. I just got a long-distance call from Indianapolis. She's in a hospital—an auto hit her. It's serious. And I'm getting ready to start for there right away."

"*To-night?*" says I, surprised.

"Yes," says she.

"How are you going?" says I. "On the train?"

"No. Your father's going to drive me over in the car. He's getting it ready now."

“How about me?” I spoke quickly.

“You can go if you want to, Jerry. But I’d rather leave you at home. For you’re big enough to take care of yourself. And I can’t half close up the house on such short notice.”

Red was listening at my elbow.

“Oh, Jerry,” says he. “Don’t go. Please.”

“It’d be a swell ride,” says I.

“But it won’t be any fun when you get there—with your ma hanging around the hospital all the time. You won’t know any kids, or anything.”

“That’s true too,” says I.

And right then and there I decided to stay at home. For I had Horse Foot on my hands. I hated like the deuce to dump him back on his ma. Besides if mum wanted me to stay at home, and keep house till she got back, that was the proper thing for me to do.

I could cook the meals. And Horse Foot could make the bed. Gee! I felt awfully sorry for Aunt Em, of course. For she’s the best aunt I’ve got. She and mum are sisters. But I felt kind of happy too. For I could see all kinds of fun ahead.

Yes, sir-ee! Horse Foot and I would have a circus.

I carried him home on my back. For he was half asleep.

“P-p-pancakes,” says he, as I jiggled him along.

But the excitement at home soon woke him up. And when he learned that he and I were going to keep house together, he actually threw his arms around my neck and kissed me.

112

The little prune!

I thought he was a pest at first. But I kind of liked him now. I guess it’s good for an older boy to have a younger one to take care of.

Mum and dad drove off hurriedly at twelve-thirty, telling me the last thing to be careful of fire and not bring in too many boys to track up the house. I could get some of my meals downtown, mum said. And she told me where I’d find spending money. Dad at the same time whispered to me to take good care of Horse Foot. He’d wire me from Indianapolis, he said, just as soon as he got there. And he further promised that he’d start for home as soon as Aunt Em was out of danger.

Horse Foot went to sleep in a morris chair while I was outside talking to mum and dad. So I had to carry him upstairs and undress him. And what a time I had. For he was as limp as a wet dishrag.

“For Pete’s sake!” I finally exploded. “Can’t you wake up long enough for me to pull your pants off?”

“Oh, J-j-jerry,” he gurgled. “D-d-don’t. Let me go to sleep.”

“But you can’t go to sleep with your pants on—you big egg!”

“D-d-did you carry me home, J-j-jerry?”

“Yes,” I grunted. “I was the horse.”

113

He was wide awake now.

“Say, J-j-jerry,” says he excitedly.

“Well?” says I.

“D-d-did you see a g-g-ghost in Red’s attic?”

“No,” says I, “we didn’t see a ghost. But we did find out who took the stuff out of the dead chest.”

“W-w-who was it?” says he. “A r-r-robber, Jerry?”

“No. It was Red’s aunt.”

“Aunt P-p-pansy?”

“Nobody else but. She did it in her sleep. She’s a sleepwalker.”

“And d-d-didn’t she k-k-know that she d-d-did it?”

“No. And she doesn’t know it yet—unless she found out after I left, with *you* on my back.”

“But w-w-where was I when you saw Aunt P-p-pansy walkin’ around?”

“Sound asleep on the attic floor.”

“And didn’t Aunt P-p-pansy wake up at a-a-all, while she was walkin’?”

“No. She walked up the attic stairs and down again. Then she went into a storeroom where she had the stuff hid. Then she went back to bed again. And she was asleep all the time.”

“That’s f-f-funny,” says Horse Foot, with a puzzled face. “For I c-c-can’t even set up when I’m asleep.”

114

“And do you think you can set up long enough now,” says I, “for me to pull your pants off?”

But he decided to do it himself. And pretty soon we were both ready for bed.

He couldn’t get over the fact that he and I were going to keep house together.

“We’ll f-f-fry onions, huh?” says he happily.

Onions!

“Oof!” says I. “You *would* think of that—you little rubber gullet.”

“Um-yum-yum!” says he, patting his stomach. “I l-l-like fried onions.”

“Well,” says I, pointing to the bed, “jump in quick.”

“L-l-let’s open the window,” says he.

“It is open,” says I.

“I d-d-don’t feel any breeze,” says he.

“Well, fan yourself with the covers,” says I.

“S-s-shall I sleep in b-b-back?” says he.

“Suit yourself,” says I. “For you’re company.”

“O-k-k-k!” says he.

And in he jumped.

I turned out the light.

“Say, J-j-jerry,” says he, as I got in beside him, “do you know any g-g-good stories?”

“Lots of them,” says I. “But I’m too tired to tell stories to-night.”

“I k-k-know one about a-a-a donkey egg,” says he.

115

A donkey egg!

“You dumb cluck!” I snorted. “Donkeys don’t come out of eggs.”

He started his story:

“A-a-a green Irishman come to this c-c-country and saw a-a-a

cocoanut in a basket at a store. He s-s-said to the storekeeper: ‘What’s that?’ And the storekeeper thought h-h-he’d have some f-f-fun with the Irishman, and he s-s-said: ‘That’s a donkey egg.’ Pat thought he’d l-l-like to raise a little d-d-donkey. S-s-so he t-t-took the cocoanut home and s-s-set on it like a s-s-settin’ hen. But it d-d-didn’t hatch. So P-p-pat got mad, and threw it a-a-away. It r-r-rolled down a hill and struck a b-b-brush pile. And out jumped a r-r-rabbit. And P-p-pat yelled: ‘Come back. You’re my father.’”

Boy! Did *I* laugh!

“You got that all twisted up,” says I. “You mean Pat yelled: ‘Come back. I’m *your* father.’”

“H-h-he thought the rabbit was a little d-d-donkey,” explained Horse Foot.

I yawned.

“Well, so much for that,” says I. “Now let’s go to sleep.”

But he was bound and determined to entertain me.

“I k-k-know a riddle t-t-too,” says he.

I gave him a kick.

116

“Oh, never mind your riddle now,” says I. “I’m too tired to guess riddles. So shut up and go to sleep.”

But he was like the Rock of Ages that Mrs. Meyers told about—kind of hard to move.

“Upon the h-h-hill there is a m-m-mill, and in front of the m-m-mill——”

I jumped in then.

“In front of the mill there is a walk, and under the walk there is a key. *Mill-walk-kee!* Now go to sleep.”

“I g-g-guess you know that one, huh?” says he then.

“Almost,” says I.

“One to t-t-two, and t-t-two to t-t-three, and t-t-three to——”

“What are you counting?” I cut in. “Your toes?”

“How l-l-long till breakfast,” says he.

Suffering cats!

“I thought you were sleepy a few minutes ago,” says I.

“I w-w-was,” says he. “But I g-g-got over that.”

“Well,” I snapped at him, “try to get over *that* and get sleepy again. If you don’t, I’m going to make you sleep alone.”

But instead of shutting up, he just started off on another track.

“Say, J-j-jerry,” says he, “did you ever d-d-dream of an ef-ef-effalent?”

“A *which?*” says I.

“An ef-ef-effalent?”

“What’s an ef-ef-effalent?”

“Why, a b-b-big animal with a t-t-trunk at one end and a-a-a vanity case at the other.”

An ef-ef-effalent!

“You mean an elephant,” says I.

“D-d-did you ever dream of one, J-j-jerry?”

“No,” I spoke shortly.

“I d-d-did.”

I let on that I was snoring.

But he rambled along just the same.

“Say, J-j-jerry, do you know how t-t-to get down off an ef-ef-effalent?”

I gave another snore.

“Say, J-j-jerry,” says he, punching me in the ribs, “do you k-k-know how to——”

“Yes,” I blatted back at him, “I know how to get down off an elephant—*with a stepladder.*”

He laughed.

“N-n-no,” says he.

“Isn’t that the answer?” says I, surprised.

“N-n-no,” says he again. And he laughed harder than ever.

“You c-c-can’t get down off an ef-ef-effalent,” says he.

“Why not?” I grunted.

“You g-g-get down off a g-g-goose.”

Down off a goose! Ouch! And I let him pull *that* one on me!

118

I made a jump for him.

“For *that*, mister wise-cracker,” says I, “I’m going to put this pillow on your face and set on it.”

And I did it too.

“There now,” says I, as he clawed and kicked. “How do you like *that*—ef-ef-effalent?”

“Hel-lup!” he squawked under the pillow. “Hel-lup!”

Then I heard a police whistle in the yard.

“It’s Red,” says I, jumping out of bed.

Horse Foot came after me.

“W-w-who?” says he, as I switched on the light.

“Red,” says I. “He’s blowing his police whistle under the window.”

Horse Foot began to paw around for his clothes.

“W-w-where are they?” says he.

“What?” says I.

“My p-p-pants,” says he.

“I didn’t tell you to put on your pants,” says I.

“But I w-w-want to blow my whistle like Red. And how can I blow my w-w-whistle like Red if I can’t find my p-p-pants?”

I left him looking for his pants and ran to the window. For Red was calling to me now.

“What’s the matter?” says I wonderingly. “What got *you* up again?”

119

The light from my room shone on his face. And I saw then that something had happened. For he was actually white.

“Oh, Jerry!” says he, in a troubled voice.

And he started to tell me something. But I couldn’t hear it. For Horse Foot had finally found his whistle. And he was tooting in my ears.

“Shut up—*you*,” I yelled over my shoulder.

Then I looked down again at Red.

“What’s the matter?” says I. “Are you sick?”

Boy! He looked sick.

Horse Foot gave another shrill toot.

“*Give me that whistle,*” I yelled.

And grabbing it, I yanked it away from him.

He was dancing in front of the window now.

“J-j-jerry! L-l-look! Red’s climbing a t-t-tree.”

“I wonder what that kid wants,” says I.

He was right outside the window, on a limb.

“Hey, Jerry,” says he. “Pull out your window screen. I’m coming in.”

“Gosh!” says I, as the limb cracked under his weight. “You better go easy. Or you’ll break your neck.”

“I can make it,” says he, “if you get the screen out of the way.”

So I took the screen out. Then I gave him my hand. And in he came in such a hurry.

“I hope your pa didn’t hear me,” says he.

“And is *that* why you climbed the tree?” says I.

“Yes. I was afraid your pa’d hear me, if I yapped any more down there.”

I laughed.

“You’d have to yap pretty hard,” says I, “to make *him* hear you.”

“What do you mean?” says Red, with a quick look at me.

“He’s already on his way to Indianapolis,” says I.

“Huh?” Red stared stupidly.

And then he began to dance.

“Oh, boy! That’s good news. I didn’t think he’d start so soon. But now you can help me.”

“Help you what?” says I.

“Jerry,” says he, with a long face, “let me tell you something. If you had six hundred and seventy-nine hornets sitting on you, with red-hot stingers, you would be twice as lucky as me.”

“It sounds bad,” says I.

“It *is* bad,” says he. “And if I don’t get those old dimes back before morning, it’s going to be a whole lot worse too.”

I misunderstood him.

“Oh! . . .” says I. “Then the old dimes weren’t any good, huh? I kind of thought so when we found them in your attic.”

“Any *good*?” he squawked.

121

And then he groaned.

“Oh, oh, oh! When I think about it, Jerry, it makes me sick all over. *A hundred and twenty dollars*. Oh, oh, oh!”

“A hundred and twenty dollars what?” says I, excitedly.

“That’s what I paid for those malted milks that we got, and all that other stuff.”

I knew better than that.

“You did not,” says I. “You sold your aunt’s old magazines for sixty cents—for I helped you and I know. And you spent forty cents in old dimes that you found in your attic in an old book.”

“Sure thing—four old dimes worth thirty dollars apiece. That’s what I’m trying to tell you, Jerry.”

Boy! As the saying is, I was getting no place fast!

“What’s the matter with you anyway?” says I. “Did you fall out of bed on your head?”

His face got longer than ever.

“Honest, Jerry,” says he. “Those old dimes are worth thirty dollars apiece. They’re part of a coin collection.”

I still felt kind of buzzy in my upper story.

“But how can a dime be worth more than a dime?” says I.

“Do you remember the date on those old dimes?”

“No,” says I.

122

“Well, *I* do,” says he. “It was 1804. And 1804 dimes, like that, are worth thirty dollars apiece—because they’re so rare, like old postage stamps.”

Horse Foot tried to get his whistle back. But I gave him a shove. And the next thing I knew he was downstairs thumping as loud as he could on the piano.

“Isn’t he the dumb cluck?” says I. “Playing a piano at this time of night!”

Red closed the door to make it quieter.

“Jerry,” says he, “I’m telling you the truth about those old dimes. They belong to a friend of Aunt Pansy’s. He’s a coin collector. And when he went away—I guess he’s over in Egypt, or some place like that—he asked Aunt Pansy to keep his coins till he got back. She was scared of robbers. So she hid the coins in the attic. And now, if I don’t get them back, she’s liable to go to jail.”

But I didn’t swallow that.

“Shucks!” says I. “If the old-coin man’s a friend of hers, as you say, he wouldn’t put her in jail for one hundred and twenty dollars.”

Red gave me a look that made me think of a sinking ship.

“But I haven’t told you the worst, Jerry. You know about those old magazines. Well, that’s where Aunt Pansy hid the rest of the coin collection.”

“In the magazines?” says I, staring.

123

“Yes,” Red spoke weakly. “And I sold them for sixty cents.”

Gosh! I saw then that he *was* in a pickle.

“As yet,” he resumed, “Aunt Pansy doesn’t know that the magazines are gone. But she’ll find out in the morning. And that’s why I sneaked out to-night.”

I did the best I could to cheer him up.

“Shucks!” says I. “I wouldn’t worry about it if I were you. For you know where the dimes are. Mugger’s restaurant got the most of them. But Mr. Mugger will gladly give them back. For he’s a good friend of ours. All we’ve got to do is to go down to the restaurant and tell him. As for the old magazines—well, we know where *they* are. Old Emery probably dumped them into his big rag shed as soon as he got home. I bet he never even untied them. So all we’ve got to do is to buy them back. Then we can slip them into your attic, and your Aunt Pansy’ll never be the wiser.”

Red breathed easier then.

“I was in hopes you’d help me,” says he. “But I was afraid maybe you couldn’t sneak out, like me.”

“I don’t have to sneak out,” says I. “For I’m my own boss now.”

And all the time Horse Foot was downstairs thumping the piano for dear life.

“Did I tell you how I found out about the coins?” says Red.

124

“No,” says I.

“Aunt Pansy woke up shortly after you left. And ma told her then how she had been walking in her sleep. Aunt Pansy still had the old book that she got in the attic. And when she saw the book she says: ‘Goodness gracious! I hope I didn’t lose the dimes.’ Ma says: ‘Whose dimes?—Mr. Cadwell’s?’ And then is when I heard that the old dimes were worth thirty dollars apiece. Aunt Pansy knew they were in the old book—for she put them there herself. It wasn’t like we thought at all—about the dimes being in the book for years, I mean. Boy! I felt weak. And when I found out about the complete coin collection—hidden in those magazines—I felt weaker still. Oh, oh! And then is when I got ready to sneak out. For Aunt Pansy is going dime hunting the first thing in the morning—she thinks she dropped the old dimes in the attic. So I’ve got to save *my* hide to-night—if I can.”

I went to the head of the stairs and called Horse Foot.

“Come on upstairs and dress,” says I. “For we’ve got work to do.”

And then I got into my own clothes, after which we locked ourselves out of the house and started down the street to Mugger’s all-night restaurant.

CHAPTER XI

URGENT BUSINESS

The street lights go out in Tutter at one o'clock. For the town is short of money. So we found a lot of dark patches under the trees on Main Street. And dark patches in a shady village street, at that time of night, are kind of spooky, let me tell you.

Then to make things all the spookier for us a bell tinkled lightly over our head.

It was the big owl! It was following us from tree to tree!

Red didn't know till then that the owl was belled. For he hadn't noticed the bell through the attic window. He was too busy peeking at the "ghost," I guess.

"A belled owl!" says he, in a hollow voice. "Good night nurse! Here's where I scam."

And off he went on the jump.

He wasn't scared of the owl itself—I don't mean that. But like me he had the idea that whoever had belled the owl was hanging around. And there we were in a dark empty street!

Horse Foot came up limping.

“I g-g-guess I got the w-w-wrong foot in the r-r-right shoe,” says he in a sleepy tone.

126

Suffering cats!

“Do you think you can change them in the dark?” says I.

“W-w-what?” says he.

“Why, your shoes, of course,” says I.

“My s-s-shoes are all right,” says he. “It’s my f-f-feet that got mixed up.”

I took him and set him down on the curb. Then I yanked off his shoes. And all the time I could hear the owl moving about in the overhead branches. Tinkle! Tinkle! Tinkle! Every “tinkle” seemed to get closer. Boy! That wasn’t so hot.

Horse Foot had his ears up.

“W-w-what’s that?” says he, as the tinkling continued.

“Santa Claus,” says I.

And then I jerked him to his feet.

“How’s that?” says I.

“L-l-let me try,” says he.

And off he went on the run.

Red was waiting for me at the corner.

“I was just beginning to think,” says he, “that the owl got you.”

“I wonder who it belongs to,” says I, looking back.

“Nobody that *I* know,” says Red. “At least I never heard of any trained owls around here.”

“It must have been belled for a purpose,” says I. “And it must have been following us for a purpose. But I can’t figure it out.”

127

“And do you suppose,” says Red, “that it knew we were in the attic?”

“Why not?” says I.

“It must be a pretty smart owl,” says he, “if it knew that.”

“I’d like to catch it,” says I. “But I don’t think I’d have the nerve to do it at night.”

Red sniffed.

“Cigar smoke,” says he.

Which proved that there *was* someone behind us in the shadowy street. For that’s where the wind came from. But we couldn’t see or hear anyone—not even the owl now.

“Let’s hurry,” says Red, in a shaky voice.

Horse Foot was still clattering along ahead of us. And suddenly he darted around the corner of Hill Street.

“Where did he go to?” says I, when we got to the corner.

Red pointed across the street.

“There he is,” says he.

“But what’s he doing over there?” says I. “The restaurant isn’t on that side of the street.”

“It looks to me,” says Red, “as though he’s heading for the fire station.”

“Hey, you!” I yelled, as Horse Foot stuck his head in the fire-station door. “Get out of there.”

But he thought he was a fire gong now.

128

“Ding-dong! Ding-dong! Ding-dong!” says he, in the open door.

“Is there anybody there?” Red spoke anxiously.

“I hope not,” says I.

But there was.

When I got to the door, Horse Foot was talking to a tousle-headed old man, whose sagging suspenders showed plainly enough that he had just jumped out of bed.

“Sammy!” came the amazed cry. “Is that you, really?”

“Y-y-yes, Uncle Tom,” says Horse Foot. “It’s m-m-me.”

“Sure, I never expected to see the likes of you downtown at this time of night,” says the puzzled old man, as he blinked his sleepy eyes.

It was old Tom Mason, the fire-truck driver. I never knew till now though that he and Horse Foot were related. Nor did I know that he stayed at the fire station all night.

He’s the only paid fireman we have. The other firemen are all volunteers. And when an alarm is turned in, they come running from all over town.

Horse Foot ran around the big red fire truck.

“S-s-say, Uncle Tom,” says he, “C-c-can I have a r-r-ride?”

I knew he wouldn’t get a ride at that time of night. But his uncle hated to tell him so right out.

129

“I’m afraid, Sammy,” waggled the kindly old man, “that I won’t be able to take you out to-night. For this is Wednesday night. An’ I’ve had me orders from the mayor not to take the truck out on Wednesday night unless there’s a fire. Sure now, if you’d happened along on *Tuesday* night or on *Thursday* night——”

“And c-c-can I g-g-go to-night,” Horse Foot cut in, “if there is a f-f-fire?”

“You sure can, lad. An’ right up there on the front seat too.”

Horse Foot promptly sat down on the side of the truck.

“A-a-all right,” says he. “I’ll w-w-wait.”

The old man blinked. And a funny look flashed across his wrinkled face.

“Oh, oh!” says he. “Sure, I didn’t except *that*.”

Horse Foot then got out his false mustache.

“L-l-look, Uncle Tom,” says he. “I’m a d-d-detective now.”

“A detective, huh? Well, well!”

“I’ve g-g-got a police whistle too.”

“And a whistle too!” the old man pretended amazement.

“Now, can you feature that.”

“I came downtown with J-j-jerry Todd,” Horse Foot continued. “We’re d-d-detecting.”

130

The old man had noticed me in the doorway. And now he gave me a wink.

“Sure,” says he to Horse Foot, “’tis mighty proud I am to be the uncle of a real detective. But don’t you think, lad,” came the kindly advice, “that you ought to let Jerry take you home and tuck you in bed? Sure, detectives need a lot of sleep, you know.”

Horse Foot yawned.

“I g-g-guess I w-w-will go home,” says he.

“Well, good night, Sammy.”

“G-g-good night, Uncle Tom.”

I grabbed the little ape as soon as he came out and waltzed him across the street.

“That’s m-m-my Uncle Tom,” says he. “H-h-he drives the f-f-fire truck. And he’s going to give me a r-r-ride as soon as there’s a f-f-fire.”

“Oh, shut up,” says I. “You’re hopeless.”

A big fat Greek met us at the restaurant door.

“Vell, boys,” says he, as he bustled behind the counter, “what can I do for you? Nize sandwiches. Sodas. Or maybe some pie you would like, huh?”

“We want to see Mr. Mugger,” says Red.

“So! . . . You teenk I no good vaiter, huh?”

“Sure thing,” grinned Red. “But we want to see the boss.”

“Vell,” the Greek threw back his shoulders, “why no you look?”

“But you aren’t the boss,” says Red.

“So! . . . Maybe you teenk meester Mugger vork all time, huh? Day and night. No, no! Heem vork till twelve. I vork till morning.”

Red’s face fell.

“Then he isn’t here?”

“No,” shrugged the Greek. “Heem home in bed now.”

Red and I went into a huddle.

“Who is that bird, Jerry?”

“Search me,” says I.

“I never saw him before.”

“Nor me. But I suppose he’s some cheap night cook that Mr. Mugger picked up.”

“Blame it!” growled Red. “I wish that Mr. Mugger himself was here.”

“So do I,” says I. “For I don’t like to say anything about thirty-dollar dimes to that Greek.”

“I know what we *can* do,” says Red.

“What?” says I.

“We can call Mr. Mugger on the phone. I guess he wouldn’t mind getting out of bed for a minute or two.”

“Yes,” says I, “and all the time you’re talking on the phone, old grease spot over there will be sifting dimes out of the cash register.”

“I guess you’re right,” says Red.

“Suppose we wait till to-morrow,” says I.

132

“And get my neck broke, huh?” Red spoke miserably.

“Listen!” says I. “You’ll be all right if you get the magazines. For your aunt doesn’t know you took the dimes. She thinks she lost them herself, walking around in her sleep. So let *her* look for them. And afterwards, you can be the hero and find them for her.”

“If—” says Red gloomily.

“If what?” says I.

“If they’re still here.”

I had been wondering about that myself. For I knew how often small coins changed hands in a store. And if Mr. Mugger had the slightest idea that the old coins weren’t any good, he’d trade them off just as quick as he could.

I took a long peek at the cash register.

“Boy!” says I. “I wish I had x-ray eyes.”

“You and me both,” says Red.

Horse Foot then galloped into sight from the kitchen.

“S-s-say, Jerry,” says he. “D-d-do you like h-h-ham?”

“Sure thing,” says I.

“They’ve got a b-b-big one out there,” says he, pointing to the kitchen.

I started for the front door.

“Come on, gang,” says I.

“What?” says the Greek. “No beesiness?”

And to tempt us he brought in the big baked ham that Horse Foot had told us about. Oh, oh! What a ham! And what a heavenly smell! Fresh from the oven too.

133

The Greek cut off a big slice and slid it into a bun.

“It’s good,” says he, smacking his lips. “An’ for you I make ’em nize an’ theeck—vhat?”

“How much are they?” says I.

“A neeckel.”

I turned to Red.

“Is your money all gone?” says I.

“All but a penny,” says he.

“I’ve got plenty at home,” says I. “But I haven’t a cent with me.”

“How about you, Horse Foot?” Red then inquired.

“Yes, Horse Foot,” I chimed in, “come over here and let me feel around in your pockets.”

“W-w-what for?” says he.

“Money,” says I.

“I-I-I’ve got a quarter,” says he.

A quarter!

“My little pal,” says I, draping my arms around him.

And all the time, of course, I was feeling in his pockets.

“H-h-hey!” he yipped. “G-g-get out of my p-p-pockets.”

I had the quarter now. A nice big shiny silver quarter!
Boy! A million dollars couldn’t have looked better to me then.

134

“Thanks,” says I.

“H-h-hey!” he yipped again. “That’s m-m-my quarter. G-g-give it back, you b-b-big gyp.”

I turned to the Greek.

“What if we buy a whole quarter’s worth?” says I. “How

many do we get then?—six?”

“What? Seex? For a quarter only? Five you geet, an’ no more.”

“All right,” says I. “Let’s have them. That’ll be two apiece for the biggest of us and one for the smallest.”

Horse Foot was trying to jump on my toes.

“G-g-give me m-m-my quarter,” he screeched.

“Don’t mind him,” I told the Greek. “For he always acts like that after his bedtime. And you can see by the clock up there how late it is.”

Red leaned over the counter.

“Don’t make mine too fat,” he told the Greek.

“So! . . . I feex heem.”

Horse Foot was whimpering now.

“I’m going to tell my m-m-ma on you, Jerry Todd.”

“Tut, tut,” says I. “Wipe your nose and keep still.”

“T-t-two for you and Red and only o-o-one for me! And you t-t-took my quarter too.”

135

“But you’re the smallest,” says I. “One is all you need.”

“I’m g-g-going to tell my ma, all right. You j-j-just see. And

I'm g-g-going to tell on you t-t-too, Red Meyers."

Red slipped me a wink.

"Say, Horse Foot," says he, "I'll flip you, if you want me to."

"H-h-how?" says Horse Foot.

"I've got a penny. See? We'll flip it. If you win, the two sandwiches are yours. But if I win, they're mine. Is it a go?"

Evidently Horse Foot had flipped before!

"And d-d-do I get h-h-heads or tails?" he spoke excitedly.

"Sure thing," says Red. "If it's tails, you lose. And if it's heads, I win. All right. Watch the penny."

He gave it a toss.

"Well," says he, when the penny fell to the floor, "what is it, Horse Foot?"

Poor Horse Foot!

"H-h-heads," says he faintly.

"And that means I win," says Red. "But you can't say I didn't give you a chance."

"D-d-darn it!" growled Horse Foot. "I n-n-never was lucky, like y-y-you."

The sandwiches were ready now.

“Um-yum-yum!” says Red. “Boy, do they look handsome.”

Horse Foot made a lunge for the counter.

“I w-w-want two,” says he.

But I got there ahead of him.

“Sometime when you make a grab like that,” says I, “you’re going to throw your arm out of joint.”

“I w-w-want two,” he screeched again.

“Well,” says I, “I suppose I can flip with you, like Red, if you insist on it.”

“N-n-no!” he screeched. “I w-w-won’t flip.”

“All right then,” says I. “Take what you get, Horse Foot.”

“I w-w-won’t!” says he, giving the solitary sandwich a shove.

“Go ahead and eat it,” says I. “Don’t be a baby.”

But he wouldn’t touch it. Boy! He sure was a spunky little rascal.

“All right then,” says I. “Leave it. And I’ll flip Red for it.”

Red came up for air.

“Oh, yah?” says he, with mustard on his chin. “Heads *you* win and tails *I* lose, huh? Not much.”

To tell the truth I never intended to eat both sandwiches. For I wouldn't cheat a little lad like that. But it was fun to get him excited.

"I'll give you a chance," I told him finally.

"H-h-how?" says he.

137

"Put out your hands," says I.

"W-w-what for?"

I showed him how to do it.

"Now," says I, "tell me how many fingers you've got."

"And t-t-thumbs too?" says he.

"Yes," says I. "Fingers and thumbs too."

"I k-k-know how many I've got," says he.

"How many?" says I.

"T-t-ten," says he.

"And you're willing to bet on that?" says I.

"S-s-sure thing," says he.

"All right," says I briskly. "I bet you've got eleven fingers. And you bet you've got ten. Now if I win, the two sandwiches are mine. And if you win, they're yours."

Boy! He could taste the sandwiches already.

“Um-yum-yum!” says he, patting his stomach. “M-m-my sandwiches.”

“Just a minute,” says I. “Just a minute. Let’s count your fingers. We’ll start at this end. One, two, three, four, five. That’s one hand. Now we’ll keep on with the other hand: six, seven, eight, nine, ten.”

He started to dance.

“I w-w-win! I w-w-win!” he cried.

“Just a minute,” says I. “Just a minute. Let’s go back. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six. How many’s that?”

“S-s-six,” says he.

“Six on that hand,” says I. “And how many on the other?”

138

“F-f-five,” says he slowly.

“And how many’s six and five?” says I.

Boy! Did *he* look sick.

“L-l-leven,” he faltered.

“There you are,” says I. “The two sandwiches are mine.”

He started to count to himself in a puzzled voice.

“O-o-one, t-t-two, t-t-three, f-f-four, f-f-five.” He paused. “S-s-six, s-s-seven, e-e-eight, n-n-nine, t-t-ten.” He paused again. “T-t-ten, n-n-nine, e-e-eight, s-s-seven, s-s-six.” There was another pause. “F-f-five, f-f-four, t-t-three, t-t-two, o-o-one.”

Then he made a jump for me.

“*H-h-hey!*” he yipped. “Give me that other s-s-sandwich.”

And he got it too. But I got half of it back. Red also gave each of us a big bite out of his second sandwich. So we all came out all right.

Just as we were finishing up, the fire bell rang.

“F-f-fire!” screeched Horse Foot. “F-f-fire!”

And out through the door he tumbled.

There was a roar from the fire station as old Tom got the motor going. The big double doors swung back with a clang. And out came the truck, with Horse Foot in the front seat.

He was cranking the siren. And as the firemen came into sight one after another, and jumped onto the moving truck, Red and I jumped on too. Then away we went. Down Hill Street, across the canal bridge, and off to the right toward the cement mill.

Talk about excitement!

But the most exciting part was yet to come.

CHAPTER XII

POOR RED!

The school bell was ringing now. For everything with a clapper in it rings in our town when there's a fire.

"Listen!" I screeched to Red, as we went around a corner on two wheels, with the motor roaring and the siren shrieking. "There's the school bell. It's time for school."

"Whoopee!" he screeched back. "Some ride, huh?"

"*And* how," I screeched again.

He tried to get around me.

"Let me by, Jerry," he nudged.

"What for?"

"I want to get up with Horse Foot and help him crank the siren."

"You better hang on where you are," I advised.

"Yes," one of the firemen yelled across the truck, "quit changing around over there, or you'll fall off."

So Red decided to stay where he was.

Horse Foot kept on cranking the siren.

“D-d-did you hear that, J-j-jerry?” he yelled back to me, as he gave the crank a particularly fast flip.

141

“Whoopee!” I yelled. “Do it some more, Horse Foot. Twist her old tail clean off.”

So he went at it harder than ever.

Presently we came to another corner. Old Tom had to sock on the brakes this time, to keep from hitting the curb. And then, as he got the truck straightened around again, off we went faster than ever.

“Hey, Jerry!” screeched Red, as we tore on like a thundering giant. “I can see the fire.”

“Where?” I screeched back.

“See?” he pointed in the direction of the cement mill. “The sky’s all red. And look at the sparks. Oh, mamma! And the smoke!”

We struck another corner.

“Hang on,” I screeched, as the truck began to slue.

“There goes my cap, Jerry.”

“Never mind your cap.”

The whole town was awake now. We could see cars starting up. And we could see men darting around half dressed.

They thought that the mill was burning up. And they were worried about their jobs. But I could see now that it wasn't the mill. It was more in the direction of old Emery's house.

Red suddenly clutched my arm.

“Jerry!” he squealed. “It's the rag shed—it's old Emery's rag shed!”

Yes, and I saw then, as we swung up beside the fire and stopped, that the shed was doomed. For it was burning inside and out.

142

One of the firemen quickly took charge.

“Now, men,” he ordered gruffly, “git down there with the chemicals. And you, Brady—git the main hose coupled.”

I stopped to help with the hose. For it got kinked. And when I looked around Red was gone.

“Now,” further directed the chief, “up with the ladder. That's it. But don't climb on the roof. It's nothing but a shell. And it's goin' to fall in any minute.”

“We'll never save that shed, chief,” one of the men cried.

“I know it. But we can save old Emery's house.”

The water came then. I could feel the hose harden under my

feet. And I could hear a sizzle too, like millions of fighting snakes, as the water struck the flames.

I found Red on the other side of the fire.

“You scared me,” says I.

“How?” says he.

“I thought maybe you had gone in after your magazines,” says I.

“I tried to,” says he, looking into the flames. “But it was too hot.”

“Did you see the magazines?” I followed up.

“No,” was his depressed reply. “And I guess I never will see them now. Nor the glider either.”

143

The glider! Gosh! I had forgotten all about it.

“Let’s look around,” says I quickly. “Maybe someone took it out.”

But we couldn’t find it. Nor had any of the baled rags or papers been taken out. Everything was in the fire.

We had kids all around us now. And more kept piling into the pasture every minute, together with their parents. For a fire like that is a big event in Tutter.

Then along came Peg.

“I thought I’d run into you guys sooner or later,” says he, with a broad grin.

“We came with the firemen,” I bragged.

He didn’t believe that.

“Oh, yah?” says he, with a skeptical air. “Let *me* tell one.”

“Honest,” says I.

And I told him how it happened. We were downtown looking for old coins, I said. And if the fire hadn’t beat us to it we had planned to get more old coins out of the rag shed. I told him how the coins got there too—and everything.

All this set Red to groaning again.

“Oh, oh!” says he, as he stared despairingly into the fire. “I’ll get an awful licking for this. For everything’s gone now, except the old dimes.”

144

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that,” says I. “For magazines don’t burn up like wood. They just burn on the outside and stop. And when they’re in a pile they don’t burn at all hardly. So if we can find where the magazines were piled, I bet we’ll come out all right.”

“But how can I put the money back in the attic, like Aunt Pansy had it, if the magazines are partly burned? For she’ll notice that right off.”

“Don’t worry about the magazines,” says I. “If we get the

money—that'll suit your aunt.”

“Oh, oh!” he further suffered. “I never dreamt when I sold those magazines that they were stuffed with money. And now they're burning up. Oh, oh!”

“I wish now,” says I, as the roof caved in with an added shower of sparks, “that we had come here first. For we might have saved the magazines then.”

“Why didn't we come here first, Jerry?”

“Because we just didn't think about it, that's why. We had to go through town—that was the best way. So it was natural to stop at the restaurant first.”

Peg spoke up then.

“Did the glider burn up too?” he inquired.

“Yes,” replied Red. “I lost the glider and the magazines and everything else.”

145

“Poof!” says I. “Forget about the glider. For it was a wreck anyway.”

“But I was going to fix it up,” wailed Red.

“Let's hunt up old Emery,” says I, “and find out exactly where he put the magazines. For there's an awful lot of stuff in there. And there's no use digging through the whole pile.”

“He was over there a few minutes ago,” Peg pointed.

I started off. But Red stopped me.

“No, Jerry,” says he hastily. “Don’t go around on that side. There’s too many people there. And I’d be worse off than ever if I ran into ma or pa.”

I saw what he meant. His folks didn’t care about him going to a fire. But he’d catch it for sneaking out.

Then along came old Emery, sort of wabbling and crazy-like.

“Git out of my way,” says he, as I ran to meet him. “Git out of my way. Cain’t you see my rag shed is burnin’ up?”

“The fire’s almost out now,” says I. “The firemen put it out with the hose.”

“Yes,” quavered the old man, “an’ what the fire didn’t ruin, the water did. Everything I owned! It took every dollar I had to buy them bundles of rags. An’ now they’re all gone.”

I got a box for him to sit on. For he was trembling like a leaf.

146

“They’re all gone,” he further wailed. “They’re all gone. They’re all burned up.”

“A lot of the rags are left,” I told him. “They just burned around the edges. And I bet you can save a lot of the old paper too.”

“But my shed—it’s gone! An’ my machines are gone!”

“And did you lose that little glider motor too?” says Peg.

“Why, no—” the old man began.

And then he stopped short. He had that same queer look on his face—that crazy look. And he started talking crazy.

“An’ fire an’ brimstone shall rain upon the earth,” he mumbled, “an’ there shall be a weepin’ an’ a wailin’ an’ a gnashin’ of teeth. . . . It’s the beginning of the end. The day of judgment is at hand. I’ve seen the signs. An’ I’ve heard the call. The others scoff. But old Emery knows! Old Emery knows! An’ when the day comes, old Emery will be ready! Crazy old Emery! He reads his Bible too much! That’s what they say. An’ they jeered at me when I got ’em out of bed to listen. But Old Emery knows! Old Emery knows!”

Peg got my ear.

“Do you know what he means, Jerry.”

“Partly,” says I.

“Someone turned an owl loose around here with a bell on its neck. He heard it flying around. And he thinks it might be a warning angel.”

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I stared.

“But how did you find out about the owl?” says I.

“I saw it.”

“When?”

“The other night when we were here.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about it?” says I.

“I was going to,” says he. “But I forgot it in the excitement—with that bull chasing us around, and everything.”

“I saw the owl too,” says I.

And I told him where. But that’s all I had time to tell him just then. For there was too much other stuff going on around us.

“How did the fire start?” I asked old Emery.

“I don’t know,” waggled the old man. “I was in bed when it started. An’ I didn’t even know that there was a fire till the people started yellin’.”

“Did you have a stove in there?” I further inquired.

“No,” he replied. “The fire didn’t start from any stove of mine.”

He was still shaking like a leaf. And there was sweat all over his forehead. So I used my handkerchief on him.

“How about that last load of magazines?” says I. “Did they get burned up too?”

For it suddenly occurred to me that the magazines might still be in his wagon.

But it was a vain hope.

“Yes,” says he, “I lost the magazines too. I lost everything. An’ the sooner the end comes now the better.”

“Do you remember exactly where you put the magazines?” I followed up.

“Over there,” he pointed. “In that corner. That’s where I put all my baled paper. I had that on one side an’ the rags on the other. I was goin’ to sell everything too, in a day or so. But now there’s nothin’ to sell but ashes.”

I stepped aside for the fire chief.

“Well, Emery, that’s all we can do for you,” the chief spoke gruffly. “Sorry we didn’t get here sooner. Spontaneous combustion, I reckon.”

Old Emery didn’t understand that.

“You mean,” he faltered, “that it—it jest blew up itself?”

“You prob’ly had some oily rags in your bundles.”

Another fireman came up. For they had nothing to do now except to gather up their hose and other stuff.

“Any insurance, Emery?” the fireman inquired.

“No, no,” waggled the broken old man. “It’s all gone.”

“Not all of it,” says the chief. “You’ll have a smelly job

sorting the rags. But you can save a lot.”

I watched the firemen pick up and leave. Then I started looking around for Horse Foot. But he was nowhere in sight. Nor had I seen him since we arrived at the fire.

“Suffering cats!” I squawked. “Do you suppose he went off with somebody else?”

“Who are you talking about?” says Peg.

“Horse Foot,” says I.

“Maybe he rode back to town with his uncle,” says Red.

“No,” I shook my head. “He wasn’t on the truck. I’m sure of that.”

A whistle blew in the distance.

“That’s him now,” says I, with a sigh of relief.

And I ran to meet him.

“Where have you been?” says I.

“D-d-detecting,” says he. “And I s-s-saw him t-t-too.”

“Who?” says I, staring.

“The m-m-man who started the f-f-fire.”

I stared harder than ever.

“What man?” says I. “Who are you talking about?”

“Old w-w-warty nose,” says he.

Old warty nose!

I took him by the neck.

“Tell me,” says I. “Or I’ll choke it out of you.”

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But he wiggled loose.

“G-g-gee!” says he, with dancing eyes. “Wasn’t that a b-b-bully fire?”

I gave him a kick.

“Pipe down,” says I. “For there’s old Emery. And the fire is a big loss to him.”

The crowd rapidly thinned out. So we helped the old man home. And then we started for home ourselves, satisfied that it would be useless to try and dig for the coins that night.

I took Horse Foot with me.

“Who did you mean by old warty nose?” says I.

“The t-t-tramp who started the f-f-fire.”

“Do you mean to tell me,” says I, looking back at the ruins of the rag shed, “that there was a tramp living there?”

“S-s-sure thing.”

“Who told you so?”

“The n-n-neighbors. They saw him g-g-going in and out, sort of s-s-sneaky-like.”

And someone had peculiarly turned a belled owl loose in the neighborhood!

“Did you see the tramp?” I spoke quickly.

“S-s-sure thing.”

“Where did he go to?” I followed up.

“T-t-that way,” Horse Foot pointed toward the river road.

“But why didn’t you call me?”

“H-h-he told me n-n-not to.”

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“He told you *what*?” I gurgled.

“H-h-he told me n-n-not to call you.”

“And did you talk with him too?”

“S-s-sure thing.”

“Where?”

“Over t-t-there,” Horse Foot again pointed toward the river road.

“What did he say to you?”

“He s-s-says: ‘Are you following me?’ And I s-s-says: ‘Yes.’ And he s-s-says: ‘What for?’ And I s-s-says: ‘I’m a detective, and I’m going to arrest you.’ And he s-s-says: ‘What for?’ And I s-s-says: ‘For arsenic.’ And he s-s-says: ‘For arsenic?—what do you mean—arsenic?’ And I s-s-says: ‘Arsenic is fire.’ And he s-s-says: ‘Oh, you mean arson?’ And then he looked at me real s-s-sharp and s-s-says: ‘Who told you I burned up that shed?’ And I s-s-says: ‘The neighbors.’ And then I s-s-says: ‘I’m going to call Jerry Todd to help arrest you.’ And he s-s-says: ‘Oh, don’t call Jerry Todd—call Christopher Columbus.’ And I s-s-says: ‘Who?’ For I didn’t know who C-c-christopher Columbus was. And he s-s-says: ‘Adam and Eve.’ And I s-s-says: ‘Who?’ And then he t-t-tripped me up and r-r-ran away. But h-h-he had a wart all right. I s-s-saw it.”

Well, of all things!

I left him and caught up with Peg.

“I found out where that owl came from,” says I.

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“Where?” says Peg.

“A tramp brought it here. And that’s why it was hanging around the rag shed the other night. For the tramp has been living there on the sly.”

“Who told you?”

“Horse Foot.”

“And who told him?”

“He heard the neighbors talking about it to-night at the fire.”

“Maybe that’s how the fire started,” Peg spoke quickly.

“It was,” says I. “The tramp practically admitted it to Horse Foot.”

“Come again,” says Peg, with a puzzled air.

I told him then how Horse Foot had talked with the mysterious tramp on the edge of the crowd, and what followed.

“But how did Horse Foot pick him out?” puzzled Peg.

“By the wart on his face, I guess.”

“And all that happened right here under our noses—oh, oh! And we never knew a thing about it.”

“I feel cheap too,” says I.

For we were real detectives, while Horse Foot was just a beginner. And yet he had talked to the fire bug, and everything. It seemed almost unbelievable.

“The neighbors should have told old Emery,” says I, “that he had a tramp in his shed. For that would have saved the place.”

“But why did the tramp burn it up!” puzzled Peg.

“Search me,” says I.

“Gosh!” says Peg. “I’m glad he didn’t burn it up when we were sleeping there.”

That set my thoughts to jumping.

“Did you ever dream that someone was bending over you in your sleep?” says I.

“Lots of times,” says Peg.

“Well,” says I, “that’s what I dreamt the other night when we were in the shed. I didn’t think anything of it at the time. But now I know that someone *was* bending over me. It was that tramp.”

“I think he actually touched *me*,” says Peg. “For I woke up sudden-like. That’s when I heard the belled owl. Of course, I didn’t know then that it was an owl. But I found out when I got up. For I saw it just as plain as anything.”

We were about to cross the canal bridge now. And suddenly a car swung into sight and stopped.

It was Red’s parents!

Mrs. Meyers had a shingle. And having collared poor Red she took him across her knee, right there in the street, and warmed him up for fair.

“I’ll teach you,” says she, “to sneak out of your bed in the middle of the night and go gallivanting around the country without telling me.”

Spat, spat, spat, spat, spat!

And did Red yell! Oh, oh!

When the paddling was over, his ma yanked him into the car. Then they all drove off toward home, Mrs. Meyers glaring at us, Red still yelling, and Mr. Meyers sort of grinning to himself.

Horse Foot was weaving now. He was all in. So I again took him on my back. And when I got him home, I dumped him into bed pants and all.

Boy! Was *I* tired!

I thought I'd go to sleep myself as soon as I touched the pillow. But I didn't. I lay there thinking about the belled owl and the mysterious tramp. I did a lot of thinking about old Emery too, wondering if I ought to tell him that his "warning angel" was nothing but a belled owl.

The tramp himself, so stupidly warned by Horse Foot, probably had skinned out for good. And so we might never learn why he set fire to the rag shed. Or it was entirely possible, I considered, that the fire was an accident. He was smoking on Main Street—if that *was* him behind us. And he might have dropped some fire from his cigar when he got back to the rag shed. Then the fire drove him out.

The owl was the queerest part of all. I had jumped to the conclusion that it was a trained owl. And I had told Red that it purposely tapped on the attic window. It knew we were there. And later it had followed us down the street. But I had no

proof that it was a trained owl. It could very well be a wild owl. The bell possibly was just a joke. And it was just a coincidence, or whatever you call it, that the owl had happened along when we were in the attic.

On the other hand it was entirely possible that the owl was a trained owl, just as I had said. In which case, of course, it would vanish with its master.

A lot depended on whether the owl was still around. So I decided to wait and see. If it was a wild owl, and I could get old Emery himself to help me capture it, that would be the surest way of convincing him of his folly. And until I knew the truth about the owl, I decided to keep still about the tramp too.

With that I dropped asleep.

CHAPTER XIII

AMAZING DEVELOPMENTS

Horse Foot and I slept right through till ten o'clock the following morning. And I guess we wouldn't have woke up then if someone hadn't started banging on the back door.

Horse Foot woke up first.

"G-g-get up," says he, punching me in the ribs.

"Huh?" says I, rubbing my eyes.

"S-s-someone's pounding on your b-b-back door," says he.

The sun was blinding. And I could tell by the heat waves that came through the bedroom window, and the droning sounds, that the morning was half gone. But I didn't know exactly what time it was till I jumped up.

I should have sent Horse Foot to the door. For he was all dressed except for his shoes. But instead I bounded down the stairs myself, dressing as I ran. And when I got the back door open, there stood Mr. Meyers with a face a foot long.

He came in without a word.

“Well,” says he finally, in his odd way, “how does it seem to wake up in the middle of the forenoon with a thirty-dollar malted milk inside of you?”

A thirty-dollar malted milk! So that’s what made him so long-faced!

“Did—did Red tell you about the old dimes?” I spoke weakly.

“Yes,” he growled, “I know all about the dead chest and the dimes and everything else.”

“We found the dimes in an old book,” says I.

“Yes,” says he, “I know about the book.”

“And the magazines too?”

“Yes,” says he again, “I know all about the magazines.”

I dropped limply into a chair.

“And what are you going to do now?” says I. “Paddle me too?”

He laughed. But it wasn’t a jolly laugh.

“No, Jerry,” says he, with a grave air. “You’re in no danger of a paddling. And don’t get the idea either that I’ve been over home laying it on Donald. He told me the story of his own accord. And so, instead of paddling him, I’m in duty bound to help him.”

What a relief!

“Where is Red?” says I. “In bed?”

“No. He’s been up for two hours.”

“But why didn’t he come over?” says I, surprised.

“He’s had orders from his ma to stay at home this morning.”

“And does *she* know about the missing coins too?” I spoke anxiously.

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“No,” came the quick reply. “And that’s what I came over to see you about. For I want you to help me get the coins back before either Donald’s mother or his aunt learn that they’re missing. Not that I believe in family secrets. But the women would worry their heads off if they knew what Donald had done. And I want to prevent that if I can.”

“When did Red tell you about the missing coins?” says I.

“This morning at daybreak. His conscience hurt him so much that he couldn’t sleep. So I got in bed with him. And then’s when he told me the whole crazy story, starting with the dead chest and ending with the fire.”

“And did he tell you about the belled owl too?” says I eagerly.

“He mentioned an owl.”

“It peeked at us through the attic window,” says I. “It tapped on the window too, with its beak. That made us think it was a

trained owl. But I'm not so sure about that now."

"I'm more interested in those coins," says Mr. Meyers, with an anxious air, "than I am in owls. And the sooner we get the coins the better. For I can't keep my wife and her sister out of the attic very long. And, of course, once they get up there and find the magazines gone, the fat will be in the fire."

"If you want me to," I offered eagerly, "I'll get Horse Foot out of bed and start searching the ruins right away."

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For Red was my pal. And I wanted to help him all I could.

"Horse Foot?" repeated Mr. Meyers, searching my eyes. "Is he here too?"

"Yes," says I. "He's staying with me while my folks are away."

"When did they leave?"

"At twelve-thirty."

"And when did Donald get you out of bed?"

"Shortly after they left."

"His ma thinks he slipped out to exercise his false mustache. In fact, that's what I thought myself, until I got in bed with him. And that's why I took his punishment so lightly last night."

“How did you happen to miss him?” says I.

“Oh, his ma wanted to go to the fire. And, of course, she knew how he’d yell if she didn’t take him too. But when she went in to wake him up, he wasn’t there.”

“She gave him an awful paddling,” I shrugged.

“It sounded bad,” says Mr. Meyers. “But I don’t think it hurt him half as much as he let on. Or even if it did, he deserved it—meddling in his aunt’s stuff that way, after all we told him. The little scallawag! He deserves to be warmed up at both ends. But I can’t go back on my own son. I was a kid once myself. And I don’t remember that I got the backache from carrying a pair of wings around.”

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I bet he didn’t!

“Are you going to help us search the ruins?” I then inquired.

“I’d like to, Jerry. But I’m afraid I can’t get away from the theatre this morning.”

“I wish Red could go with me,” I spoke longingly.

“So do I. But orders are orders. And the less we stir up his mother right now the better.”

“How many coins are there altogether?” I asked.

“Two hundred and twenty-six.”

“Gosh!” says I. “That’s a lot.”

“The complete collection is worth upwards of six thousand dollars.”

Six thousand dollars! And Red had innocently sold the coins for sixty cents! Oh, oh!

“I’m hoping,” Mr. Meyers continued, “that we can get the coins back before night.”

“I’m sure we can,” says I. “For the fire didn’t last long enough to completely burn up the magazines. And it takes a lot of heat to melt silver.”

“You want to be careful, Jerry, how you poke around. For we’ll be worse off than ever if you get the coins scattered in the ashes.”

“We already know where the magazines were piled,” says I.

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“Fine!”

“And shall I tell old Emery what we’re looking for?” says I.

“I’d rather not, Jerry. For the fewer that we let in on the secret the better for us.”

“How about Mr. Mugger?” says I.

“I’ll talk to him myself.”

Here Horse Foot let out a yell from the head of the stairs.

“P-p-pancakes,” says he.

And down he came, three steps at a jump.

Mr. Meyers went off grinning.

“I’ll let you know,” says he, “about the dimes.”

“Yes,” says I, “and I’ll let you know about the other coins.”

Horse Foot sat down on the bottom step to lace his shoes.

“W-W-who was it?” he inquired, as I hurried around him to get my own shoes.

“Mr. Meyers,” says I.

And then I stopped on the stairs.

“You needn’t bother to wash up this morning,” says I. “For we’ve got a dirty job ahead of us. And I won’t have time either to bake pancakes. So, as soon as you get your shoes on, run outside and grab the milk. And when I come down we’ll have some cornflakes.”

A door banged while I was tying my shoes. And I naturally thought, when I came downstairs, that I’d find the milk bottle on the kitchen table. But instead, the bottle set on the front porch, exactly where the milk man had left it. And Horse Foot himself had completely disappeared.

I got the milk and brought it inside, thinking, of course, that Horse Foot would soon show up. He probably had run home

to talk with his little sister through the window, or something like that. And to hurry him along I yelled to him from the back porch.

Peg came in then. And was he ever the dirty looking specimen. Oh, oh! All he needed, to complete the picture, was kinky hair.

“What’s the matter?” I grinned. “Did you and Santa Claus get mixed up in the same chimney?”

“I’ve been searching the ruins,” says he, as he stopped at the sink to wash up.

“Hot dog!” says I.

And I ran my hands into his pockets.

But they were empty.

“Evidently,” says I, “you stopped at Red’s house and unloaded.”

“No,” Peg shook his head.

“But where are the coins?” says I.

“I didn’t find any,” says he. “And what’s more I didn’t find any glider braces either.”

Glider braces!

My head was in a jumble now.

“What do you mean?” says I.

“I mean,” says he slowly, “that if there ever were any coins in those old magazines, they were taken out *before* the fire. And so was the glider.”

I didn’t care about the glider. It was all smashed up anyway. But I hated to think that the coins had gotten away from us.

“And are you sure,” says I, “that you dug around in the right place?”

“Of course.”

“Were the magazines badly burned?”

“No. I could even read Aunt Pansy’s name on some of the covers.”

“And the coins weren’t there, huh?”

“No.”

“But where did they go to?” I puzzled.

“Jerry! Use your head. It was the warty-nosed tramp, of course.”

The warty-nosed tramp! And why not? He had been living in the rag shed. He probably picked up one of the magazines to read it—for they were on top of everything else. And out dropped a coin. That set him to searching for more coins. And so he got the whole bunch, except the four old dimes that we

had spent in the restaurant.

I raced to the phone and called up Mr. Meyers.

“I’ve got some bad news for you,” says I.

“Well,” says he, “let’s hear it.”

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“You know that owl that I told you about?”

“Yes.”

“Well, the guy who belled the owl has got the coins.”

“Make it plainer, Jerry.”

I told him then that the rag shed had been fired by a warty-nosed tramp. And I further told him *why* the shed had been fired. The tramp had found the coins, I said. And he had fired the shed to make us think that everything had been burned up.

“And do you think the tramp was following you last night, and listening to you, when you and Donald started for the rag shed?”

“Sure thing,” says I. “We smelt him.”

“Huh?” says Mr. Meyers.

“His cigar,” I added quickly.

“Oh! . . .”

“The owl was there too,” says I. “We could hear it. But we

lost track of it when we got downtown. And then is when the tramp hurried around us and started the fire.”

“And did you say that you heard the owl when you were in the attic?”

“Sure thing. It tapped on the window.”

“By the way,” says Mr. Meyers, “I’ve already run down two of the old dimes. And I expect to get the others before noon.”

“Fine!” says I.

“But if what you tell me is true,” he spoke, with a worried air, “I’m liable to lose the rest of the collection.”

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“Why don’t you go to Bill Hadley,” says I, “and have him put out a dragnet?”

“I believe I will.”

“It’s your only chance,” says I.

“And shall I send Bill to you for a description of the man?”

“Old Emery’s neighbors,” says I, “can give you a better description than me. For all I know about the tramp is what Horse Foot told me.”

“But what’s the purpose of the belled owl, Jerry?”

“That’s what I’d like to know,” says I.

“And shall I tell Bill about the owl too?”

“If you want to.”

“A belled owl!” Mr. Meyers spoke reflectively. “If the owl is a pet, it may lead us to the thief. Had you thought of that, Jerry?”

“Sure thing,” says I. “And to-night I’m going to set up and listen.”

“And you’re absolutely sure,” Mr. Meyers pinned me down, “that what you heard last night *was* a belled owl?”

“Just as sure as I’m standing here,” says I. “For I saw the owl through the attic window. I saw the bell too. And what’s more, Peg saw the owl night before last.”

“Was it belled then?”

“Yes.”

“And old Emery thinks it’s a warning angel, huh, Jerry?”

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“Yes.”

“By the way, Jerry, I heard something when I got downtown this morning.”

He was talking in a different voice now.

“What?” says I.

“About that glider of Donald’s.”

“Oh! . . .” says I.

“Were you with him when he had that ruckatuck with the bull?”

“Yes.”

“Humph! It’s a wonder he didn’t end up with a broken neck.”

“It was the glider,” says I, “that got broken up.”

“Where is it now?”

“We left it in old Emery’s rag shed. And we thought it got burned up last night. But Peg says now that it didn’t. For it had a lot of iron braces on it. And he couldn’t find a single one this morning.”

“And is it your idea that the tramp ran off with the glider too?”

“We think he took it out of the shed and hid it.”

“What for?”

“We don’t know.”

“Well, I’d look around, if I were you. For a thing like that couldn’t go far. And if the tramp did take it out of the shed before the fire, as you think, he may come back for it.”

I hung up then. But I hadn't gone two feet from the phone before it rang.

It was Horse Foot this time.

"S-s-say, Jerry," says he excitedly. "I've g-g-got one of the old coins."

"One of the dimes?" says I quickly.

"N-n-no. It's a quarter."

"Where did you get it?" says I.

"At R-r-randall's grocery."

"And is that where you're phoning from?" says I, surprised.

"Y-y-yes."

"I thought you were over home," says I.

"N-n-no. I'm d-d-downtown."

"Well, if you aren't the limit!" says I. "I send you after the milk; and you wind up downtown."

"S-s-sure thing," says he. "But you're a g-g-good detective too."

"I didn't say you were a good detective," says I. "But you certainly have a pile of luck."

The little prune! He had me guessing. To hear him blat

around about his p-p-pancakes and k-k-ketchup you'd think he was dumber than a doornail. And yet he always popped up at exactly the right time. It was him who got us out of the dead chest. Then he spotted the fire bug. And now he was the first one in our bunch to recover one of the coins from the magazines.

Either he was the luckiest thing that ever walked on two legs, I concluded, or he was a blamed sight brighter than he let on.

He told me then how he happened to go downtown.

"I r-r-rode down with the m-m-milk man," says he. "H-h-he was just putting the m-m-milk on the porch when I went out. And he showed me an old quarter. H-h-he got it down at R-r-randall's grocery, he said. And Mr. Randall says h-h-he got it early this morning from old warty nose."

"Who?" I squeaked.

"C-c-cheese," says he.

"Cheese what?" says I. "What are you talking about?"

"Old warty nose b-b-bought twenty-five cents' worth of c-c-cheese."

"With one of the old coins from the magazines?"

"S-s-sure thing. It's got 1823 on it. And the m-m-man at the bank says it's w-w-worth a hundred dollars."

So old warty nose had spent a hundred-dollar quarter

for twenty-five cents' worth of cheese! That proved two things to me: He *had* taken the coins from the magazines, just as I had said. But he didn't know that he had a six-thousand-dollar fortune in his pocket.

The dumb cluck! It ought to be easy, I figured, to catch him. For apparently he hadn't enough brains even to skin out when the skinning was good.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE SURPRISES

Horse Foot popped in at ten-thirty.

“T-t-there,” says he, flipping the recovered quarter onto the kitchen table.

I picked up the coin and examined it. It was an old-timer, all right. It looked it. Besides, the date proved it.

“How did you happen to get it?” I asked Horse Foot.

“Oh,” says he, “I f-f-flipped for it.”

“Flipped who?—the milk man?”

“Y-y-yes. I wanted it. So I s-s-says: ‘I’ll f-f-flip you for it—h-h-heads I win and t-t-tails you lose.’ He laughed. ‘All right,’ says he, ‘you can have it—we won’t bother to flip.’ But I s-s-says: ‘Oh, we’ve got to f-f-flip.’”

“And so you flipped, huh?” says I, with a wink at Peg.

“Y-y-yes, we flipped. And I w-w-won. He’s a g-g-good guy—that m-m-milk man.”

“I believe you,” laughed Peg.

“Come on and have some breakfast with us,” I then invited Peg, as I set out the cornflakes and cream.

“I’ve already had one breakfast,” says he, in his good-natured way. “But I guess it won’t kill me to eat another.”

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So we all sat down.

The clock struck eleven.

“And d-d-do we eat again at t-t-twelve?” beamed Horse Foot.

The little glutton!

“Sure thing,” says I. “We’re going to have roast turkey then.”

“With plum pudding,” tacked on Peg.

Horse Foot got up and peeked in the oven.

“I t-t-thought maybe you b-b-burned ’em,” says he.

“Burned what?” says I, surprised.

“My p-p-pajamas,” says he.

I jumped up to look. And sure enough, there were his pajamas in the oven.

“I p-p-put ’em there,” says he, “so that I c-c-could undress downstairs to-night.”

“Oof!” says I. “I’ll never eat any more bread out of that oven.”

“No more b-b-bread?” says he, with a wondering look at me. “What’ll you do with your g-g-gravy?”

I got a long-distance call from dad just before we left the house. He and mum were all right, he said. They made the trip without a particle of trouble. But things looked bad in Indianapolis, I was told. So I was kind of sober when I hung up. Poor Aunt Em! It was pretty tough, for her to get banged up that way.

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Mrs. Rail collared me on the way to the street.

“I suppose,” says she, as she beamed at me over the end railing of her front porch, “that you and Sammy are having a wonderful time.”

“Wonderful isn’t the name for it,” says I.

“I was tempted to bring him home,” she continued, “when your ma first phoned me about her trip. But I’m glad now that I didn’t. For I can imagine how much he brightens up your place.”

“Just like an electric light,” says I.

“Without any juice in it,” Peg whispered in.

I gave him a kick.

“Dad just phoned,” I told Mrs. Rail.

“And how’s your aunt?” she inquired.

“All banged up,” says I.

“Dear me! How terrible! As I told my husband this morning, when he was gargling his throat, it does seem as though the whole world is out of balance—with good people like your aunt getting run down in the street and gangsters’ wives driving around in Packard automobiles with ten-dollar silk stockings on, and painted lips. It’s a wonder our grandmothers don’t crawl out of their hoop skirts and turn over in their graves.”

Then her thoughts returned to Horse Foot.

“I suppose,” says she, as she further leaned over the porch railing, “that he keeps you laughing all the time.”

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“*And* how!” says I.

But she didn’t understand how I meant it.

“He’s so droll,” she wheezed.

“And such a good riddler,” says I.

“Such a good what?” says she, stretching her ears.

“Riddler,” says I.

“Riddler?” says she, with a puzzled air.

“Haven’t you heard that one about the ef-ef-effalent?” says I.

“Ef-ef-effalent?” says she, with growing wonderment in her voice.

“You know—how to get down off an ef-ef-effalent?”

“Goodness gracious?” says she. “What are you talking about anyway?”

Horse Foot was hiding in a bush. For he was scared that his ma would call him home for neck-and-ear inspection.

“If s-s-she asks for me,” he hissed out of the bush, “t-t-tell her I’m stuck in the b-b-bathtub, Jerry.”

Peg came running with the garden hose—the big monkey!

“Isn’t it awful, Mrs. Rail,” says he, “how dry the bushes get around here?”

“I hadn’t thought about the bushes,” says Mrs. Rail. “But our lawn is in terrible shape.”

“Take that bush over there,” Peg pointed to Horse Foot’s hiding place. “It’ll die in another day or two if it doesn’t get a bath.”

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“Why don’t you water it?” says Mrs. Rail.

Peg giggled.

“I think I will,” says he.

And he quickly turned the nozzle.

I don't know who squawked the loudest, Horse Foot or his ma.

“Sammy!” she whooped it up, as he took to his legs.

“*Sammy!*”

But her dear little nest egg was halfway to the corner now. And dropping the hose, Peg and I took after him.

Red was singing the prisoner's song in his front yard.

“All I need is prison stripes,” says he, as we stopped to sympathize with him.

His ma popped up in the front door with a switch.

“Yes,” says she sharply, “and you'll get black-and-blue prison stripes right where you set down, if you don't hush up.”

Red blinked.

“Oh, oh!” says he. “I didn't know you were so close.”

I decided not to go in the yard. For I didn't like the way Mrs. Meyers looked at me.

“Where-gly you-gly go-gly?” Red inquired, in hog Latin.

But his ma, I guess, knew as much about hog Latin as the rest of us.

“You'll go-gly to bed-gly,” says she sharply, “if you don't come up here on the porch and keep still.”

I got behind a tree, out of her sight, and tried to wigwag to Red that we were going over to the rag-shed pasture to hunt for the glider. I flapped my arms—that was supposed to be the glider. Then I jiggled my legs up and down. And then I bellowed like a bull.

“Mither of Moses!” a voice spoke behind me. “If ye itch that bad, why don’t ye try usin’ a currycomb on yourself?”

It was old Mrs. Maloney.

I thought that Peg would bust.

“Come on,” says he, grabbing my arm.

So off we went down the street.

The town hall, with its jail and police headquarters, came into sight ahead of us. And there, in a patch of weeds behind the jail, was Horse Foot. He was wringing out his pants.

I thought he’d light into Peg. But he didn’t. And then did I ever laugh as he started out ahead of us. For the whole seat of his pants was out.

Too much hard wringing, I guess.

We met Mr. Meyers coming out of the town hall.

“I’ve got another dime, Jerry,” says he.

“Good for you,” says I.

And then we all turned as Bill Hadley boomed at us through the doorway.

“You’re a fine bunch of detectives—lettin’ that tramp git away.”

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“I never knew anything about him,” says I, “till he was gone.”

“H-h-he’s got a wart on his n-n-nose,” says Horse Foot.

“And are you the kid that talked with him at the fire?” growled Bill.

“S-s-sure thing. He s-s-says: ‘Are you following me?’ And I s-s-says——”

“I told Bill all about that,” Mr. Meyers cut in impatiently.

“Yes,” growled Bill, “I know all about that—Christopher Columbus and Adam and Eve! . . . What did he have besides a wart?”

“A h-h-hat,” says Horse Foot helpfully.

“Felt?” quizzed Bill.

Horse Foot laughed.

“You’re j-j-just like my p-p-pa,” says he. “Every time I g-g-get a new shirt, he pinches me on the arm and s-s-says: ‘Felt?’ He d-d-did it last Sunday. And I s-s-says: ‘No—it’s c-c-calico!’ And he g-g-gave me another pinch and s-s-says: ‘But don’t you feel it?’ And I s-s-says: ‘Yes.’ And he s-s-says:

‘Well, if you feel it it’s felt.’”

Bill blinked.

“Are you tryin’ to kid me?” he boomed.

I stepped in then. For I didn’t want Horse Foot to lose his head.

“You better talk with old Emery’s neighbors,” I told Bill. “For they can tell you more about the tramp than any of us.”

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“The durn scallawag!” boomed Bill, as he jiggled his big nose around. “Comin’ in on us that way, an’ robbin’ us. But I’ll git him, if I have to call out all the cops in the state.”

I took Mr. Meyers aside.

“Take a look at that,” says I, handing him the recovered quarter.

“Why! . . .” says he happily. “It’s one of the old coins.”

“I was right,” says I, “about the tramp. He’s got the coins. But he didn’t skin out last night, like I thought.”

“How do you know?” says Mr. Meyers.

“Because,” says I, “he spent that quarter this morning in Randall’s grocery.”

I thought that Bill would blow up when he learned that the

tramp was still in the neighborhood. And off he went, with the full power of the law behind him, to make a sensational capture.

Peg and I and Horse Foot in the meantime meandered across the canal bridge to old Emery's place. And when we got there we searched high and low for the missing glider. But there was no trace of it, either in the pasture or in any of the thickets surrounding the pasture.

A thing like that couldn't have been taken far. And to us the biggest wonder of all was why the tramp had taken it out of the shed in the first place. Did he think that he could fix it up? And was that what kept him here? It was possible. But where in Sam Hill had he put the blamed thing? 178

Bill Hadley buzzed up and down the neighborhood. And that afternoon he formed a posse and searched the adjacent marshes, between the pasture and the river. He brought back a lot of mud on his number elevens. But that was all.

Old Emery put in the day messing his rags around. He made them up into new bales. And all the time he kept mumbling to himself.

"I think he's crazy," says Peg, as he and I hung around.

A big rag buyer came along at four o'clock with a truck. And while he and old Emery were loading the baled rags onto the truck, Peg and I went back into the ruins to search further for the glider braces.

Old Emery came running.

“Git out of there,” he yelled.

“What’s the matter?” growled Peg. “We aren’t hurting anything.”

That made the old man madder than ever.

“Git out of there, I tell you,” he screeched. “That’s my property. An’ I want you to git out of there an’ stay out.”

He had a big roll of greenbacks in his hand. For the rag buyer had paid him in cash. And later we saw him digging a hole at his back door.

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“What the dickens! . . .” says I. “Do you suppose he’s hiding his money out there?”

“He’s crazy, I tell you,” declared Peg.

“For two cents,” says I, “I’d dig up the money to-night and turn it over to somebody for safekeeping.”

“Let’s,” says Peg.

Horse Foot came along then with a big red patch on the seat of his pants.

“Look, Jerry!” laughed Peg. “Your star boarder has patched his pants with a red table-cloth.”

“W-w-why not?” says Horse Foot, with an unconcerned air. “If it’s g-g-good enough to eat on it’s g-g-good enough to set on.”

I hadn't seen Scoop all day long. So I stopped at his house that evening, learning that he was sick in bed. He had the quinsy. All he could eat, he said, was soup. Stuff like that is catching—meaning the quinsy, of course, and not the soup. So I talked hurriedly for a few minutes and then ran home to meet Peg.

He came in at dusk with a puzzled face.

“Jerry,” says he, dropping into a kitchen chair, “there’s something screwy going on around here.”

“What do you mean?” says I quickly.

“Didn’t old Emery tell us last night that he saved the glider motor?”

“Sure thing.”

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“Well, he says now that he didn’t save it.”

“What was it you asked him last night?” says I, tugging at my memory.

“We were standing there beside the fire, you know. The old man was groaning about his loss. And I says: ‘Did you lose the glider motor too?’ And he says: ‘Why, no—’ And then he stopped. Don’t you remember?”

“Sure thing,” says I quickly. “I remember just as plain as anything now. That’s exactly what you said. And that’s exactly what he said too.”

“Ma baked some hot biscuits for him,” Peg resumed. “That’s how I happened to go over there again.”

“And did you look in the ruins for the glider motor?”

“Yes—but it wasn’t there. And that isn’t all, Jerry.”

“Tell me,” says I eagerly.

“I stopped to see Mr. Randall, the grocer. And *he* says that it was old Emery himself that bought the cheese.”

“*What?*” I squeaked.

Peg looked around.

“Where’s Horse Foot?” says he.

“Upstairs, brushing his teeth.”

“Call him down.”

“What for?” says I.

“I want to quiz him.”

So I ran to the foot of the stairs.

“Don’t wear that tooth brush out,” I yelled.

“What t-t-tooth brush?” Horse Foot yelled back.

“Aren’t you brushing your teeth?”

“N-n-no. I’m shaving.”

Shaving!

“Come on,” I yelled to Peg.

And up the stairs I tore.

Horse Foot was lathering his face in front of the bathroom mirror.

“All I need n-n-now,” says he, with a big air, “is a r-r-razor.”

I grabbed the shaving brush and jabbed it into his mouth. But I wished afterwards that I hadn’t. For he bit off all the hair.

I finally got him wiped up.

“If I had to have you around all the time,” says I wearily, “I’d put you in a cage.”

“Tweet! Tweet!” says he, in his crazy way. “Pretty little birdie in a c-c-cage.”

I motioned helplessly to Peg.

“Take him,” says I. “He’s all yours.”

“Say, Horse Foot,” Peg began, “did you actually talk with a strange man last night at the fire?”

“S-s-sure thing.”

“Did he look like old Emery?”

“With that *w-w-wart?*—no!”

“Then he really had a wart, huh?”

“Y-y-yes.”

“Did he have eyes like old Emery?”

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“Y-y-yes.”

“And a mouth like old Emery?”

“Y-y-yes.”

“Then he *did* look like old Emery, except for the wart, huh?”
Peg spoke triumphantly.

I swung in then.

“What are you trying to get at?” I asked.

“Simply this, Jerry: Mr. Randall has known Emery Blossom for years. And *he* says that the man who bought the cheese this morning was none other than old Emery himself with a fake wart on his nose.”

A familiar tinkle fell on my ears.

“The owl!” I cried. “The belled owl!”

And I tumbled to the bathroom window.

But when I got there the owl was gone.

I turned back to Peg. And never, as long as I live, will I forget the bewildered look on his face.

“I’ve fooled around with a lot of mysteries,” says he. “But this is the blamedest all-firedest tangle that *I* ever got mixed up in. It beats anything I ever heard tell of.”

CHAPTER XV

CLANK! CLANK! CLANK!

Peg and I talked till it got good and dark, him arguing one way and me another. *He* said that there wasn't any tramp at all. The supposed tramp, he said, was no one else but old Emery himself, who, for some unknown reason, had been going in and out of his rag shed on the sly. He made himself look different—with a fake wart on his nose, and everything. And so the story got around that there was a strange tramp living in the rag shed. That's what *Peg* said.

But *I* said it wasn't old Emery. He might be crazy, I admitted, and he might be mixed up in some kind of a wild scheme having to do with the end of the world. But it never was him, I declared, who ran away from Horse Foot. Christopher Columbus and Adam and Eve! That didn't sound like the old man at all. Besides when we talked with him, beside the fire, he was trembling like a leaf. And no one, I wound up, could ever make me believe that this was acting. No, sir-ee! It wasn't old Emery himself who fired the rag shed to cover up the theft of the coins and the glider. *He* was one man. The warty-nosed tramp was another. And it was the tramp who started the fire.

But it *was* kind of odd, I had to admit, that the old rag

man had lied to us about the glider motor. He told us first that he had saved it. Then he said he lost it. But it wasn't in the ruins. And that meant that it had been taken out of the shed *before* the fire, the same as the glider itself and the coins.

It did seem as though the old rag man had some connection with the fire. But I still wouldn't believe that he had started it himself, or that it was him that bought the cheese.

For whoever had bought the cheese didn't know the real value of the money he used. Therefore if it was old Emery, as Peg said, why had the old man gone to the trouble of disguising himself with a fake wart? Why didn't he simply go downtown and buy his stuff as usual? Or if he really wanted to disguise himself, for some unknown purpose, why hadn't he done a better job of it?

No, I declared, it wasn't old Emery who bought the cheese, but someone who resembled him. A brother possibly. But why had this brother been living secretly in the rag shed? And why had he turned a belled owl loose in the neighborhood?

Peg didn't argue when we came to the owl part. That was one thing, he admitted, that completely baffled him. He could think of no reason, he said, why the old rag man should turn a belled owl loose in the neighborhood, and then start having religious fits every time he heard it.

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My answer to that was that old Emery didn't know that there was a belled owl near-by. He actually thought it was a warning from heaven. And then I brought out the clever theory that the tramp had turned the owl loose for that very

purpose—to make his brother think that the end of the world was at hand.

Peg finally went to the phone and called up his ma.

“Say, ma,” said he, as I stood listening at his elbow, “didn’t you tell me one time that you went to school with old Emery Blossom?”

“No,” says Mrs. Shaw. “I never went to school with him. For he’s much older than me. But I grew up in the same neighborhood with him.”

“Did he have any brothers?”

“Yes—three.”

“And did one of them have a wart on his nose?”

“Yes. That was Spindle.”

“*Spindle?*” says Peg.

“His real name,” says Mrs. Shaw, “was Peter. But his ankles were like pipe-stems. So we all called him Spindle Shanks. And then we cut that down to Spindle.”

Peg turned to me.

“You win,” says he.

“What’s that?” says Mrs. Shaw, at her end of the wire.

“I was talking to Jerry,” says Peg.

“But why did you ask me about Spindle Blossom?”

“Oh, Jerry and I got to arguing.”

“Old Emery himself,” Mrs. Shaw resumed, “is a nice old man—outside of his silly religious beliefs. But Spindle was a scallawag. His conscience was even skimpier than his shanks. And the last I heard of him he was in the state penitentiary. He robbed a bank or something. But I dare say his term has expired by this time.”

“Oh, oh!” says Peg, as he shot another look at me from the corner of his eye. “We’re getting warmer every minute.”

“Did Emery get his biscuits all right?” Mrs. Shaw then inquired.

“Sure thing,” says Peg.

“And is that all?”

“Yes,” says Peg, “that’s all.”

I started to strut as he hung up.

“All right,” says he good-naturedly. “Go ahead and brag on yourself. I’m licked.”

“Me and Sherlock Holmes,” says I.

There was a sudden crash in the pantry. And when I got

there Horse Foot was standing in a puddle of jelly.

“G-g-grape,” says he, turning up his nose.

And coming out of the pantry he tracked jelly all over the kitchen floor.

“I t-t-thought it was b-b-blueberry,” says he.

What a mess!

“Let’s rub his nose in it,” says Peg.

“O.K.,” says I.

A chair went down as Horse Foot jumped for the door. But we caught him. And did he ever yell as we dragged him around the kitchen on his face.

Mrs. Rail popped out.

“Sammy!” she screeched from her back porch. “*Sammy!* What are you yelling for?”

I thought he’d tell on us. But he didn’t.

“Um-yum-yum!” says he, as he ran his tongue around his sticky face. “It’s b-b-better than I thought.”

His ma was still yapping.

“Sammy! *Sammy!* Why don’t you answer me?”

“I c-c-can’t,” he yelled back. “I’m b-b-busy.”

“What are you doing?”

“Helping Jerry m-m-mop the floor.”

Gosh! I couldn't be grouchy with him after that. So I helped him clean up. And then we all started off in the direction of old Emery's house.

Red yelled at us from his front porch.

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“Whoopee!” says he. “Jail's out to-morrow.”

Mrs. Meyers was playing “The Maiden's Prayer” on the piano. But the prayer came to a sudden stop when Red hilariously kicked over the family rubber plant. We heard the plant fall. Then we heard the door bang. And then we heard Red squawk as his ma yanked him inside.

After which the prayer was resumed, with some particularly loud thumps at the lower end of the piano.

“What shall we do?” says Peg, when we came to the town hall. “Shall we tell Bill Hadley who the tramp is?”

“I think we better,” says I.

So we went inside. But Bill was nowhere in sight.

Peg stopped to look at the “reward” posters on the bulletin board.

“Is there anything there about old Spindle Shanks?” says I, running over.

“No,” Peg shook his head.

“There wouldn’t be,” says I, “if he served his sentence, like your ma said.”

“Look, Jerry!” Peg pointed to one of the posters. “There’s a reward of two thousand dollars for that guy. He’s an escaped counterfeiter.”

“Too bad,” says I, “that it isn’t old Spindle Shanks, huh? For what we could do with two thousand dollars! Oh, oh!”

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“There may be a reward for him too,” says Peg. “For they don’t have everybody’s picture on this board.”

“In that case,” says I, “maybe it’ll pay us to do the capturing ourselves. What do you say?”

“O.K.,” says Peg, in his sturdy way.

Horse Foot was out in back slamming the cell doors. Bang, bang, bang! But I didn’t try to stop him. For if he locked himself in so much the better—for us!

Peg started quietly for the street door.

“Come on,” says he in a low voice. “Let’s shake him.”

But we found that it wasn’t so easy to shake that little squirt. For he heard us when we went outside. He caught up with us at the canal bridge. And what do you know if he didn’t have a pair of Bill’s handcuffs!

“I f-f-found them in a b-b-box,” says he, giving them a swing.

I caught them just in time to save them from going into the canal.

“Yes,” says I grimly, “and you’ll find yourself in a box, with a fancy glass top, if you don’t take those handcuffs back where you got them. For you know how crabby Bill is.”

“That’s what my p-p-pa uses, for b-b-bait.”

“Bait?” says I, staring. “What are you talking about?”

“C-c-crabs,” says Horse Foot. “But I-I-I like angleworms the b-b-best. For they don’t p-p-pinch in my p-p-pocket.”

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I grabbed the handcuffs and stuck them down his neck.

“Take them back,” I yelled.

“But how c-c-can I catch old w-w-warty nose,” he argued, “without h-h-handcuffs?”

“*Take them back!*” I yelled again.

“Upon the h-h-hill there is a m-m-mill, and in front of the m-m-mill there is a w-w-walk, and under the w-w-walk there is a k-k-key. I b-b-bet you can’t guess t-t-that one.”

I fell back weakly.

“You murder him,” I told Peg. “You’re the strongest.”

“It’s a b-b-big city,” says Horse Foot.

“Chicago?” says Peg.

“N-n-no.”

“New York?”

“N-n-no.”

“What is it?”

“B-b-boston,” says Horse Foot.

“And you’re sure,” laughed Peg, “that it isn’t Milwaukee?”

“It u-u-used to be M-m-milwaukee, but I c-c-changed it.”

Of all the crazy nuts!

I finally got him started back with the handcuffs. But he hadn’t gone ten feet before he took a header. And when he got up he was handcuffed on the left ankle. One of the cuffs had snapped around his ankle and locked securely.

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That settled it! He couldn’t go detecting with us, I told him fiercely, with a thing like that dangling at his heels. For what chance would we have to creep up on either the belled owl or the jailbird with a “clank! clank! clank!” behind us?

He promptly ripped off his left shoe.

“N-n-now,” says he, dropping on his back, with his feet in the

air, “p-p-pull.”

“With pleasure,” says I.

“Ouch!” he squawked, as I dragged him back and forth across the splintery bridge.

“Is that enough?” says I.

“I g-g-guess my f-f-foot’s too big,” says he ruefully.

“Let *me* try it,” Peg spoke eagerly.

But Horse Foot had had enough. And grabbing the loose end of the handcuff he jumped up.

“N-n-no,” he told Peg. “I g-g-guess I’ll carry it.”

“But you can’t go with us,” says I.

“W-w-why not?”

“I just told you—we can’t have you clanking around behind us.”

“I w-w-won’t clank,” he promised.

“Go find Bill Hadley,” says I, “and have him unlock you.”

But he didn’t want to leave. For he knew that if he did he’d lose us.

“S-s-see?” says he, as he walked around. “I d-d-don’t clank—very much.”

“Let’s tie him to the bridge and leave him,” suggested Peg.

But Scoop’s pa saved us. He came up from the river in his car. And when he stopped on the bridge, to see what we were doing, Peg and I promptly dumped Horse Foot into the back of the car and beat it.

I thought we’d hear the belled owl when we got away from the bright lights of the stores. And a queer little shiver chased up and down my backbone as we struck one shadowy patch after another. But nothing happened. There wasn’t the slightest tinkle overhead. Nor did we see anybody peeking at us around the trees.

“Say, Jerry,” says Peg, with a thoughtful air, as we passed under the last street light. “I’ve got an idea.”

We were in one of the loneliest parts of town now. The houses were scattered. And off to the right, where the cement mill stood, there was a faint reddish glow in the sky. This came from the big cement-rock kilns which were kept burning night and day. For cement rock, you know, has to be baked in a kiln before it can be ground.

“Did you hear me?” says Peg.

“Yes,” says I.

“I’ve been thinking of something you said at the house. And I’ve got an idea. Want to hear it?”

“Sure thing,” says I quickly.

“Do you remember what you said, Jerry, just before I called up ma on the phone?”

“It was something about old Spindle Shanks,” says I.

“We were wondering about the belled owl. And you said that Spindle Shanks had belled the owl to make his brother think that it was a warning from heaven.”

“I remember,” says I.

“Well,” says Peg, “I think you’re right about that. And I’ve been trying to figure out why Spindle Shanks wants to make his brother think that the world is coming to an end. Is it revenge? Did old Emery help to put his brother into jail? And is Spindle Shanks now trying to drive his brother crazy, to get even?”

“I bet that’s it,” says I excitedly.

“Old Emery has been telling for years,” pursued Peg, “that the world was coming to an end. We’d soon hear Gabriel’s trumpet, he said. He talked it to the neighbors. And no doubt he talked it to his brothers. That’s where Spindle Shanks got the idea of belling the owl. And just as he schemed, old Emery, in his crazy way, jumped to the conclusion that the belled owl was a warning angel. The Bible tells about a trumpet. But trumpets and bell, I guess, all sound alike to old Emery. Anyway he thinks that he’s going to fly away to heaven in a few days. And that’s why he sold his rags—so that he could take his money with him. And the chances are, if he has time, he’ll sell the rest of his property.”

“His house and pasture?” says I.

“Yes,” says Peg. “And he ought to get a blamed good price for his pasture too. For it’s got a lot of cement rock under it. And the mill people would gobble up the land in a jiffy if he offered it to them. For I happen to know that they’ve been after it for years.”

“Gosh!” says I. “Do you think that the old man is silly enough to sell all of his property?”

“He’s already sold his rags,” says Peg. “And you know how he’s been acting. He’s two-thirds crazy already.”

I gritted my teeth.

“That brother of his,” says I, “ought to have his neck broke.”

“It may be revenge that he’s after,” Peg spoke thoughtfully. “And it may be something else. That’s what I’ve been thinking about.”

“Tell me,” says I eagerly.

“Well, suppose old Emery *did* sell off everything—
turned it all into money. And suppose he buried the
money in his back yard. Money, of course, is no good in
heaven—at least I’ve never seen any pictures of angels with
pocket-books. But someone may have told the old man that he
ought to take his money with him. And so he gets ready for
the grand take-off, money and all. Now, where did he get the
idea in the first place that the world was soon coming to an
end? From the belled owl, of course. And isn’t it reasonable

to believe that the whole purpose of the owl was to get the crazy old man to change his property into money so that the other brother could steal it?”

Gee-miny crickets gosh!

“And if you’re right,” says I, with a thumping heart, “old Spindle Shanks may be digging at his brother’s back door this very minute.”

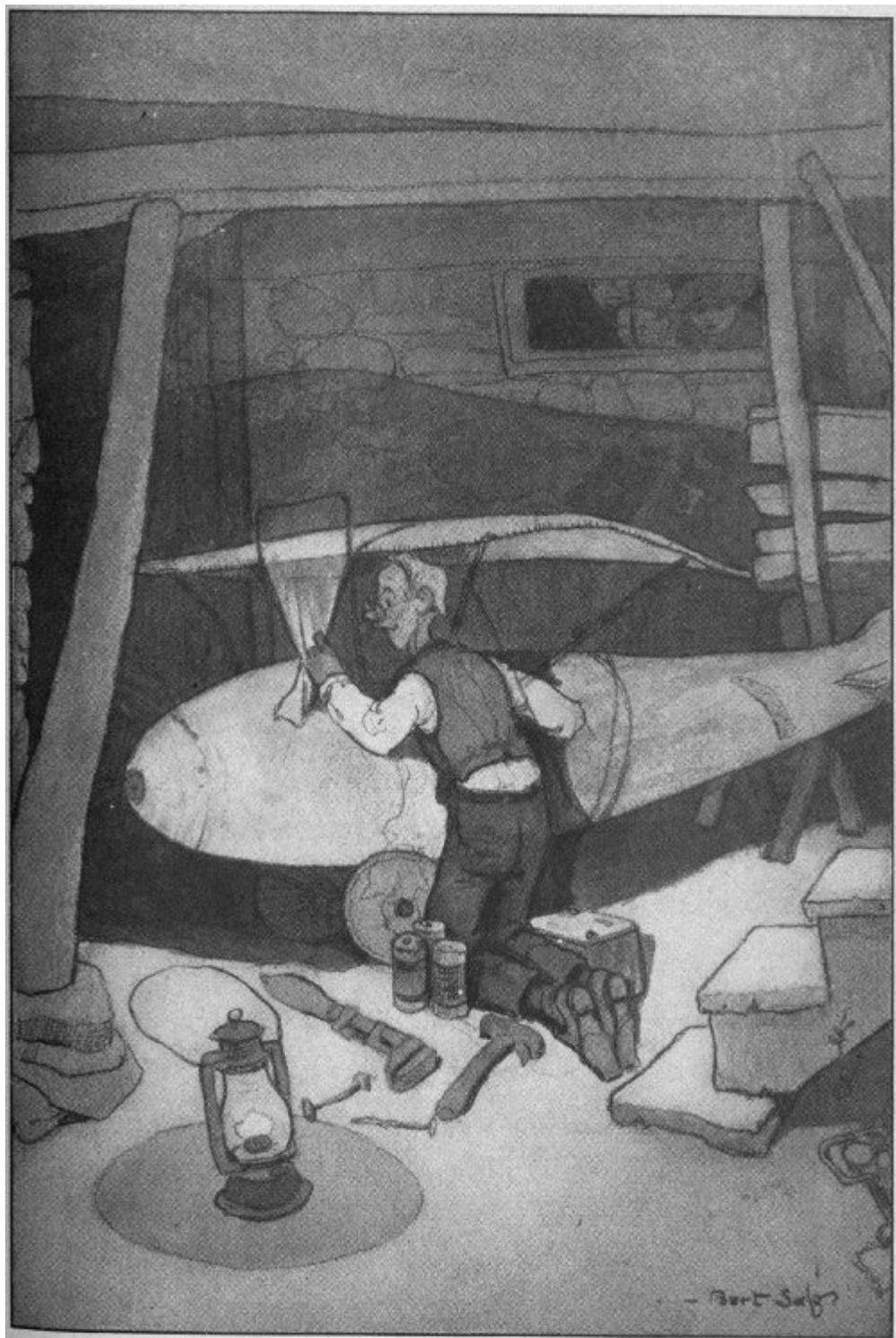
“That’s possible,” says Peg. “But I have a hunch that the jailbird will hang around till his brother sells his land too. For why skin out with a few old coins—he hasn’t any idea of what the coins are really worth, you know—and a little rag money, when they’re thousands of dollars in sight?”

We were close to old Emery’s house now. For we had been walking along in the dark. And suddenly we caught the sound of a small gasoline motor.

Peg gripped my arm.

“I bet a cookie,” says he, with mounting excitement, “that it’s the glider motor.”

We traced the sound to an exhaust pipe that came from old Emery’s cellar. And what do you suppose we saw when we got down on our knees and peeked through the low cellar window? The glider itself! Old Emery was putting new fabric on the wings. And he was trying out the motor on a stand.



- Bert Saly

OLD EMERY WAS PUTTING NEW FABRIC ON THE WINGS.

I knew all the time that the old rag man had a big cellar under his house. For that's where he worked in the winter time. And I knew further that the cellar workshop had a big outside door. But I never thought of looking for the glider *here*. Nor had Peg.

And yet how natural! The cracked old man thought that the world was doomed. And when the final moment came, he planned to jump into his motored glider and fly away to heaven. A cuckoo idea, of course. But I've told you how he was.

He moved feverishly from one end of the glider to the other, straightening a brace here and stiffening a part there. And then, at nine o'clock, he shut off the motor and went upstairs. We thought he was going to bed. But instead he washed up carefully in the kitchen and then sat down expectantly in his front room.

He was waiting for somebody.

"Keep your eyes on him," says Peg, as he started off in the darkness, "and I'll dig up the money."

"Shall I whistle," says I,— "if he moves?"

"Yes," says Peg, in a low voice. "And if anybody grabs you in the dark, yell your head off, Jerry."

197

Gosh! I didn't like the sound of that. For he meant old Spindle Shanks, of course.

“Let me go too,” I spoke eagerly.

“No, you wait here—I won’t be gone long.”

So I waited. I could hear Peg digging. Then I heard something click—like a money box. But he told me, when he got back, that all he found in the hole was a couple of empty sardine cans. Either the old man hadn’t buried his money in the hole, as we thought, or the warty-nosed guy had gotten there ahead of us. A big automobile drew up at the gate at nine-thirty. And out stepped two men with a satchel. One of the men was big and fat. And the other was skinny.

“Is this the place?” rumbled the fat man.

“Yes,” came the curt reply.

“Humph! Dark as pitch. Why didn’t you make him wait till morning?”

“Listen, Lorry! I’ve been after that pasture of his for years. And when I got word to-night that he was ready to sell, for cash, I got here in a hurry.”

“But we can’t close the deal to-night—on a moment’s notice.”

“Possibly not. But if he gets the money, and I get his signature on those papers, he can’t possibly back out.”

“But what’s his great hurry?”

198

“Sh-h-h! Not so loud, Lorry. I can see him through the door. And I don’t want to offend him. But I think he’s kind of

cracked—too much Bible stuff. He’s getting ready for the end of the world.”

“Rubbish!” sputtered the fat man.

I knew now who the visitors were. The thin one was Mr. Norman Radway, the mill owner. And the fat one was Mr. Thomas Lorrying, a prominent Tutter banker.

And the satchel, of course, was full of money from Mr. Lorrying’s bank!

Oh, boy! Almost anything could happen!

Peg suddenly cocked his ears.

“Listen!” says he breathlessly.

“What did you hear?” says I. “The owl?”

Clank! Clank! Clank!

“Oh, my gosh!” says I weakly. “It’s that crazy Horse Foot.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROBBERY

Old Emery had been watching the street. He had seen the big car pull up and stop at his front gate. And now he came quickly to the door, which eager act in itself showed plainly enough how anxious he was to close the intended deal.

The poor old man! He was due for an awful disappointment later on. For the world wasn't half as wobbly as he thought. But nothing could have stopped him then from selling his land.

"I'm powerful glad to see you, gentlemen," says he, as he stood beamingly in the open door.

Then, as the visitors entered, he bustled around and got suitable chairs for them.

"Here, Mr. Lorrington—you take this chair—it's big an' comfortable."

"Thanks, Emery," rumbled the banker.

"I always set a great store by that chair, Mr. Lorrington," the old man resumed. "Fur my pappy made it hisself, when I was a boy. Maybe you don't remember him—he's bin

dead so long. But he was a big man—much bigger even than you. An' I'll always remember how disap'inted he was over us boys. Whiffets, he called us. An' my brother Peter was the smallest of all, with them spindle shanks of his. That's what we all called him—Spindle Shanks."

"Yes," says Mr. Lorrington, "I remember."

He acted as though he remembered some other stuff too. But he was too polite to mention it.

The mill owner cleared his throat.

"And shall I take this chair by the table, Emery?" he inquired.

"Yes, Mr. Radway—if you will, please. I was goin' to ask you to set there. Fur we'll have to make out some papers. An' I thought you'd want to be by the table."

"Quite right," says Mr. Radway, with a pleasant nod. "Quite right, Emery." Then he spoke to his companion. "Let me have the bag, Lorrington. For I want to show Emery that we're prepared to meet our end of the obligation."

Peg touched my arm.

"Are you watching, Jerry?" says he.

"Yes," says I.

And if any of you readers are wondering right now about Horse Foot, you'll have to keep on wondering. For I was too busy just then to notice anything except what was going on in

old Emery's parlor.

Mr. Lorrying opened the satchel and covered the table with money. It was all paper bills. Gosh! I never had seen so much money before, outside of a bank.

"There's one hundred twenties in that bunch," says Mr. Lorrying. "And here's one hundred fifties."

"That's seven thousand dollars," says Mr. Radway.

Old Emery reached eagerly for the money.

"Let me see," says he.

And then he counted the bills one by one.

"Yes," he spoke finally, "there's seven thousand dollars here."

"And here's another package of twenties," says Mr. Lorrying.

"Yes, yes," says old Emery, as he reached for the money.

"How many twenties are there in that bunch?" Mr. Radway inquired of the banker.

"Fifty."

"That's eight thousand dollars. . . . Are you counting them, Emery?"

"Yes, Mr. Radway. There's one hundred twenties in this pile,

jest like you said, an' one hundred fifties in this pile—I wish it was all in fifties, fur they don't take up so much room—an' fifty twenties in *this* pile. But there should be more. Like I told you, Mr. Radway, on the phone——”

“Just a minute, Emery,” the mill owner interrupted. “We haven't emptied the bag yet.”

And still another package of bills was brought into sight.

202

“That's all,” says the banker.

Old Emery counted the final bunch of bills one by one.

“Correct,” says he. “Eighty-five hundred dollars, all told.”

And then he dumped the money into an empty pillowcase.

“What?” stared the banker, as the old man took the pillowcase and tossed it onto his bed, in an adjoining room. “Are you going to keep that money in the house?”

Emery had behaved like a business man so far. But now that queer wild look came into his eyes. I could see him plainly through the open window. And I could hear every word that he said.

The house faced the north. Peg and I were on the west side. And the bedroom that I just mentioned was on the east side. Remember that. Remember too that it was a hot summer night, and that all of the windows in the house were open.

“What!” the banker again spoke to old Emery, as the latter came empty-handed from his bedroom. “Are you going to keep that money here?”

“Of course,” says old Emery. “But I won’t have to keep it here long.”

“No,” growled the banker, with narrowed eyes, “I don’t think you will, if a few scallawags like that brother of yours happens along. Eighty-five hundred dollars in cash! That *would* be a haul. You better let me take the money back to the bank for safekeeping, Emery.”

203

“No, no!” cried the excited old man. “It’s my money. An’ I’m goin’ to keep it here.”

The banker didn’t like that. And he turned sharply to his associate.

“Did you know, Radway, that he intended to keep the money here?”

“Well,” the mill owner spoke dryly, “it just occurred to me that he *might* want to do that. Otherwise, why did he insist on an immediate cash settlement?”

“I thought he just wanted to see the actual money involved in the transaction. Some old people are that way—they can’t imagine that a deal is a deal unless they actually handle the money. But I never dreamed he’d keep it.”

The mill owner shrugged.

“Well, Lorryng, it’s his. And if he wants to keep it here, and run the chance of losing it, that’s his business, not ours.”

Old Emery then spoke for himself.

“I won’t have it here long,” says he. “Fur I’m goin’ up in a day or two. My Bible says so. An’ lately I’ve had special warnin’.”

The banker drew the mill owner closer to the window where we were listening.

“Radway, you can’t do business with that man,” came the low remark. “He’s crazy.”

204

There was a crafty light in the mill owner’s gray eyes.

“Not crazy, Lorryng—just peculiar. Remember, this deal means a lot to me. And remember, too, that he’s the one who suggested it. So I’d be a fool to pass it up simply because he thinks that the world is coming to an end in a day or two. He’s talked that way for years. But you never thought of discontinuing his business at the bank. No, indeed! You were glad to get the business. So why should you quibble now, when *I* have a deal on? If he’s right in his belief about the end of things, I’m the loser. For we won’t need cement on judgment day. But *he* can’t lose either way. For he’s got his money, even if his other plans do miscarry.”

“All right, all right,” the banker unwillingly gave in. “We’ll put the deal through if you insist. But see if you can’t urge him to bank the money. For he’s risking his life by keeping it here. Eighty-five hundred dollars in cash! Why, if word of

this got out in the underworld, he'd have a hundred gangsters on his neck before morning."

The mill owner leaned forward to lower his voice.

"You mentioned a brother of his, Lorring. What about him? Is he a bad egg?"

"Yes. And if *he* knew what was going on here, that money would disappear in a flash."

205

"Does he live around here?" came the further inquiry.

The banker laughed throatily.

"He's living on the state—up in Joliet."

"Oh! . . . In prison, huh?"

"Exactly."

"Robbery?"

"Yes. He cleaned out a bank near Peoria."

"Well," the mill owner continued, after a slight pause, "I'll talk with the old man about the money. For I'd feel badly myself if anything happened to him through this deal. But I doubt if we can induce him to give the money up. For his whole purpose in converting his property into cash was to have it handy. And he wouldn't think that it was very handy in a bank."

“But suppose the world *did* come to an end,” says Mr. Lorry. “And suppose he suddenly found himself with a pair of wings. What good would the money do him?”

“It’s one of his queer ideas.”

The banker growled.

“*Crazy* ideas, you mean.”

But the crafty mill owner wouldn’t have it that way.

“No, no, Lorry!” he spoke hastily. “Don’t insinuate that I’m dealing with a crazy man. He’s peculiar—that’s all. Just peculiar. And deals with peculiar people are always permissible—even a hurry-up deal like this one.”

206

“And are you ready to stand the consequences, if he tries to annul the deal later on?”

“Most assuredly.”

And now I’ll get back to Horse Foot. He had clanked up to the front gate. That happened soon after the three men started handling the money. But since then I hadn’t heard a peep from him. And I began to wonder now, sort of shivery-like, as the three men got together over some papers, if the warty-nosed guy had grabbed the little kid and made off with him.

He was a pest. He muddled up everything that he touched. But I was supposed to look out for him. So I started off to find him.

“You wait here,” I told Peg.

“Where are you going?” says he.

“To look for Horse Foot.”

“Shucks! Why bother with him, as long as he keeps quiet?”

“I’m scared of old Spindle Shanks,” says I. “For he and Horse Foot came together once before. And it wouldn’t be so good for the little kid if it happened again.”

Peg looked around.

“I wish I was a dog,” says he.

“Why?” says I.

“Then I could tell if there was anybody else in the yard besides us three kids. For dogs can smell people a block off.”

“It’s too dark to see anything,” says I.

207

“Then how do you expect to find Horse Foot?” says Peg.

“Oh, he may start jiggling his chain.”

“Just a minute, Jerry,” Peg further kept me there.

“Yes?” says I.

“What are we going to do about the money?”

I took a peek at the house.

“Is the money still in old Emery’s bedroom?” says I.

“Yes,” says Peg.

“Gosh!” says I. “I don’t know what to do.”

I wanted to help the fogged old man in every way I could. And I knew that, if we didn’t get the money and hide it, the warty-nosed guy would steal it. But it’s blamed risky stuff—taking a man’s money out of his own house. And if we got caught it might go hard with us, even though we had good intentions.

“I know what we can do,” Peg spoke thoughtfully.

“What?” says I quickly.

“We can tell the two men when they go.”

“That’s an idea,” says I.

“Mr. Lorrying never would leave the money here,” says Peg, “if he knew about the belled owl and everything behind it.”

“It’s funny,” says I, looking up at the unbroken black sky, “that we haven’t heard the owl around here.”

“This is a big night for Spindle Shanks—with all that money in sight. And he’s probably keeping the owl close to him for some special purpose.”

“Gee!” says I. “It’s a mighty lucky thing for old Emery that we found out the truth about that owl. Otherwise Spindle

Shanks might have gotten his brother out of bed to-night and robbed him of everything he owned—the rag money and the pasture money and everything else. For old Emery *would* pop out of bed in a jiffy, and prepare for the end, if he heard the belled owl jumping around on his roof.”

Peg laughed softly.

“I’d like to save the money,” says he, “and then watch for something like that. Wouldn’t it be funny?”

“We’ve *got* to watch,” says I grimly. “And when the old guy comes around we’ve got to capture him too. For you must remember that he’s still got Red’s old coins.”

“Oh, oh!” says Peg. “I had almost forgotten about the coins.”

“It would be kind of nice,” says I sensibly, “if Mr. Lorry and Mr. Radway would help us watch. For then, with so many on our side, old Spindle Shanks wouldn’t stand a chance.”

“We can ask them,” says Peg.

I went off then, on my hands and knees, to look for Horse Foot. The three men were still messing papers around. And I could see the loaded pillowcase on old Emery’s bed. \$8,500! Boy! That was a fortune. And I could readily imagine how eager old sticky fingers was to get it.

209

I stopped suddenly in my tracks. What the dickens! . . . The money was moving! And I could see a long skinny arm! Someone in old Emery’s bedroom was slowly pulling the money off the bed!

I jumped up then, yelling to Peg to follow me. And into the house I went on the tear. I almost scared the three men out of their wits. They thought it was a hold-up, I guess. But they soon got into motion.

“My money!” screamed old Emery, as he tumbled into the bedroom behind me. “It’s gone! I’ve bin robbed! I’ve bin robbed!”

Then he ran with trembling legs to an open window.

Mr. Lorrington jerked me around.

“What do you know about this, Jerry?” he demanded.

I told him what I knew. But I won’t bother to put it down here. Instead, I’ll switch the mike over to Horse Foot (as they say in broadcasting stations) and let him continue the story.

Here he is—the one and only Horse Foot!

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT I DID THIRD

(By Horse Foot)

Well, gang, here's another treat for you. I'm back!

I don't know what Jerry Todd would do without me.

He tries to let on (the big kidder!) that I'm dumb from the neck up. But he knows better. For I'm the first fellow that he calls on when he needs help. "Here, Horse Foot," says he, "you write this and you write that." When this story is finished, I suppose he'll tell around that *he* wrote it. And if anybody brags on it, he'll take all the credit. But I should worry. I know who wrote the best part of it. The guy's first name doesn't start with "J" either. It starts with "H." Some day maybe I'll start writing a bunch of books of my own — "Horse Foot and the Whispering Mummy," and "Horse Foot in the Kitchen Sink," and "Horse Foot and the Bob-Tailed Pancake Griddle," and so on. Stuff like that. And will *that* ever make somebody's face red who lives next door to me! Oh, oh!

Let's see now, where shall I start?

I guess I better start with Mr. Ellery's new false teeth.

He cracked his old false teeth on one of his wife's biscuits—that's what he told me when Jerry and Peg dumped me into his car on the canal bridge. He had been over to Ashton getting some new teeth. And his wife, who was with him in the front seat, would hardly speak to him when he dropped me at the jail to get my handcuffs unlocked. For she said it wasn't a biscuit either that he broke his old teeth on—it was a hickory nut. And any grown man, she said, who didn't know any better than to crack hickory nuts with his bare teeth ought to get them broken.

Then Mr. Ellery says: "Honey dumpling, I was just fooling. Your biscuits are like little puffs of thistledown." And she says: "Don't honey dumpling me. Hurry up and drive home—my corns hurt." Then Mr. Meyers came along. And he says: "What, ho!—another honeymoon?" And Mrs. Ellery says: "It's hard to believe that we ever had a honeymoon, after the way he runs down my cooking." And Mr. Ellery says: "But, my dear, I just said that your biscuits were like little puffs of thistledown." "Yes," says Mrs. Ellery, "and you just said you broke your teeth on one of them too." And Mr. Meyers says: "That's nothing. One time when I was crossing the river in a rowboat I ate some of my wife's biscuits, and the boat sunk." And Mrs. Ellery says: "It's terrible how abused you poor husbands are—I feel sorry for you both."

I got out then. And when Mr. Meyers heard me clanking around he says: "Well, well, what zoo did you get out of?" And I says: "D-d-don't you remember?—I w-w-was in the next cage to you." And he says: "Ouch!" And Mrs. Ellery laughed. But she didn't laugh very much. For Mr. Ellery bumped her corns when he pushed in the clutch. They

drove off then, with Mr. Ellery saying how sorry he was to hurt his poor little honey dumpling's corns, and Mrs. Ellery saying: "Oh, oh!—and I bet you scratched my patent leathers, you big dunce."

Mr. Meyers went away too. That left me all alone. So I went chasing around for Bill Hadley to get him to unlock me. But I couldn't find him. So I tied up the loose end of the handcuffs as best I could and started after Jerry and Peg. Pretty soon the string that held up the handcuff broke. So I let the handcuff drag. And it dragged all the way to old Emery's house, where I saw a big car at the front door.

I knew what I'd get from Jerry Todd if I did any more clanking. So I pulled the handcuff tight. That kept the chain from clanking. And then I tiptoed around the big car to see if it needed detecting. For that's what Jerry and Peg were doing—they were here detecting. So I figured I better detect too. And why not start in on the big car?

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So I decided to start in on the big car.

I detected it in front—number 444,444. Then I detected it in back—number 444,444. The numbers were practically the same. So I hardly knew which one to write down—for a good detective, you know, always writes down the numbers of mysterious cars.

So I said "eenie, meenie, mynie mo"—like that. I said "eenie" in front, and then I ran around in back and said "meenie." Here's what I said altogether:

Eenie, meenie, mynie, mo,

Catch a nigger by his toe,
If he hollers, let him go—
O-u-t spells
Out goes he.

The front number went “out.” So I wrote down the back number. I didn’t have any paper to write it on. So I scratched it in the dirt beside the road. Then I kicked up the dirt with my feet. For I didn’t want anybody to know that I was detecting. A good detective always kicks up the dirt when he writes down the number of mysterious cars, unless he writes down the number in a book. So I kicked up the dirt. Then, holding the handcuff chain tight, I tiptoed down the path from the gate to the house.

Voices! Ah-ha! Another clue. It was a big fat man and a skinny man. They were inside telling old Emery something about a paper. Where had I seen these men before? Oh, yes! I remembered then, as I scratched a mosquito bite on the back of my neck. They both lived in Tutter. One owned a bank—that was the skinny one. And the other one—that was the fat one—made cement. Or was it the skinny one who made cement? Well, one of them made cement—I was dead sure of that. And I figured (like the good detective that I was!) that they owned the big car. Number 666,666! Six sixes in a row. I saw then that I needn’t have bothered to write the number down. For it’s easy to remember a number like that. All I had to think of was the number nine, and turn it upside down. That made a six. And it was easy to think of six sixes.

214

The men were still talking. So I stopped near the front door to listen.

“Yes, Emery,” says the skinny man, with a light laugh, “I know what you believe. But I’m willing to gamble that you’re wrong. So let’s hurry up and close the deal.”

“All right,” says old Emery, as he twiddled the paper around sort of nervous-like, “all right. You’re buyin’ the land with open eyes. An’ I’m sellin’ it with a clear conscience. Fur I’ve warned you that you’ll never be able to work it. But you say you will. An’ you still want to close the deal. So there’s my signature on the paper. Now, the land’s yours, an’ the money’s mine.”

215

“Thanks, Emery,” says the skinny man, as he pocketed the signed paper.

The fat man spoke up then.

“Emery, you better let me take that money back to the bank.”

“No, no,” says old Emery, sort of crazy-like. “It’s mine. An’ I’m goin’ to keep it near me.”

I started off then to find Jerry and Peg. And all the time that I was tiptoeing around the house the three men on the inside of the house were talking about a pillowcase full of money. Old Emery, it seems, had put all of his money in a pillowcase. And the pillowcase was on his bed. The fat man said the money wasn’t safe in the pillowcase. The skinny man said that too. And they tried their best to get the money away from old Emery. But he wouldn’t give it up. The world was coming to an end right away, he said. And he wanted to have his money handy.

I was on the east side of the house now. That was the dark side. The three men were in a lighted room on the west side. But I thought I'd be more likely to find Jerry and Peg on the dark side. So I took the dark side.

And who do you suppose I found there? Old warty nose himself!

216

He knew there was money in the house. He had heard the other men talking about it. And when I got there he was halfway through a bedroom window.

He had climbed up on a box. I could see the box. It was directly under the window. And then, as I took a closer peek, I saw where he had cut away the cloth window netting to get in.

I guess he heard me moving around. For he hung there, on the window sill, as still as still could be. And all the time I was wishing to myself, sort of excited-like, that he'd hurry up and steal the money, so that I could capture him.

Finally I got a stick and poked him in the seat of the pants.

“G-g-go on,” says I eagerly. “D-d-don't stop now.”

But he hung there, sort of paralyzed-like.

“Who is it?” says he, in a hollow whisper.

“H-h-horse Foot the detective,” says I, pushing out my chest.

He slid down then—first to the box, and then to the ground.

“What are you doing here?” he growled, in a low breath.

“D-d-detecting,” says I, with another push on my chest.

But I didn’t tell him that I was going to capture him as soon as he got the money. For that was a secret.

217

He bent over and peeked at my face.

“Are you simple?” says he.

I had already told him who I was—I was Horse Foot the detective, I said. But I guess he didn’t hear me. So I told him again.

He took me by the neck and pulled me back where it was darker.

“Do you know who *I* am?” says he.

“S-s-sure thing,” says I. “You’re old Emery’s b-b-brother. And you j-j-j-just got out of j-j-j-jail.”

He still had me by the neck.

“Who told you that?” says he, in a low steady voice.

“C-c-christopher Columbus,” says I.

(I got that from him.)

The grip tightened on my neck.

“Who?” says he meanly.

“A-a-adam and Eve,” says I.

(I got that from him too.)

He dropped me then. And I could feel him staring at me in the dark.

“Do you know,” says he finally, in a soft silky voice, “I’m beginning to like you.”

And locking arms with me he took me back to the window.

“I’m no ordinary thief,” says he in a chummy way, as we stopped under the window. “And don’t imagine either that I’m half as bad as my brother has pictured. *He’s* the real scallawag of the family. And all he put me into jail for was to steal my wife—my beautiful Henrietta Marie. He brought her here and made a rag picker of her. My beautiful Henrietta Marie—a rag picker—a common rag picker. And when she died, of overwork, he never even bought her a tombstone. But I’m going to buy her a tombstone if it takes the last dollar he’s got.”

218

And then he asked me, in that same soft silky way, if I’d climb through the window and do the stealing for him. It was nothing to be ashamed of, he said. He had been wronged by his wicked brother. His wife had been worked to death in a rag shed. That’s why he had burned the shed down—for revenge. And that’s why he wanted the money—to buy a tombstone for his beautiful Henrietta Marie.

Right then I dropped the loose handcuff.

“What’s that,” says he, as the handcuff dropped.

“A c-c-chain,” says I, flipping it around.

“A *chain*?” says he wonderingly.

I had intended to use the handcuffs on him. That’s why I took them in the first place. But I didn’t tell him so. I guess not! Instead I let on to him that my two chums had handcuffed me on the ankle so that they could get away from me.

“That settles it,” says he, with a disappointed air.

219

“W-w-what?” says I.

“You can’t climb through the window,” says he, “with a chain on your ankle.”

I didn’t want to climb through the window. I wanted *him* to climb through the window. And when he came out, with the money, I planned to sock him on the head with a big club.

So you can see easy enough why I dropped the handcuff. Pretty smart, huh? But I’m that way. And don’t get the idea either that I swallowed all that taffy about his beautiful Henrietta Mary Ann—or whoever it was. For my ma had told me that old Emery was a nice man. And I knew she wouldn’t say that if he had worked somebody else’s wife to death in his rag shed.

But I let on that I swallowed the silly story. I even helped the old crook through the window. Then I took the box away, to make him tumble. And having found a club, I stood there

waiting for him.

Which brings me to the point where Jerry Todd let out that crazy screech of his. And as soon as he screeched, of course, old warty nose made a bound for the window. I swung at him as he came out headfirst. But I missed him. For I never figured that he'd come out *that* way. I thought he'd come out feetfirst. And what a lovely spat he was going to get on the tight part of his pants!

I've always been sorry he missed that spat!

220

Well, like I say, he came out headfirst. He landed on all fours. And he was up and off before I could crack him. But I took after him. And grabbing him by the leg (get this now—it's blamed smart stuff)—and grabbing him by the leg, I quickly snapped the loose handcuff on his skinny ankle.

That brought him down in a jiffy, pillowcase and all. And you should have heard him scream when he found that we were chained together. Oh, oh! It's a good thing for me, I guess, that the others came up then on the run. Otherwise Horse Foot the detective (he always gets his man!) might suddenly have become Horse Foot the harp player. You know what I mean—soft music and calla lilies and everybody sniffing. He was such a *good* little boy. And he looked so natural lying there. And what a pity he had to go so young, and so on and so forth.

Jerry got there first. And after him came old Emery with a lantern. There was a glad cry from the old man as he saw his pillowcase. He made a grab for it. And then, as he saw who

the thief was, he fell back with a queer wondering cry.

“It’s Peter,” he gasped. “It’s my own brother Peter.”

The fat man waddled up.

221

“Git the money?” he wheezed.

“Yes,” says old Emery slowly.

“Humph! I told you so. Let me have it and I’ll take care of it.”

Jerry was jumping.

“Gee, Horse Foot,” says he, “you’re a peach.”

“He’s an idiot,” growled the thief, as he scowled down at me.

“W-w-who?” says I, facing him.

“You,” says he, with flashing eyes.

I kicked him in the shins.

“S-s-so’s your old man,” says I.

Old Emery later sawed us apart. Then we all rode downtown in the big car. The thief was begging now. But we took him to jail just the same and locked him up.

My ankle wasn’t so hot—the one where I was handcuffed. For I got some bad jerks. And when Jerry saw me limping, he took me on his back.

“Good old Horse Foot,” says he, as we started for home.

When we got home, he asked me if I knew any good riddles. So I told him the one about the mill on the hill. He had an awful time guessing that one, for I changed the answer to Baltimore. And then I told him another one about a parrot.

We were still telling riddles, with a lot of sandwiches around us and bananas, when the front door bell rang.

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It was Mr. Meyers.

He came in grinning.

“I came over to see the hero,” says he, “and to tell you the good news.”

So I stepped out to be looked at.

“You’ll get your name in the paper for this,” says he.

“I-I-I expect to,” says I.

“Oh, oh!” says he, with another grin. “Our shrinking little violet.”

Our shrinking little violet? I didn’t see any sense to that.

“I-I-I like sunflowers the b-b-best,” says I.

Jerry swung in then.

“What’s the good news?” says he.

“Can’t you guess?” says Mr. Meyers.

“The old coins?” says Jerry.

Mr. Meyers nodded.

“We got them all back except six,” says he. “And the chances are we’ll get those too, if we look around. For the thief spent them here in town.”

Then along came Red himself.

“Whoopee!” says he, as he tumbled into the house. “The war’s over. Ma and I just kissed and made up. Smack, smack! And I’m going to stay all night.”

We slept three in a bed that night. And the next morning we had pancakes. I ate eleven. And when my ma heard about it, and all the other stuff that had happened to me, she told me to come home right away. She wouldn’t trust me in Jerry Todd’s company another minute, she said. 223

But my pa talked up to her. So maybe I’ll get to stay in Jerry’s gang after all—if he wants me!

Which finishes my part of the story.

You’ll get the rest from Jerry himself.

This is the one and only Horse Foot signing off for keeps.

Olive oil!

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

Now you know how Horse Foot—the one and only Horse Foot!—captured the thief. I think he did it pretty slick too, especially that part where he detected the number of the car. Oh, boy! That’s funny. The number was 444,444 to start with. And when we wound up it was six nines turned upside down. If he doesn’t turn upside down himself some day, or inside out, it will be a wonder.

And then to have his ma blat out that way that he wasn’t safe in my company! Suffering cats! He gets into twice as many scrapes as me. And the wonder is that he ever lives to tell about it. But he’s lucky, I guess.

Imagine him being dragged around by the neck! And by *that* old jailbird! Oh, oh! I still shiver when I think of it. For it’s my idea that he had a blamed narrow escape.

It was easy enough to see what was going on in the jailbird’s mind. He was after the money in the pillowcase. And then, just as he got ready to grab the money, along came a stupid acting kid who called himself a detective. The jailbird didn’t dare leave the kid outside—at least he didn’t want to at first. Nor did he have time to take the kid off

and tie him up. For it was possible that the money in the pillowcase would start back to the bank any minute.

The jailbird wanted to grab the money right away. So he tried to get the kid to help him, after telling a supposedly sorrowful story about his poor mistreated wife. It was his plan, of course, as soon as he got the money, to skin out. Nor did he care a rap what happened to the kid. But little old Horse Foot had an idea of his own. And you know how he worked it—dropping the handcuff and everything.

I think myself he worked it blamed slick. And instead of taking all the credit for this story, I'm going to say right here that he's the best part of the story. It's really *his* story. And I'm going to admit further that the stuff he wrote is ten times as interesting as the stuff I wrote. Take this stuff for instance. It's a little bit of this and a little bit of that. But that's the way it always is at the end of a story.

Yes, sir, I'm going to say again, Horse Foot is *all right*. I like him. And if he wants to pal around with me and my gang, that suits me swell.

He's kind of small, of course. But he'll soon grow up. And does he have grit!

As he wrote down in the preceding chapter, we took the thief to jail. He was later sent back to the state penitentiary. And that's that. I don't like to write about crooks. So let's forget about him. He was born that way, I guess—always wanting to steal and the like. And it's a good thing for the country as a whole that schemers like him *are*

put way in stone cells.

He'll likely die there.

Still, I can't drop him till I clear up the part about the belled owl. Just as we figured, the belled owl was a scheme to make old Emery think that he was being finally warned of the end of things. Spindle Shanks knew how his brother was about the Bible. And so the belled-owl scheme grew up in the jailbird's tricky head while he was still locked up. In time he got out. He came straight to Tutter with a pet owl. And the rest you know.

Old Emery heard the owl. He thought it was a final warning from heaven. So he turned all of his property into cash. But thanks to Horse Foot the cash is still in the hands of its rightful owner.

And so far as I know, old Emery never has been sorry he sold his pasture. Anyway, he got a good price for it. Big holes have already been dug in the pasture. And the cement rock, from these holes, is being hauled off daily to the near-by mill.

Bill Hadley growled when he heard about the sawed handcuffs. But he's all right now. I like Bill.

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When questioned about the fire, Spindle Shanks admitted that he had fired the rag shed to cover up his theft of the old coins. For he had overheard Red and I say that we were going to the rag shed to get the coins. Already the coins were in old Spindle Shanks' pockets. And so he hurried around us, with a match, just as we suspected.

We got a lot of credit for our work on the mystery. And Horse Foot, of course, got the most credit of all, just as he deserved. Even Mrs. Meyers bragged on us. She's just as nice as pie now. But I guess she was kind of huffy when Mr. Meyers first told her about the missing coins. She thought he should have told her sooner, I guess.

As for Aunt Pansy herself, she was so tickled to get the coins back (she keeps them in a safety deposit box now) that she even bought Red a big box of candy.

That was the night he and I and Horse Foot were sick.

Yes, everything is lovely at Red's house. And everything is lovely at my house too. Mum and dad are home again. And down in Indianapolis dear old Aunt Em is frizzing her hair and baking cookies just as lively as ever.

Mum did a lot of sweeping and dusting when she got home. But she expected that, she said. And she still brags to the neighbors how well I took care of myself.

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She and Mrs. Rail often visit over the fence—blah, blah, blah! And Mr. Rail (if I am to believe his wife!) still gargles regularly. Jane Rail is up too. So I don't have Horse Foot for a steady bedfellow.

But he's around a lot.

And now for a few words in conclusion about old Emery.

It's hard to believe, I know, but he actually believed that he was going to fly away to heaven in a motored glider. And I

suppose he thought it was perfectly all right to make the trip in stolen property! Anyway, he took it.

He's just as batty as ever about some things. But his money has been put away in a safe place. He's building a new rag shed too. And that looks as though he expects to stick around for another month or two at least!

The silly old man!

He wouldn't believe us at first when we told him that the supposed "warning angel" was nothing but a belled owl. So we caught the owl for proof. And right then is when the old man began to take more of an interest in his earthly affairs.

It takes a lot of queer people to make a world. And he's among the queerest of the lot. But with all of his queerness he's a blamed good mechanic. So we're hoping—Red in particular—that some day we'll be able to take off in the Flying Flapdoodle and stay up as long as we please.

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But that won't be this year or next.

For that was a part of the agreement between Red and his ma when they signed the armistice—he had to do his flying with a kite hereafter.

But the glider is still there. And when we get big——

Well, we'll see about that.

And so-long, everybody.

THE END

OUR CHATTER-BOX

Will I be writing CHATTER-BOXES when I'm 100 years old? I sure hope so—and books too. For it's fun to write books for appreciative boys and girls.

But the best fun of all is getting out the letters that I receive, from day to day and selecting those that I think will be most interesting to our big group of CHATTER-BOX readers.

I'd like to use all of the letters I receive. And the big majority of them deserve use. But if I *did* use all of them, we'd have a whole book of letters—and no story!

So always, I reckon, my job will be, first of all, to enjoy *every* letter I receive, and then select those most suitable for publication.

No matter how busy I am, I always reserve a part of each day for my “fan” mail. So I know what the boys and girls are writing to me at all times. I can't possibly answer all of these letters—and my good pals, here and there, don't expect it. But I do give personal attention to many of the letters, and my secretary takes care of the balance. All of the outstanding letters are saved. And it is from such an assortment of letters that I am now selecting the material for this CHATTER-BOX.

As I have explained so many times before, OUR CHATTER-BOX is a department, in each of my books, made up almost wholly of contributed material. Would you like to have a published letter or poem in a future CHATTER-BOX? I'm always on the lookout for outstanding letters and poems. So why not write to me to-day?—or start a poem to-day?

Take great pains with your poem, as you have a lot of competition! You can write on any subject of general interest to boys and girls. And in your letter tell me something about yourself or your chums—something that will interest other boys and girls.

We give no prizes for published letters. But we do give autographed books to the writers of all published poems. That is, the young poet gets a copy of the book in which his poem appears.

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MUSICAL BEDBUGS

Those of you who have read *Jerry Todd, Caveman*, know all about the musical bedbugs, and the contest. In this contest I received more than 600 letters. And out of that huge pile of letters, I had the job—not an easy one!—of selecting the ten winners. I'm going to publish all ten prize-winning letters—some of which were selected because of their humor, some because of their “style,” and some because of their simple good sense. I have forty more here I could use, as second prize winners. In fact, every one of the 600 is deserving of a

prize of some sort. But autographed copies of this book will be awarded only to the ten whose letters are published here. And don't imagine either that I consider the first published letter the best. I'm simply taking them as they come.

Paul Johnson, 1353 Sheridan, Des Moines, Iowa, is the first prize winner. Congrats, Paul!

And here's his letter:

“As for the musical bedbugs, well, Sinbad always kept them tied around his waist, in a bottle, and it's lucky for us that he did, as you will find out later, because we never would have been saved if he had not.

“The first thing when we came to on board the ship Sinbad asked about the musical bedbugs. ‘Do you mean those singin’ things in that there bottle?’ asked the captain. Sinbad said that was what he meant. ‘Why, I threw that bottle back in the ocean,’ said the captain. When Sinbad heard that, he nearly fainted. ‘But it's lucky for you that you had them bugs,’ said the captain. ‘Why?’ asked Sinbad. ‘Cause if it hadn't been for them, you never would have been saved. I'll tell you how it happened. We were going along full speed on our chartered course when I heard a loud singing noise over to the east. I ordered the ship put about to see what it was and pretty soon I saw you fellows on that door and found out that that funny singing noise came from the bottle tied around your waist.’ He pointed to Sinbad. ‘I took you on board, but I had to throw those singin’ bugs back in the ocean, because the sailors thought they were bewitched and would have started mutiny.’

“We thanked the captain for saving our lives, but Sinbad sure felt sick because he had lost his life’s great ambition—the musical bedbugs.

“I stayed in Sinbad’s native land for about a week. One night I heard a peculiar noise in the ocean. Then an idea popped into my head. ‘Get the rowboat,’ I ordered Sinbad.

“We rowed into the ocean, and the noise kept getting louder. In the distance a bottle came into sight. ‘Hot dog!’ yipped Sinbad. ‘It’s the bedbugs.’ Well, we got the bedbugs, but it didn’t do us much good, because when the bedbugs found out they weren’t in their own singing land, they just shut up. I guess they were so sad they couldn’t sing. And this, fair king, ends my story.”

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Freckled Goldfish Fred Stothman, Jr., 1467 Warren Ave., Long Beach, Calif., is the next prize winner. An autographed book is on its way to him.

And here’s his letter:

“When the turtle went down to Davy Jones’s locker, everyone of the bedbug band went down with it except the saxophone soloist, who escaped in the king’s shaving mug.

“Floating for days, the bedbug played, ‘Down Went McGinty to the Bottom of the Sea,’ and ‘Locked in the Stable with the Sheep,’ or was it ‘Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep’?

“Getting much practice, the bedbug began to compose pieces of its own.

“When it finally docked at a wild, desolate island named Cambridge, Wis., it set up a studio of its own under the assumed name of Leo Edwards.

“Its latest musical brain child is a little gem entitled: ‘They Laughed When I Sat Down to the piano—Because There Wasn’t Any Stool.’”



Leo Briggs, 79 Windom Ave., Arrochar, Staten Island, N. Y., comes next.

Here’s his letter:

“When the floating island sank, out in the uncharted sea, the musical bedbugs turned on their private submarine buttons. In this way they followed Sinbad and Jerry. When the ship rescued the adventurers, the musical bedbugs discovered a crack in the hull, under the water; into this they crawled and were carried back home with Sinbad and Jerry. After Jerry left, Sinbad became so attached to the music-loving bedbugs that he could not bring it upon himself to sell them. He now keeps them in a beautiful pink bathtub filled with strawberry soda.”



Louis Eldridge, 3206 E. 35th St., Chattanooga, Tenn., is next in line.

He writes:

“Here’s my theory of what happened to the bedbugs. I think they must have gotten seasick from the rocking of the raft

(Sinbad having grabbed a bottle of them as the island went down) and kicked the bottle, because there was no bucket handy to kick. (Poor bedbugs!)”



Ronny McDonnell, 43 Texas Ave., Lawrence, Mass., comes next.

Here's his letter:

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“Dr. C. B. Bosworth, of Boston, formerly head of Hall’s Botanical School, is the one to whom I must refer you, if you doubt the following. Having had the privilege of looking at his notes, I made a copy of the following data: Friday, Feb. 10—Had students dissect the bodies of crickets and afterwards tried to solve the mystery of their origin. Saturday, Feb. 11—Collings, the smartest of my pupils, came in to-day with information concerning the origin of crickets, dated 1499. It seems that when two unknown seamen landed in a small port in ——, they caused a great deal of excitement because they had with them some musical bugs then known as Bedgascae of Buggascae, or as the peasants called them for short—bedbugs. The musical bedbugs were received with favor by the people, but the common bedbugs were very jealously aroused by being thrown out one by one as the number of musical bugs increased. The common bedbugs formed a plot to overthrow the musical bugs. In this plot the common bedbugs were aided by an unknown species of bug who were to keep the musical bugs prisoners and who were also to prepare for a great feast when the new bugs had been overthrown. But alas and alack the unknown bugs fell in love with their prisoners and the prisoners with their captives, and

their descendants are now known as the cricket, whom we all know is always singing. The crickets had a wanderlust and they moved to the fields and are seldom found in the kingdom over which the bedbug rules.”



Harold Lee Cromiller, P. O. Box 1288, New Orleans, La., comes next.

Here's his letter:

“The musical bedbugs objected to leaving the island, and as there was no room in the bottle to dance around, they quickly folded their arms and passed out. Poor little bedbugs, we hope you are happy now.”



Charles S. Brearley, Jr., 4440 Thomas Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn., is next in line.

He writes:

“(This is taken from an epistle from Columbus to King Henry LXII of Inkland.)

“Sinbad, I noticed, as the upheaval on the island took place, was considerably fussed. It seemed he was still bent on capturing his musical bedbugs. Which was easy. For every time the mammoth turtle's diaphragm took an upward course (which was often), species of every living creature on the island slid past us. However, we had nothing to keep the tonal insects in. But all of a sudden the turtle gave a great sigh, and a huge bubble rolled up on its back. In this we caught our

bedbugs and leaped aboard the castle door which had become loose, just as the turtle and its inhabitants sank below the billows to arise no more.

“(Here Columbus tells of the rescue.)

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“When we recovered from our delirium, on board the rescuing ship, we learned that the bubble had burst and the bedbugs scattered all over the ship. There were twenty on my bed, but they seemed to have taken a special shine to Sinbad, for he had three hundred on his. The captain complained about them. He said he liked concerts all right, but when a chorus of bedbugs put on grand opera all night, it was time to draw a line. So one night when Sinbad and I were asleep, the hated bedbugs were cast overboard, where, it is said, they crossed with the catfish to make a species known as bedfish, or flounder. Sinbad never recovered from the shock, and never went sailing again.”



Ives Harvey, 210 Holmes Ave., Altoona, Pa., is next in line.

Here's his letter:

“Having filled our pockets with bedbugs, when searching the king's bedroom, Sinbad and I were cast into the sea on the great palace gate. This covered at least an acre in area and was at least six feet thick.

“Having floated about for some time, we finally got our wits together. ‘How many bedbugs have we?’ asked Sinbad. ‘I have twenty-four,’ I said. ‘And I have twenty-six,’ replied Sinbad.

“We placed the bugs upon the raft as I shall now call the gate. The bugs began to chirp and sing. They sang merrily all the first day. The second day they were not so ready to chirp, being thirsty. We had water, but we used it ourselves and had scarcely enough. The third day six of the weakened bugs died of thirst. This was sad, for we were getting much attached to them. The fourth day ten more of the poor things succumbed to thirst, leaving us with thirty-four.

“The fifth day we attracted a shark, who coming up, bit off ten square yards of the raft, on which were twenty of the poor bugs. The sixth day our water ran out. We gave up for lost, but suddenly we saw a ship, which we attracted with loud shouting. Then, on looking behind us, to our dismay we saw a giant whale coming at us full speed. It was a race between the whale and the ship. Fortunately the ship won, and when they let down a ladder, we started to climb up it. Suddenly I thought of the bedbugs. I climbed down the ladder as fast as possible (if not faster), and making a grab, succeeded in getting five bugs before the whale swallowed them raft and all. Two of these fell out of my hands into the water and drowned. The others were divided between Sinbad, the captain of the ship, and myself. My bug died soon of loneliness. Sinbad’s died of too hot a climate. The captain’s died of overwork. Thus ends the tale.”

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Next comes Ben L. Statzell, 645 Drexel Ave., Drexel Hill, Pa., with the following:

“When Sinbad brought the bedbugs back, they all died,

because when they got here and heard the jazz, their own music being so old-fashioned, they just dropped dead.”



And last in the group is Eugene Wages, 109 West 19th St., York, Neb.

“Sinbad upon his return gave the bottle of musical bedbugs over to the caliph’s chief research worker, Azie. Azie’s greatest fault was his absent-mindedness. He had been known to stop in the street to take notes. He took the musical bedbugs to his laboratory where he opened the bottle. The bugs were in a half-starved condition—too weak to sing. (Think of that!) Azie noting this went out to get some food, leaving the bottle open. As usual he forgot his purpose and stopped in the street where a discussion was going on. At supper time he went home.

“In the meantime the musical bedbugs took advantage of their freedom and scattered over the room. The biggest and hardiest of the bedbugs, being hungry, first got food for himself, and then searched for a bed. He hunted all over the castle and found a huge bed which suited him. He did not know this was the caliph’s bedroom. He wouldn’t have cared anyway. The rest of the musical bedbugs scattered over the town.

“The caliph retired at the usual time, assisted by ten servants. He dropped off to sleep and soon the room was shaking to his snores. It was said that his cabinet had to sleep in the daytime and work at night because he snored so loudly. This awoke the musical bedbug, who, thinking it was a contest, joined in. Now these musical bedbugs had a mouth shaped like a

megaphone to give them volume, and also they were noted for harmony, often singing in fifty different sharps and flats. The caliph mumbled in his sleep, stirred uneasily, and then woke up with a roar of rage. Hearing the noise, the servants rushed to the room, where they found the caliph trying to stuff a pillow in each of his ears. The servants recoiled at the terrible noise, but the caliph's rage urged them on. They opened the windows, thinking it might be a moonlight serenader. Seeing no one they hunted around the room. The caliph left the room in a rage, vowing the miscreant would pay with his life.

“The other musical bedbugs, hearing the singing, joined in too, for they dearly loved contests of this sort. The whole town was in an uproar. People bought cotton to stuff in their ears, which didn't help much. The police and army were called out and told to shoot the villains. 236

“The servants found the musical bedbug in the caliph's bedroom and a cloud of missiles was thrown at it. The musical bedbug dodged expertly, as it was used to this sort of applause. This was the way it was all over town. The musical bedbugs quieted down toward morning to the great relief of the people. All the scientists were called out. Azie's blunder was discovered. He was taken before the caliph, who, still wild with rage, ordered that if every one of the bedbugs was not in Azie's hands by night, he was to die. Azie quaked in his shoes and immediately retired to think of a plan. He sweated and thought and thought. About noontime a watcher would have seen him suddenly leap from his chair into the air and run to the caliph. He unfolded his plan. His plan was: (1) A concert would be given at 7:30 that very night. (2) A sound-proof box was to be made to hold the bedbugs.

“Azie thought the music-loving musical bedbugs would attend this concert. The best players in the country were gathered. Men with gas masks were posted in the room.

“At the appointed time the band started to play, but no bedbugs appeared. The band played for hours, until they were nearly exhausted. Success at last. A small head appeared around a mouse hole. Then a whole body cautiously crept into the room. It peered around the room. Satisfied that there were no enemies, it turned and motioned. A line of others followed. They gathered in the middle of the room. Shoo! A cloud of gas enveloped them. The band had gas masks on. The musical bedbugs were soon overcome. They were quickly put into the sound-proof box. Azie was lauded with praises, and his picture was in the *Daily Gazooka*, and his name went down in history.

“Now, what to do with the musical bedbugs! Azie again came to the front and suggested that a sound-proof room be built in the jail. All prisoners accused of crime would have to listen to the musical bedbugs, who were to be protected in a separate compartment with just a funnel leading to the cell. This was done, and the criminals all left town. The musical bedbugs still live in Balsora to this day.”

And that, boys and girls, is the end of the musical bedbug contest.

Ordinarily we have from ten to twelve prize-winning poems in each CHATTER-BOX. But we'll have fewer poems here, on account of the ten bedbug letters.

Our first poem was written by Dick Henkel, 69 Polk St., Oshkosh, Wis.

Here it is:

The Best Books of All

When my family starts tiptoein' 'round,
'N' I begin to hear
A certain hushy whisperin' sound,
About this time of year,
I know that ma or pa or sis
Is buyin' books for me,
'N' so I hope they're wrote by you,
'Cause yours are best, you see.

When I trot down on Christmas morn
And underneath the tree
There's a Todd or Ott or Berg or Bean,
I just yell out, "Whoopee!"
'Cause anybody ought to see
Your books are wrote for boys,
'N' they're the bestest books on earth,
For bringin' Christmas joys.

All right, Dick! Your autographed copy is on its way to you.

And here's another corking good poem, by Ernest Fey, 4914 Balmoral Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Mother

Who helps you with many a task?
Who answers countless questions that you ask?
Who makes life more full of joy
For her little girl or boy?

Who tends you when you're sick abed?
And places pillows 'neath your head?
Who comforts you when you are sad?
Who sorrows when you are bad?

Who cared for you when you were small?
And helped you up at each infant fall?
Who toils for you all the day
And helps you in work and play?

A better friend than any other,
Is your true and loving mother.

The next poem, by Raymond Miller, 119 N. 7th St., Colorado Springs, Colo., is more humorous in character. Here it is:

Red

Beside the Tutter grocery store
The village grocer stands—
Red, a *pithy* boy is he!
With freckles on his hands,
And the muscles of his stomach
Are stretched like rubber bands.

His hair is red and very long,

His face is like a freckle,
His neck is wet with honest sweat
For he's eating where e'er he can—
And does he love that grocery store!—
And worship the grocery man!

Children going to school
Peek in at the kitchenette door,
They love to see him eat and gorge
And hear his bellows roar,
And see him swing the pancake turner
Till he falls upon the floor.

Herry Nixon, 90 Walnut St., Uniontown, Pa., writes of spring
as follows:

Spring Is Comin' 'Round

If you see the birds a-singin'
And flyin' with all their might;
If you see the trees a-greenin',
And the owls about at night;
If you see the flowers bloomin'
With colors red and white;
If you see the brown grass turnin'
To a green upon the ground—
Then you'll know that winter's goin',
And that spring is comin' 'round.

If you see the birds a-sittin',
Two by two up in the trees;
If you see each lovely flower

Clustered 'round about with bees;
If you feel the air grow warmer,
And soft breezes blowin' round;
If you see the field mice diggin'
Nests and burrows in the ground—
Then you'll know that winter's goin',
And that spring is comin' 'round.

Billy Kesler, 1364 Forsythe Ave., Columbus, Ohio, is the next young poet to break into print.

See how you like this one:

Poppy Ott's Pedigreed Pickles

A pickle parlor—"Wow!"
Says I to Poppy Ott.
I didn't like his idea
Nor did I trust his plot.

But Poppy has a big bean,
Chock full of great ideas,
And I knew I couldn't discourage
Any plot of his.

As I'm his bosom pal,
I had to stick to him
And help him with his ideas,
As a pal through thick and thin.

From Mr. Weckler we got a store
To sell our pickles in.
And for a silent partner

We both elected him.

Old Pennykorn, a miserly man,
Who owned a pickle firm,
Tried to get some cucumbers
To sell out our concern.

Mrs. O'Mally sold us cucumbers
To start our pickle store,
But Pennykorn wanted some,
So Poppy bought some more.

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To spite old Pennykorn,
Poppy bought them all.
But Poppy didn't know
That we were doomed for a fall.

We passed out free samples
Throughout the town quite thick,
But to our great dismay
All the people become sick.

But after many failures
We won out in the end.
And I thank my lucky stars
That I have Poppy for a friend.

And that's all the poems for this time. We'll have a big bunch in the next CHATTER-BOX. You probably have an idea for a poem of your own. If so, write it carefully, and send it in.

GENERAL

Just to prove to me that *he* can write books too, Theodore Shireman, Jr., 531 Lincoln Ave., Pomona, Calif., sends me a copy of his latest dog book—*The Adventures of Buster the Pup*. Yes, sir, it's a complete little book, in four chapters, all printed and bound and everything, with a picture of Buster on the cover. It's a might fine little story too, for a small boy. Theodore writes: "Here's a copy of my book. It was printed at the Southern Service Company, where my dad works—he's a printer. I set the type last summer during vacation, going down there every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday when I could. It took all summer to set the type! We printed 250 copies in all, planning to give some away for Christmas, and to sell some. I've already made \$2.50."

"While at the World's Fair, in Chicago," writes George Ray Tullis, 1115 Kossuth St., Lafayette, Ind., "I saw several puppet shows. Then when I read the CHATTER-BOX for *Poppy Ott Hits the Trail*, and thus learned about how your books had been dramatized on the radio, it gave me an idea. Can you imagine two venturesome puppets named Jerry and Poppy, talking to each other confidentially? Can you imagine a puppet named Bid Stricker throwing rotten tomatoes at a puppet named Red Meyers? A puppet named Tail Light would sure be amusing. Of course, the same dialogue used over the radio could be easily used in a puppet show. The ladies in our church gave a puppet show of Little Red Riding Hood not long ago. I saw it, and it sure was clever. By the way, it would be fun to see Davy Jones (the big turtle) crawling across a puppet stage, wouldn't it? Tony Sarg,

famous artist and illustrator, designed the puppets at the Century of Progress. He also wrote or revised the dialogue. He makes a hobby of it. I've only been telling you about my idea, for nothing has been done about it. What do you think of it?"

Well, George, I think it's a great idea—in fact, I've long wanted to take the time to see what I could do with Jerry and his gang in puppet form. But, alas, I have so many pressing jobs on my hands, I don't know when I'll ever find time to develop this intended hobby. If any of you readers try it, let me know how you come out. It seems to me that some bright boys or girls, with original ideas, in the right neighborhood, could make quite a bit of spending money with a continuous puppet show, carrying the same characters into new adventures for at least two shows a week—like the continuous comic strips in the newspapers. And what a lot of fun it would be for everybody!

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Ed Spottwood, 1103 Classen, Norman, Okla., writes: "I want to tell you of an incident that happened at a barber shop here. After checking out *Trigger Berg and His 700 Mouse Traps*, at the public library, I went downtown to get a haircut. I laid the book in a chair while I got the haircut. A sour-looking old man came in and sat down. He opened the book about the middle and started reading. After a while I looked around, and he had cracked a smile a mile wide. He left after a while, but it must have been funny, to make *him* laugh."

I have many more dandy letters that I'd like to publish. But I'll have to carry them over, for I haven't space for more here.

PICTURES

Here comes a boy on a bike. He's riding right at me, and his name is James Baker, 119 W. Pembroke, Dallas, Texas. Jim also sent me a poem, but it wasn't quite as good as some others I have.

And what's this?—another boy with a bike? Sure enough—and what a spill! All I can see is arms, legs, and wheels—and a big boyish grin! Many thanks, Buford Sullivan, of 510 Dewey St., Greenwood Miss. Buford has a Freckled Goldfish Chapter, and also sends me a picture of two of his fellow members—Carey and Calvin Cox—both real he-boys in overalls. I bet that lodge has fun! Buford writes: “We are coming along fine with our Local Chapter, and already have six prospect members.”

Edwin Wheate, 10 Ward Place, Ossining, N. Y., is the next chap whose picture bobs up in front of me. Ed, too, is a Goldfisher, with a Local Chapter of his own—at least I suppose his Chapter is well organized by now, for he sent for organization booklets many weeks ago. He asks, in conclusion, if it's all right if he comes up to see me some time—and the answer is—“Sure thing!”

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And who is this swell-lookin' little guy sittin' on the lawn? Oh, yes!—Conrad L. Hoover, who wrote to me from New Rochelle, N. Y., but who says in his dandy letter that he's moving to Merrick, L. I. Conrad writes: “I borrowed *Tuffy Bean at Funny-Bone Farm* from a friend and like it a lot. I almost died laughing when I came to where Oliver (the pup)

swallowed the sponge and had to be squeezed when he drank too much. I'm 13, and a sophomore in high school.”

And still another boy on a bike! It's Walter Nixon, 317 Van Buren St., Harlingen, Texas. Walt says that he and his pals, wanting a buried treasure of their own, hid some money in a hollow tree. If I ever go to Texas, I'm goin' to look for that tree! And thanks for the picture, Walt. I sure do enjoy the pictures that I get from boys and girls.

And speaking of girls—I see one, with a boy and a dog, in the next picture. The writer of the letter—Scott Gilmer, Henlawson, W. Va.—speaks of the dog in the picture—but nary a word about the little girl. I suspect though it's his little sister. And is he a Goldfisher?—oh, sure!

The next picture shows a lake at a boys' camp—Camp Lincoln, Lake Hubert, Minn. The picture was sent to me by Jim Hill, who lives in Minneapolis, Minn., at 5121 Bryant Ave., So. Jim and his brother George both wrote for Goldfish pins and cards when they were in camp.

George Weber, 107 Union Ave., West Haven, Conn., comes next—then a picture of Marvin Gans, 451 Hardingway West, Galion, Ohio, taken with his Boy Scout buddies—and did you know, Marvin, that I live four years in Shelby, just a few miles from Galion?—and that my first Jerry Todd book was written in Shelby? Sorry about the poem—but it didn't quite click. Try again!

Oh, Oh! Here I find myself admiring a very pretty young lady, who answers to the name of Evelyn Watkins, and in

another picture I see her young brother, John Henry Watkins. Both live at Rt. 2, Box 30, Palestine, Texas. Thanks for the nice letter, Evelyn—and sorry I couldn't use the poem.

And is J. Jack Diether, 1669 29th Ave., W., Vancouver, B. C., ever a liberal guy—for he not only sends me one picture, but six. He's all lit up in his Sunday pants in the first, is swingin' a baseball bat in the second, and a golf club in the third. Then he sends a picture of his sister Virginia—and did my heart flutter!—Oh, oh! Then a picture of Jack and his pal, Doug Lowe—and finally a dandy picture of Jack and his mother and grandmother. There's a poem too, in the letter, but—Well, I guess you'll have to try again, Jack.

I've had several fine letters from Ovid Epps, 169 Hedges St., Mansfield, Ohio—and here's his picture. Some boy!

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Jerome Silver, 98 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y., sends me a picture of the family car, with him decorating the running board. Then comes a picture of William Dudley, 110 Wendell Terrace, Syracuse, N. Y., in a bathing suit—then two pictures, one of Harry Holmes, 627 Salter Place, Westfield, N. J., and the other of his Ford. The hood is down, so I don't know if it's got an engine in it or not—but he said it runs.

Bill Hadley, 305 Hunt St., Central Falls, R. I., sends me two pictures taken in his room, showing his books and some letters I wrote him. He's the bird that got me out of bed one New Year's morning, to receive a telegram on the phone—and was I sleepy!

Then here's a picture of Fred Nyhan, 103 Trenton St., Lawrence, Mass., also a picture of his dog—and next two pictures, one of Bill Veenstra, and another of his little sister, both of 90 Auburn St., Paterson, N. J.—then, hurrying along, a picture of David Gould, 106 Leonia Ave., Leonia, N. J., another of Pat Sacken, 115 Crescent Ave., Leonia, N. J., and still another of Jack Thomas, 7511 N. Woolsey Ave., Portland, Ore.

And there I'll have to stop—but thank goodness I got up to 1933! There's about a hundred more swell pictures here—but we'll hear about them in the next CHATTER-BOX.

FRECKLED GOLDFISH

And how many members do you think we've got in our Goldfish Club? Well, by the time this book is published we'll have almost 22,000, for we have more than 21,000 right now.

Yes, sir, our Goldfish Club is something to talk about! On top of the general memberships we have several hundred branch clubs. One of these branch clubs, in Milwaukee, has been going strong for more than four years. The boys who started it are now in college—but last summer they held their meetings just as always. Only a few days ago we sent 40 cards and buttons to a boy's outdoor club in New York City. Some of the boys in the club were Goldfishers, and the man in charge wanted all the boys to be Goldfishers.

Do you belong to our great Goldfish Club? If not, and you consider yourself a Jerry Todd fan, don't you think you should join? For the club started with Jerry's and Poppy's experiences in the *Freckled Goldfish* book.

Boys with branch clubs tell me they are having a lot of fun. Parents like the idea, as it gives their children something creative to do. A boy who can get up a club, and make a success of it, is learning the essentials of true leadership. Just the other day I had a newspaper clipping, telling of a boy in the South, whose dad is a big up-and-up lodge man, and who took his son with him to a lodge convention. Come to find out, when the newspapers were getting the life story of the father, the young son was a lodge man in his own way—a Freckled Goldfisher, if you please! The pictures of both the boy and his father were in the newspaper.

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To join the club, simply observe the following rules:

- (1) Print your name plainly.
- (2) Supply your complete printed address.
- (3) Give your age.
- (4) Enclose six cents in stamps (if the postage rate is three cents), or four cents in stamps (if the rate is two cents). We simply ask enough postage to pay for the stuff we send out. You get a membership card, autographed by Leo Edwards, and a membership button.
- (5) Address your letter to Leo Edwards, Cambridge,

Wisconsin.

LOCAL CHAPTERS

To make it easy for you to get up a club, we have organization booklets. All the information you'll need, to get up a chapter, and keep it going, is contained in these booklets, of which you should have three—one for each of the three main officers, Gold Fin, Silver Fin, and Freckled Fin. You can get up a chapter without these booklets, and work out the initiation and everything else in your own way—that's perfectly all right with us. But if you want to follow the plan in our booklets, you can get them, at cost, at six cents each, or all three for sixteen cents—either eight two-cent or five three-cent stamps.

CLUB NEWS

“We now have a real freckled goldfish in our clubroom,” writes Jack Dawson, Member No. 19,650, living at 110 Pomona Ave., Providence, R. I. “The other day the Freckled Fin and I went downtown to get a goldfish. We went into every animal store in the city, but no freckled goldfish were to be found. So finally we went into the good old dime store, and we got a fish that was covered with freckles. We are planning to make a special stand to keep the fish bowl on, and whenever a member enters the clubroom, he must bow to the

Freckled Goldfish. We're also going to make a giant sling-shot like Jerry's. If we can't find any clay to make clay balls with, we are going to shoot bunches of wild grapes. When they hit—Oh, boy! I found two pairs of earphones that were used on the old radio sets, and I connected them together, using a small transformer for power. One pair is in the clubroom, and the other pair is in the hall downstairs. At the beginning of the meeting the Freckled Fin or the Silver Fin stays in the downstairs hall and speaks into the earphones to me when a member arrives. I listen at the other end of the line, and then I talk back to him. We have our clubroom in our attic, so we do not have to be bothered with furniture or other things that do not belong to the club. We have arranged the room to suit ourselves, and we have a desk or table for each of the three officers. I forgot to tell you that we're going to give a show to make money for the club treasury. I have a magician's set, so I am going to be the magician. We also are going to blacken our faces with burnt cork and put on a negro act."

"The boys in my neighborhood," writes Camp Flournoy, 1402 Louisiana Ave., Shreveport, La., "have a Goldfish Club and I am Left Gill. With our dues we have already bought *Poppy Ott and the Freckled Goldfish*."

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Attached to the next club report is a calling card, very neatly printed, which reads: Freckled Goldfish Club, Gold Fin John Bores, 91 Jubilee St., New Britain, Conn. John writes: "Boy!—the pin and card sure is a pip! I got my card framed and I wear my pin whenever I can. I showed all the kids in my room my card and pin, and pretty soon they were all asking questions about the club. The girls are just as interested as the

boys. Our clubroom isn't quite finished. We're building it outside, with a sign on it which says—Freckled Goldfish Club. Our three charter members are, Fred Trudell, Robert Yankaska, and myself. For lodge decorations we have a fish net and a wooden fishhook about half a foot long. I have a white robe with a goldfish and the letters G F on the front and back.”

And that, boys and girls, completes our CHATTER-BOX for this time. You know about our Goldfish Club, and how many members are having fun with branch clubs. If you want to start a branch club, write to me, and I'll help you all I can. Leo Edwards, Cambridge, Wisconsin.



This Isn't All!

Would you like to know what became of the good friends you have made in this book?

Would you like to read other stories continuing their adventures and experiences, or other books quite as entertaining by the same author?

On the *reverse side* of the wrapper which comes with this book, you will find a wonderful list of stories which you can buy at the same store where you got this book.

Don't throw away the Wrapper

Use it as a handy catalog of the books you want some day to have. But in case you do mislay it, write to the Publishers for a complete catalog.

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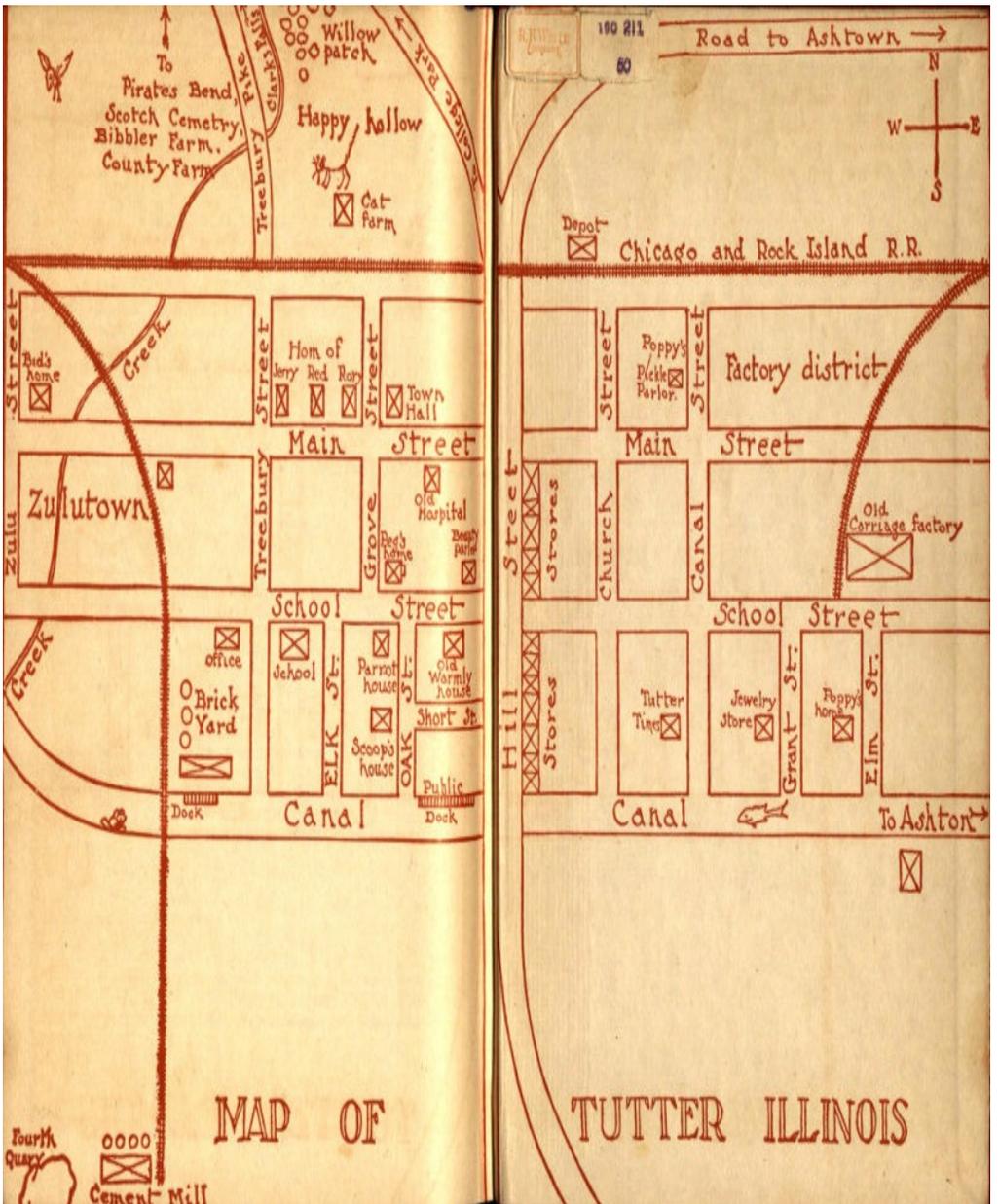
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MAP OF TUTTER ILLINOIS

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- Silently corrected palpable typos; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.
- Relocated the illustrations (printed on unnumbered pages) to the corresponding paragraph in the text.
- In the text versions, delimited italics text in underscores (the HTML version reproduces the font form of the printed book.)

[The end of *Jerry Todd and the Flying Flapdoodle* by Edward Edson Lee (as Leo Edwards)]