

**SAM SMALL
FLIES AGAIN**

**THE AMAZING ADVENTURES
OF THE
FLYING YORKSHIREMAN**

ERIC KNIGHT

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OF THE
FLYING YORKSHIREMAN*

by
ERIC KNIGHT

**HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON**

SAM SMALL FLIES AGAIN

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FIRST EDITION
B-R

TO

Bob Clarke, Sam Schwab, Charlie Kapnic,
Harry Parsons, Curly Wolfe, Harry Nason,
Roy Wolfe, Hal Borland, Jack Flynn,
Warren Cawley, James O. G. Duffy

*All good American newspapermen
who at some time or other sweated
over the job of trying to make me
write readable English—*

THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED



Author's Note

THIS saga of the life and times of Sam Small and his mates was mostly written when the world was a happier place. Bits of it were published in big and little magazines in England, the United States, Canada, and Australia. These bits were written—or rather they made themselves up—at various times and places; mostly when I was very homesick or feeling low or hopeless and wanted to cheer myself up.

When a man has little else to rely on, I think he falls back on his blood and background. And so, curiously enough, nearly all of these stories were written five and six thousand miles away from my native Yorkshire. It was mostly being homesick, I think.

I like to feel that these stories are original with me, but to be truthful they were created by my blood and background. For they are just the same kind of stories that Yorkshire people have made up to tell for who knows how many generations.

The Yorkshire people, as you may gather from these tales, are a very wonderful lot. (So are Texans and Nova Scotians and so on—but I'm Yorkshire.) Yorkshire people are truly full of fine, strong virtues. Life is often hard for them, so they cling to those virtues—courage, patience, truth, sticking it out as best you may—and they pass them on to their children by example and precept—and by story.

When I was young they told me a lot of stories about Sam Small. He was fabulous—the epitome of all that was Yorkshire. He was a folk tale.

You may notice that Sam's character is quite flexible. Sometimes he is just an ordinary mortal, limited by human abilities—and then suddenly sometimes he seems godlike, like a dream come true. Don't let that worry you. Fiction is just dreaming out loud, that's all. Tanglewood Tales, John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Superman, Sam Small—they're all the subconscious desire of man to be nearer the angels. And Sam could do anything in my childhood.

One day I had my first bad toothache. (We didn't go to a dentist, I don't think there was one for miles around.) My aunt said: "We'll rub it with a bit o' laudanum, lad—and if tha just bides patient it'll go away."

While I bided, she told me the story about Sam Small training his frightened pup—trying to make it into a real, fighting Yorkshire kind of dog. He teased it so much that in desperation it bit his nose one night, and what is more, it held on. His friend, hearing the row, came in, and Sam roared for him to pry the dog loose.

"Nay, Sam," said the friend. "Bide it, lad, for it'll be t'makin' o' t'pup."

You might try this story on yourself as alleviation for your next toothache. But it's the Yorkshire way, a typical example: biding what fate brings in undying faith that if you stick it out, there'll be better times to come.

I suppose it was all that, the ineradicable influences during childhood, that made up these stories. Wherever I was—under palms and blue-gum trees of California, or looking down on the Hudson Valley where the thunderstorms come booming along, or

cooped up in some apartment in a city, or farming in the red hills of Pennsylvania—these stories would evolve and I'd hang them on Sam Small.

It is curious, I never made up any of them in England.

Some of them may be fantasy and some not. I think they are just “telling” stories, and so may not have much point or moral or sense or continuity. In fact, I told most of these stories before I wrote them. Sometimes they even got told three or four times before they were written, and they'd get twisted and changed in some spots.

That's good for a story, because you try it on the dog. The parts that don't go, or perhaps drag a bit, or that go over very well—you note all those and adjust the story each time. You add new and funny bits at points. The dialogue gets all straightened out.

It's a good way to build a story—you can always go on getting it more and more nearly perfect. But the big thing is, you've got to get it down on paper sometime. That's a hard job, because in a way the tale is dead then. It can't grow and flower and change any more. It is over, done with, fixed permanently.

But you've got to get them down some day and have done with them. That's the sad part. Probably the finest stories ever made up by writers weren't put down, and died with them.

In a way, to be born in print is a story's death. Telling them, in the old Yorkshire way, by word of mouth, made them live much longer.

ERIC KNIGHT

Atlantic City, N. J.
October, 1941

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SAM SMALL
FLIES AGAIN



ADVENTURE I

ALL YANKEES ARE LIARS

*You can always tell the Irish,
You can always tell the Dutch.
You can always tell a Yankee;
But you cannot tell him much.*

MR. SMITH was pleased with The Spread Eagle. He was pleased with Polkingthorpe Brig. The village was off the beaten track—the truly rural sort of English village the American always wants to see.

The inn was low and rambling, with great sloping roofs. Over the door swung the sign—a darksome bird in a weather-beaten setting.

Everything justified his decision to take this bicycle trip up into the north—the mullioned windows, the roaring fire, the Yorkshire accents of the men who shuffled over the sanded stone floor of the low-ceilinged room as they played darts. Mr. Smith was almost beginning to understand what they were talking about. During his excellent high tea he had sorted out the four men playing darts. One was Saw Cooper, a farmer; a small old man was referred to as Sam; a young, bright-faced lad who played darts left-handed was Gollicker Pearson; and the fourth, a huge man, was just called Ian.

Mr. Smith watched them play, listening to the endless thwack of the darts in the cork board as he finished his meal. The barmaid, plump, corn-haired, came toward him, her apron rustling stiffly.

“Would there be owt else?”

“No. It was a very good meal.” Mr. Smith smiled. He wanted to make the girl talk some more. “Er—what do they do for fun in this place of an evening?”

“Foon?” she repeated. “Well, they sit here—or o’ Sat’d day neights lots o’ fowk goa ovver to Wuxley to t’pictures.” She waited. “They gate Boock D’Arcy i’ T’Singing Cowboy,” she added suggestively.

Mr. Smith had already become acquainted with British cinemas in small towns. Also, he was a Southern Californian, and had that familiarity with movies that belongs to all Southern Californians. He had no inclination to go four miles to see a last year’s Class B Western. “No. I think I’ll have another ale and sit here,” he said.

“If tha’ll sit ovver by t’fire, Ah’ll bring it to thee theer. Then Ah can clean oop here.”

Mr. Smith sat on the bench by the generous fire and nursed his ale. The dart game came to an end with Saw Cooper losing and paying for the round. The men brought their mugs to the fire. Mr. Smith shifted politely. The men, in the presence of a stranger, grew quiet. Mr. Smith decided to put them at ease.

“Pretty chilly for an October evening, isn’t it?”

The men considered the remark, as if looking at both sides of it. Finally Saw Cooper spoke.

“Aye,” he said.

The others nodded. There was silence, and the five regarded the fire. Then, suddenly, young Gollicker smiled.

“Tha shouldn’t heed t’cowd, being a Yankee,” he said.

“Ah, but I’m not a Yankee,” Mr. Smith said.

They stared at him in disbelief.

“Yankees,” explained Mr. Smith, “come from New England.”

They looked from Mr. Smith to one another. The big man named Ian took a deep breath.

“Yankees,” he said, “coom fro’ t’United States.”

“Well, yes. New England is a part of the United States,” Mr. Smith said. “But it’s thousands of miles away from where I live. In fact, believe it or not, I should think you’re closer to the Yankees than I am. You see, the United States is a big country. In the part where the Yankees come from, it gets very cold in the winter. Where I am—in Southern California—it never snows. Why, I’ve never known it to snow there in all my life.”

“No snow?” Gollicker breathed.

Mr. Smith smiled. For, after all, he was a Southern Californian—and they were discussing climate. “No snow,” he said. “In wintertime we have a bit of a rainy season, but after February it clears, and then it doesn’t even rain for nine months—not a drop.”

“Noa rain for a nine month—noan at all?” Saw Cooper asked.

“Not a drop. Day after day, the sun comes out, clear skies, never a drop of rain for nine months. Never!”

“Whet do ye grow theer, lad?” Saw asked, slyly.

“Lots of things. Truck, vegetables, oranges—all kinds of things.”

There was a silence again. Big Ian took a breath.

“Orinjis,” he said, and then took another breath, “graw i’ Spain.”

He looked at Mr. Smith so emphatically that Mr. Smith nodded.

“Oh, yes,” he said. “They grow in Spain, too, I understand.”

“Orinjis,” Ian repeated, “graw i’ Spain.”

That seemed to settle the question. They all looked in the fire in silence. Saw Cooper sniffed.

“Whet else grows theer?”

“Well, I have a ranch there; we grow alfalfa.”

“Whet’s that off to be?”

“Alfalfa? We use it for hay. It’s a desert plant originally, but it thrives in California. We get eight cuttings a year.”

“Eight cuttings o’ hay a year?”

“Eight cuttings a year.”

The little man, Sam, spoke for the first time: “Mister, if it doan’t rain for a nine month, how can ye get eight cuttings o’ hay a year?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” Mr. Smith said. “We irrigate the land.” He went into a short but conclusive description of irrigating.

“Heh,” Saw Cooper said. “Wheer’s this here watter coom fro’?”

“In the San Fernando Valley we buy it from the water company, just like you do in your homes.”

“Wheer do they get it?”

“From reservoirs.”

“If it doan’t rain, where’s t’reservoys get t’watter?”

“Oh, we pipe it down from five hundred miles north. It rains a lot up there.”

“And ye sprinkle t’ farming land out o’ t’watter tap. How mony acres hesta?”

“It isn’t like sprinkling from the tap, of course. I used that to illustrate. The pipes are large—we have fourteen-inch valves on our pipes. We flood the land—cover it right over with water.”

Saw looked in the fire. “Does corn grow theer?”

“Well, generally our land is too valuable to put into corn. But it will grow corn fourteen feet high.”

They made noises in their throats and shifted their feet.

“Fohteen foot,” Saw breathed. “Eigh, ba gum!”

“Mister,” Sam said, “once Ah were oop to see t’Firth o’ Forth brig. Ah suppose they hev bigger brigs i’ Yankeeland?”

Mr. Smith should have touched on the new Oakland bridge, but then, he was a *Southern Californian*.

“We have bridges, but they’re building vehicular tunnels under the rivers now.”

“Whet for?”

“Well, there’s so much motor traffic.”

“How mony moatorcars goa through ’em?”

Mr. Smith lit his pipe happily. They seemed quite interested in America.

“I couldn’t say. The way they turn ’em out, I should say there’s hundreds of thousands.”

“How fast do they turn ’em out?” Gollicker asked.

“I don’t know. I think they roll out finished at the rate of one every couple of minutes.”

“And they goa i’ tunnels, not i’ brigs?” Sam commented.

“Oh, we have some bridges.”

“Big uns, Ah suppose.”

“Well,” Mr. Smith said modestly, thinking of the Pulaski Skyway coming into New York, “we have some that go right over entire towns. You’re practically on one bridge for miles.”

Saw Cooper spat in the fire. "How many fowk is there in all America?"

Mr. Smith didn't know, but he felt expansive. And after all, there was South America too.

"A quarter of a billion, I should say," he hazarded.

"A quarter of a billion," they repeated. Then they stared at Mr. Smith, and he became aware of their disbelief.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I think a billion is different in America from here. It's a thousand million in America and a million million here, isn't it?"

"A billion," said Ian slowly, "is a billion."

The others nodded, and then Ian stood. The others rose too.

"Oh—er—wait a minute. Won't you all have a drink with me?" Mr. Smith invited.

"Us is off to play darts for a round—us four," Ian said, meaningly.

The other three laughed.

"Ah knew them their brigs o' thine'd hev to be big," Saw Cooper said as a parting shot as he swung over the bench. "That's so's they'd be able to goa ovver wheat what graws fohteen foot high when ye sprinkle it fro' t'watter tap."

He grinned at the others in victory.

"I didn't say wheat; I said corn," Mr. Smith protested.

"Same thing," Saw snapped.

"It isn't. Wheat grows in an ear. Corn grows on a cob; it has broad long leaves."

"Heh! That's maize," Saw said.

Big Ian stepped between Saw Cooper and Mr. Smith.

"Now, lad," he said flatly, "tha said corn, and Ah heeard thee. Thee and thy orinjis, and farming out o' t'watter tap, and brigs ovver cities, and it nivver rains, and denying th'art a Yankee, and a billion is a billion and yet it ain't. Tha's tripped thysen oop a dozen times, it seems to me. Now, hesta owt to say?"

Mr. Smith looked at Big Ian, standing belligerently with legs widespread and his thumbs in the waistband of his corduroy trousers. He looked round and saw everyone in the inn waiting, silent.

Then a curious thing happened. In that minute the smell of soft-coal smoke and pig-twig tobacco and ale was gone, and instead Mr. Smith was smelling the mixed odor of sun-baked land and citrus blossom and jasmine and eucalyptus trees, just as you smell it in the cool darkness coming across the San Fernando Valley. And he was homesick. Suddenly it felt unreal that he should be so far from home, sitting in an English inn with these men about him. He looked up at the faces, forbidding in their expression of disapproval. And he began to laugh.

It was all so unreal that he laughed until he cried. Every time he looked up he saw the faces, now even more comical in their bewilderment than they had been in their disapproval. They stared at him, and then Big Ian began to laugh.

"Eigh, Ah'll be jiggered!" he roared. "Drat ma buttons if Ah won't!"

It was Mr. Smith's turn to be puzzled now.

Big Ian roared, and suddenly slapped Mr. Smith on the back so heartily that his chin flew up in the air and then banged back on his chest. The others looked on in amazement.

“Why, whet’s oop, Ian?” Saw asked.

“Why, ye gowks!” Ian roared. “He’s laughing at ye! He’s been heving us on! Sitting theer for an hour, keeping his mug straight and telling us the tale! And us swallering it, thinking he was serious!”

“But,” Mr. Smith said—“but you don’t——”

“Nay, now no moar on it!” Ian roared. “Ye’ve codded us for fair, and done it champion! Lewk at owd Sam’s face!”

The others regarded Ian and scratched their heads and grinned sheepishly, and finally looked at Mr. Smith in admiration.

“But——” Mr. Smith began again.

“Nay, now, ye copped us napping,” Ian said, “and here’s ma hand on it. Soa we’ll hev noa moar—onless ye’d like to tell us whet Yankeeland’s rightly like.”

Mr. Smith drew a deep breath. “Well, what would you like to hear about?”

“About cowboys,” young Gollicker breathed. “Werta ivver a cowboy?”

For a moment Mr. Smith stood on a brink, and then an imp pushed him over.

“Of course I’ve been a cowboy—naturally,” Mr. Smith said. “What would you like to hear about it?”

“Wait a minute,” Gollicker said. They all adjusted themselves on the bench. “Now,” he went on, “tell us about a roundup—tha knows, ‘Ah’m yeading for t’last roundup,’ like Bing Crosby sings.”

Mr. Smith held his mental breath and plunged.

“Ah,” he said. “A roundup and the life of a cowboy. Up at the crack of dawn, mates, and down to the corral. There you rope your horse——”

“A mustang?” Gollicker asked.

“A mustang,” Mr. Smith agreed.

“A wild one off’n the prairies, happen?”

“Indeed a wild one from off the prairies,” Mr. Smith agreed. “I see you know America yourself.”

Gollicker grinned modestly. “Doan’t let me interrupt, measter,” he apologized.

Mr. Smith drew another breath. He saw he was up against at least one expert, so he made it very good. Inwardly he thanked fate for what he had hitherto regarded as two entirely misspent weeks on a Nevada dude ranch. He gave them, in more senses than one, a moving picture of the cowboy’s life.

When he was done, Gollicker sighed and Big Ian nodded.

“Now,” Sam said, “how about them bloody buffalo?”

“Ah, the buffalo,” Mr. Smith said. “The thundering herd! The bison! For a while there was danger—or thought to be—that the herds were dying out. But now, I am glad to say—and no doubt you are just as glad to hear—the herds are increasing, and ere long, again the crack of a rifle will bring down a bull in full gallop.”

“But how about them bloody Indians?” Saw put in.

Mr. Smith considered the Indians at the station in Santa Fe. They didn’t seem at all satisfactory. But he was inspired. He drew himself up.

“You will pardon me if I do not speak of that,” he said. “We have not too much love for the paleface who stole our lands. I say ‘we,’ for my mother was Yellow Blanket, a princess of the Blackfoot tribe. Therefore, let us not speak of the white man and the red man.”

He stared into the fire—majestically, he hoped.

“Now, see what tha’s done?” Ian said to Saw. “Happen it’ll learn thee to keep thy yapper shut once in a while. . . . Tha maun excuse him, measter. Tell us about gangsters instead. Did’ta ivver run into any gangsters?”

“Run into them? Why, how could you help it?” Mr. Smith asked.

Swiftly and graphically he painted for them an America in which here was the town where the bullets of the gangs cracked day and night. Here was the last street, and on it the last house, and beyond that was the trackless prairie where the buffalo thundered, the cowboy rode and the Indian ever lurked.

As he finished, he looked up. Everyone in the inn was listening. Men had gathered behind him silently. At the bar, the maid leaned on her elbows, entranced.

“Ah, I talk too much,” Mr. Smith said.

“Nay, goa on, lad,” they said. “Goa on.”

“Well, it’s dry work. How about a drink?”

“Champion,” said Saw.

“Owd on,” Big Ian said. “Us’ll play darts for a round.”

“Now, Ian, if the lad wants to buy——”

“Ah said,” Ian repeated, “us’ll play darts—onybody that wishes to be in on t’round. And t’loser will pay.”

Mr. Smith paid anyhow, for the dart game was trickier than he had thought, and they all seemed to be experts.

He was getting very much better when the barmaid called: “Time, gentlemen, please.”

Mr. Smith was sorry. It had been a good evening. They all said good-night cheerfully. Big Ian shook him by the hand.

“Well, soa long, lad. We had a champion time. But Ah just want to say, tha didn’t fool me when tha were kidding us at first. Tha sees, for one thing, us goas to t’pictures and so us knaws whet America’s really like. And then Ah’d allus heeard tell that all Yankees were liars.”

“Yes,” Mr. Smith said, regarding his conscience, “I did tell some lies.”

“Aye, but Ah suppose it’s a way ye Yankees hev,” Ian said. “But it’s all right as long as tha told us t’ trewth finally.”

ADVENTURE II

STRONG IN THE ARMS

*A Yorkshireman born
And a Yorkshireman bred:
Strong in the arms
But weak in the yead.*

POLKINGTHORPE BRIG isn't such a big place, even as villages go; but by gum, it can produce men.

In fact, for a place its size, as you might say, it has produced more famous men, in a manner of speaking, than any other place in the world.

For instance it has Sam Small, who is famous the world over, as all men know. And then it's got Ian Cawper.

Ian Cawper is really famous. He's the biggest and strongest lad in all Yorkshire—which means, of course, all England. For everyone knows that inch for inch and pound for pound a Yorkshireman's worth two from any other county—especially Lancashire.

Of course, Ian's a little thick in the head; but they don't hold that against a man much in Yorkshire. And, true, he's a fearful man to see when he's angered; but that's very seldom. Most times Ian is pleasant enough and affable enough. Whenever there's anything heavy needs lugging in the village, the folk always get hold of a bairn and say: "Run up Ian Cawper's cottage and tell him there's summat here that nob'dy but him can do." Ian will come down, generally carrying the bairn on his shoulder, and after they've explained to him carefully what they want, he'll move or lug or lift whatever it is, such as a walnut bureau or a boulder or a cart stuck in the mud—and very pleasantly he'll do it, too.

But there's a thing or two about Ian that fair puzzles the older people in the village.

To come right out with it, the fact is that Ian doesn't look much like any other Cawper that ever lived, not even as far back as old Capper Wambley can remember. True, the Cawpers have always been a strong breed, so he takes after them in that. But Ian is a blond, blue-eyed lad, while all the Cawpers before him were very dark—so dark, in fact, that Ian's father was known as Black Cawper. Ian's blondness couldn't have come from his mother's side, either, for she's a Motherthwaite, and the Motherthwaites are a darkish clan.

It's fair puzzling, indeed it is, and that's the truth, as the village people say. Naturally, they don't say it when Ian's around, for Ian Cawper's a fearful man when he does get angry, and could break a man in two with his bare hands if so be he wished.

But people do talk once in a while, and one night Sam Small got talking down at The Spread Eagle. What his story means, you must judge for yourself. As to how true it

is—well, Sam Small’s as truthful a Yorkshireman as ever blew the foam off four or five pints of good ale in an evening.

Ian’s father, Black Cawper—so goes Sam’s story—was a big strong man who was ready to fight, feast, or wrestle at the drop of a hat. He wasn’t as big as Ian has turned out to be, but he was shrewder than Ian will ever be. And he was more given to sudden tempers and to daring other men and showing off his strength.

Black Cawper was a favorite chap up on the moor on Sunday afternoons. For then, as now, all the men of the village would meet up on the moor to show off feats of nimbleness or strength, or to ask each other puzzling questions and riddles, or to bet on their dogs. They’d run their whippets, or hold terrier contests by putting their tykes in a barrel with a score or so of rats to see how many the dog could kill in sixty seconds. And sometimes, by lucky chance, they might meet a bunch of lads from another village who would be looking for a bit of a fight. That’s the way it’s always been on Sunday afternoons.

Now on this Sunday afternoon about twenty-five years ago, so Sam Small says, a stranger came cutting across the moor who seemed by his speech to be from over Malton way.

They asked him if he’d like to fight, and he said no; they asked him if he wanted to buy a dog and he said no; they asked him if he’d like to wrestle or run a race for a bit of a side-bet and he said no. They had just about concluded he was a pawky sort of chap until he said that if it were a matter of knerr-and-spell, by gum, he’d be willing to back himself roundly to the tune of a few shillings.

Now if there’s anything the lads of Polkingthorpe Brig pride themselves on besides fighting and dogs, it’s their skill at knerr-and-spell, a game requiring strength, speed, and judgment. (Many years ago this game drifted from Yorkshire up into Scotland where, in a much deteriorated and simplified form, it became known as golf.)

So when the stranger said he’d play, he was rapidly taken up.

It turned out, however, that this lad was nobody’s mug. He was a lanky, lithe chap with a click to his wrists when he swung that sent the ball sailing champion distances. One by one he took the money away from the Polkingthorpe men until there was only Black Cawper left, and the light was beginning to fade.

“All or nowt in a final match,” Black Cawper offered.

The lad said it was so for his pile of sixteen shillings, and he put up such a mighty dingdong battle that at the last stroke Black Cawper needed the well-nigh impossible score of 262 to tie, 263 to win. But Black Cawper only laughed and flexed the muscles in his big arms and spit on his hands. He tapped the tip-up smartly, and when the ball rose into the air he wrapped the springy club round his neck and swung. He hit the ball fair just as it was beginning to fall and belted that dobbie a giant clout such as the men there had never seen before. Away the ball went, screaming away in a straight, rising line. Up it went, away and over a far hilltop, out of sight.

Black Cawper laughed his hard laugh.

“Two hunned and sixty-three,” he offered.

This meant that if the stranger could reach the ball in less than 263 leaping strides, the score counted to him. If he couldn’t, it counted to Black Cawper, who thereby won

the match.

The Malton lad looked up at the hill and shook his head. He was a fine judge of distances, and knew he couldn't reach the ball in the required number.

"Tha's t'better lad o' t'two on us," he said and conceded the game. They shook hands and paid off. The matches were over for that day.

"Well," Black Cawper said, "now let's off and find ma dobbie."

But the men all shuffled their feet and coughed and spat.

"Nay, Black," they said, "us'll away and meet thee later down at t'Eagle."

Then Black Cawper laughed, for he knew why they were backing away as they looked at the bleak hill, now rapidly sinking back into the evening darkness. For over that hill was Wada's Keep.

Most everyone in Polkingthorpe Brig had seen Wada's Keep—but not after dark.

You went up there in the daytime when you were lads. On some summer holiday day you went—a bunch of you together, of course—and even then it was bad enough. If you had courage, you went right up to it, plunging through the bracken and stumbling over rocks. For the land there was no longer flat moor, but rocky and broken into strange crags. You kept on, being wrapped deeper in the lonesomeness and barrenness of that place. And when you got there, you didn't dare to talk. All you did was stand by the Keep, whose stones were damp and green with their ancient age. At least 1200 years old it was—that's what the schoolmaster said the day he went up there. He talked about Saxon defenders and cromlechs. That word cromlech, it made it worse, it did.

No one needed to talk of things like that when you could stand there in that silence and look at the round tower and its walls made of mighty boulders that no human hands could have lifted into place. But those boulders had been nothing for Wada, the giant. He'd lofted them up into place as nicely as a mason these days sets in a little brick.

You knew the awe of that place when you stood there thinking things like that, standing in the land where no living thing moved as far as you could see down on the wide stretches. You smelled the dust of the dried bracken and against it the damp smell of stones in unused places, and then you'd hear the fearful, lonesome cry of a peewit, and at that you'd shudder and start home, walking quickly and more quickly—all of you. Until you came over the moor and could see Polkingthorpe again, and then you slowed down and laughed and pretended you'd never walked fast with the terror of unknown things breathing on the back of your neck.

And that was the terror all the men felt that Sunday afternoon when Black Cawper faced toward Wada's land and said he was going there in the dusk. He laughed in his hard, bold way, and said:

"Would ye leave a lad find his dobbie alone?"

They rocked on their feet and coughed and spat. And then Black Cawper blazed into one of his sudden tempers—Cawper's mad highs, the men called them.

"Ba gow," he roared, "that's ma pet dobbie and Ah'm not off to lose it. Ah'm bahn up theer, and what's more, one on ye's cooming up wi' me to bear witness Ah showed no fear. Here, Sam Small, tha'll coom wi' me."

"Nay, not me," Sam said, stoutly.

“Tha’ll coom when Ah say,” Cawper shouted. And he jumped over and caught Sam by the scruff of his neck and slung him over his shoulder.

“Here, let me dahn, Black,” Sam pleaded. “It’s ma teatime, and Mully’ll be mawngier nor owd hell if Ah’m late.”

Black Cawper paid no attention to Sam. Instead he swung about and faced the hill. He shook his knerr-and-spell club and lifted his head and shouted:

“Now giant! If so be as tha lives in them hills, clear out o’ t’road! For here cooms Black Cawper, and wi’ a witness to boot!”

But when he said that, from the skyline came a quick glow of light and then, far away, the distant rumble of thunder. And as the watching men drew in their breath sharply, one of the dogs lifted his head and howled in a manner like to curdle your blood. Then, like a flock of birds that obey an unsounded signal, all the men turned about, and a mad charge of men and dogs went stampeding off down to the village.

When they were gone Black Cawper stood a while, and then, slowly, one foot stamping down before the other, he started up that hill with Sam Small over his left shoulder and his knerr-and-spell club in his right hand. At the top of the hill he lifted Sam to the ground.

“Now lad,” he said, “us’ll find ma dobbie. And tha’d better stick close to me; because t’owd Nick hissen knaws what maught grab thee if tha tried to run hoam alone this time o’ neight.”

He chuckled deep down in his chest, but Sam only shivered. He glanced around fearfully, Sam did, and resolved not to be left alone that night if he could help it. So he followed close behind Black Cawper and they kicked at the tufts of grass and pulled aside clumps of gorse as they looked for the ball. But nowhere was a ball to be seen.

“O’ course it’s not here,” Black Cawper said. “It maun ha’ gone far and away down into t’valley here. For surely it were the championest clout a lad ivver give a dobbie.”

So they went deeper and deeper into the country, following the line the ball had taken as best they could. But no ball could they find.

“Now lewk here, Black,” Sam said at last. “No man can say tha hesn’t dared to hunt, but it’s pitch black now and we’ll noan find it in the dark. Sitha lad, let’s coom up tomort morn and lewk for it.”

“Us has gate to be at t’pit and digging coal by dawn,” Black said, “and Ah’m bound Ah’m off to find ma dobbie toneight. There’ll be a gradely moon out soon.”

“Nay, coom away, Black lad,” Sam coaxed. “Just think, Black, it’s supper time and there’ll be a nice fire i’ t’ fireplace, and a fine, steaming pot o’ tea, and some hot toasted scones or muffins, all swimming in butter; or a pikelet or two and some sliced ham, wi’ a wedge or two o’ nice cold pork pie—or happen a bloater, all fried to a turn. Tha likes bloaters, Ah knaw . . .”

“Nay,” said Black.

“Eigh, but happen there’d be a gert big foaming quart o’ fine beer. Wouldn’ta like a mug o’ beer that’d mak’ a chap smack his lips and . . .”

“Nay,” said Black.

“Not even if, happen, somebody were to stand thee that quart o’ beer?”

“Nay!”

“Not for a quart o’ beer? Not even if Ah were to say outright it’d be me what stood the price on it for thee?”

“Ah said nay,” roared Black Cawper. “Ah’ve said Ah’m off to find ma dobbie, and find it Ah will—if it tak’s all neight, and no matter whose bailiwick it chances to be in.”

Right when he said that Sam shivered, for Black’s great voice went rolling out into the darkness and rumbled up into the crags, and like an echo came back a voice that boomed like a peal of thunder, saying:

“Be this what th’art looking for?”

At that moment there was a lifting light and the rising moon shot from behind a ragged cloud. Black and Sam, standing stock-still, looked out across the rocky hollow and saw a man standing on a flat crag—a great, well-set-up lad he was, with a blond beard that shone in the moonlight.

For a long time they all stood without moving and the moments passed. The first sound was when Black Cawper laughed his bold laugh.

“Tak’ this,” he said, and he thrust his club into Sam’s hand. Sam heard him drawing in his breath through his nose, drawing it in and filling his chest so that it expanded, wider and wider. Then, with his head thrust forward and his arms hanging wide from bent elbows, Black Cawper took the first step forward. He kept on steadily, evenly, his metal-shod clogs coming down regularly as he went forward step by step to where the man waited.

Poor Sam’s belly turned over with terror, but he felt that this was no time for a lad to leave his chum, even if he died for it. So he scabbled along behind Black, gripping the club firmly.

Cawper went on until he reached the flat rock where the man waited with his legs far apart and his thumbs hooked lightly into his waist-belt. Within an arm’s length Black Cawper halted and took the same position—his feet planted apart and his thumbs resting inside the waist of his corduroy trousers. Thus they stood and looked each other up and down slowly and carefully, not saying a word.

Sam waited in fear as the minutes passed; for although Black Cawper was a well-set man, the bearded chap was bigger by almost a foot.

They said no word, and when the time was done Black Cawper turned and picked up the dobbie that was shining on the ground. The way he did it was a dare-devil way, for he turned his back completely on the other man as if he scorned him. It was a bold, contemptuous thing to do, and Sam gripped the club firmly. But the bearded man made no move, only following Cawper with his eyes that seemed to smile.

Cawper turned the dobbie over carefully, pretending to examine every part of it, his back still toward the other man.

“Aye,” he said finally. “This is ma dobbie.”

He turned around and laughed, loudly, in the face of the stranger.

“Now, Ah gate what Ah coom for, Ah’ll be off on ma road hoam,” he said.

He waited patiently, but there was no answer.

“Aye, that’s champion,” Sam said quickly. “Thanking this lad varry politely for his help, us’ll be off.”

Black did not look at Sam. He stared at the unmoving man on the rock.

“Nay, but on t’other hand,” Cawper said, “Ah maught want to stay.”

The other man did not move, so Black Cawper went near to him, and squinting his eyes and looking up through his knotted eyebrows he said:

“Ah nivver turned ma back on noa man yet be-out being polite-like, as tha mought say. Soa Ah’m axing thee: wouldt’a like to feight, lad?”

The blond man laughed.

“Eigh, there’s all night for sport yet,” he answered. “Sit thee down here for a while—if tha hast time to spare.”

“Ah’ve gate as much time to spare as any other man,” Cawper said, “and brass enow to sit ony place ma feet can carry me to.”

So they sat, each on a boulder, facing each other. Sam, not knowing what to do, sat on the ground, hugging the club. For a long time nothing was said, but Sam, knowing Black Cawper, could see he was getting ready to do a bit of thinking. Nearly half an hour passed in silence, and then Black said, suddenly:

“If a hen and a hawf laid an egg and a hawf in a day and a hawf, how much would one hen lay in a week?”

He looked cunningly at the big man, for Black Cawper prided himself on being a foxy sort of a chap at thinking. But right smack back came the big lad:

“Four eggs and two-thirds on the way to lay another.”

Sam Small drew in his breath quickly, for he knew of no stranger who’d been able to answer that problem before. Many a pint of beer had Black Cawper won from strangers in the inn with that one. Moreover, the answer given was the right one, for that’s what the schoolmaster had told them was the right solution when they’d first taken the puzzle to him to be worked out.

When this stranger gave the right answer, Black Cawper nodded his head, for he began to see he was up against a very unusual opponent this time. So he went back to doing a bit of thinking again. He thought and thought until the moon was rising up in the sky. Then he got up suddenly and walking to Sam took the club from his hand. Looking over to see if the stranger was watching, Black took the dobbie from his pocket. Not speaking a word, he threw it up in the air with a fine, careless twirl of his hand, and then swung back with his club. The dobbie flashed up in the moonlight and began to fall. Just when it was a little over waist-high, Black’s club came swinging round and caught that dobbie a crack that sounded sweet and true.

Away that ball went like a line of silver. Then it was gone, slanting up into the night. But even then they could hear it whooshing away with a dying moan in the black quietness. For a long time they waited, breathless, and the minutes passed. Faintly they heard at last the sound of the dobbie tacking and tumbling on the stones far across the valley.

Then Black nodded his head in satisfaction and sat down.

The big man said never a word, but he got up and looked carefully at Black's club. He took it in one hand and whooshed it round a few times. Black's club was a special one, so heavy that no man but himself could swing it with the flash of accuracy and speed that knerr-and-spell demands. However, the stranger seemed amused by it and put it aside. Instead he picked up a great ash cudgel and selected a rock. As big around as a man's two fists, that rock was. But the big chap flipped it up in the air and swung quickly. There was a crash as if the rock had exploded, and Sam Small blinked as if he'd been blinded.

How far that rock went Sam never knew, for as he waited for the sound of it falling, there came a flash of light on the horizon and a mumbling and a bumbling of thunder far away.

"Eigh, they maun be hev'in a storm up i' t' Malvern Hills," Sam said.

He felt he must say something, for the other two never spoke. They looked at each other, and the blond man smiled. Black Cawper knotted his brows in anger and suddenly cried:

"Ah'll run thee a race for ten bob!"

"Good! To the tower and back," the other man said.

At the mention of that tower, Sam did shiver for fair. But Black Cawper hesitated hardly a moment.

"Done," he said.

"Touch the tower wall and back to Tichie here," the stranger said.

At this Sam got fair blazing, for although he wasn't a big man, no one had ever called him Tichie before—for that word means a dwarf man in Yorkshire. But he consoled himself with the thought that now the stranger would be beaten, for few light men were as fast on their feet as Black Cawper, and surely no big man could best him in a footrace. But before he could think much of this, Black shouted:

"Ready? Go!"

Away they went into the darkness and Sam could hear the mighty churning and a whortling of their bodies tearing through the thick bracken and the crashing of their feet upon the rocks. The sounds died away and then grew again. Sam jumped to his feet to see who was first, and when they came into view they were neck and neck. But right at the last moment the stranger seemed to glide ahead without altering his stride and flying past he tapped Sam with the tip of his hand.

It was only a light touch, yet Sam felt as if he'd been struck with a jolt of electricity and he felt himself going rolling and abowling arse-over-ashtip down the rocks. When he picked himself up and got back Cawper was paying off the bet, his forehead knotted in anger.

Now that the blond man had won the footrace, Sam realized that Black Cawper was up against something the likes of which he'd never known before and that this night was to see a contest to be remembered. For Sam knew that Black Cawper would never give in. And neither he did. In that moonlight night up in Wada's country Black Cawper matched the stranger at all the things he knew, one by one. They matched at games of cunning and games of strength; at jumping for height and jumping for distance; at

heaving rocks for yardage and heaving rocks for aim; at lifting boulders of greater and greater size above their heads. And always the stranger won.

Finally Black Cawper had not a farthing left to bet with. So he jumped up in anger and tore off his coat.

“Now lad,” he roared, “there’s nobbut one thing left. There’s gate to be a feight, between me and thee!”

“For what stake?”

“Nay, Ah gate nowt left. We maun feight for t’fun on it.”

“My heart is happy,” the blond man said.

“That’s spoken like a honest chap,” Black said and tore off his shirt.

They both stripped to the waist, and knotted their neckerchiefs carefully about their middles. Black Cawper flexed his knotty arms and lifted his chest, all covered and matted with black hair. The other man’s skin shone in the moonlight, pink and hairless as a baby’s backside.

“Now lad,” Black said, “how’ll us feight—standups or knockdowns? Us maun do this reight and proper.”

“Nay, the way matters not,” the other replied, lightly.

Sam waited anxiously. For there are two kinds of fighting up in Yorkshire. The standup is a softy sort of fighting that is drifting in from the south counties, in which it is very useless to knock a man down, for all you must do then is stand back and let him get up again.

Now the knockdown is the real Yorkshire way of fighting, for if you once strike your man down then everything else follows in a sensible sort of way—for instance, you may jump on him, or kneel on him and batter him, or if you think it best you may stand off and kick him sweetly. This is a most honest way of fighting, especially since the clogs of Yorkshire have fine, pointed toes that are capped with brass, whereas the men from the south counties have only blunt-toed boots.

So Sam waited breathlessly, for a man who feels he is to be beaten will always pick the cowardly southern style which allows him to escape whenever he wishes to lie down and fight no more. But he was proud of Black Cawper when he roared:

“Knockdowns—onless th’art flaid!”

The blond man laughed and waved his hand to say it was all the same to him. Then, bending, their arms hanging low, they began to circle each other on the flat rock. For nearly five minutes they moved thus, and the only thing heard in the clear night was the shifting of their feet on the rock and the deep drawing of the breath into their chests.

Suddenly, without a warning, the blond man charged first. But Black Cawper was ready. Like the blink of an eye he swung his clogged foot and kicked the man in the groin. So fast that you could hardly see it, he kicked again—and a third time. Then they swung around and faced each other once more, and Black Cawper laughed deep in his chest.

The other man should have dropped, but instead he charged in again, and this time from the position of his feet Sam could see he was to kick at Black’s crotch. But Black knew a trick worth two of that. Without giving ground, he half-turned in a flash,

standing on one foot and holding the other foot with his hands. He held the foot knee-high, and with the metal-shod sole turned out. He did it just as the other man's leg swung forward, and it was like a shield in defense. Sam Small heard a sound as if the shin-bone were splintering when the stranger's leg crashed against the upheld foot.

But the big man gave no sign, and instead kept coming right in and the two locked their arms. For a time they circled, each bent over, head to head like stags in the mating season. They pushed and swayed, each feeling for a stronger hold and kicking at each other's legs. It seemed to be deadlock, until Black Cawper shifted quickly and reaching under grasped the other's beard. He pulled down with all his strength, yanking the man's head down; and at the same time he brought up his knee with a force that smashed it into his opponent's face and sent him staggering back, with blood gushing from his mouth.

Without halting a second, Black put down his head and charged. He caught his foe in the belly with his head, and the force of the butting charge sent the man flying back. His body went wildly through the air and crashed onto the rocks six feet below the flat crag. Even while it was falling, Black was following up, and charging over the rock he leaped out into space, meaning to come down feetfirst on the body of the man below.

But somehow the man managed to roll aside with a lightning twist, and scrambling to his feet he locked his arms tight about his enemy. Thus they stood, chest to chest, and Black grinned, for he had never yet met a man who could withstand his grip. So he squeezed, tighter and tighter. Sam saw the cords and veins stand out on his neck as he put on the pressure, but the other man only waited.

At last Black was done, and then it was the other's turn. He pressed, tighter and tighter, seeking to crush in Black's ribs. But Black, waiting as the other had waited, could not be beaten that way, either.

At a deadlock again, they began trying to lift each other, to pluck their foe from his feet and throw him. But they seemed evenly matched there, too. They swayed and staggered, crashing about and panting.

Thus, while Sam Small watched, Black Cawper and the stranger fought all that moonlight night in the land beside Wada's Keep. They crashed over the rocks and locked together they rolled down the slopes. They tore themselves free and charged each other. They wrestled and struck and kicked themselves apart and came back to the locked embrace again.

So the moon sloped over the sky and the wind blew cold and the night went past as they fought on.

And then, slowly, Sam saw that Black Cawper was to be beaten. He charged as courageously as ever, but his arms were lifting more slowly. And in a final locked struggle, the bearded man at last bent Black Cawper back, further and further. Then he lifted him from the ground and hurled him across the rocks.

Black Cawper, his face covered with blood, lifted himself up and came back, but again he was thrown. For a second time he lifted himself, shaking his head savagely as if to get it clear. He charged in once more, and once more was thrown. And this third time, try as he might, he found himself unable to rise. He pushed with his arms upon the ground, but they would not lift his body.

But even then he was not beaten in spirit, for as the blond man advanced, instead of wrapping his arms about his head to protect his skull, the way beaten men do, Black Cawper lay there proudly and defiantly, looking up sidewise at his enemy, but without any pleading in his eyes.

The big man jumped down to where Black lay and drew back his foot. Then he said:

“All this night we have contested, thee and me.”

Black Cawper did not answer. All there was to hear was the breath coming and going as his chest heaved for air. He tried to lift himself and managed to push up his shoulders with his straightened arms. But he could get no further though he tried until the beads of sweat stood out on his forehead.

Then, with a quick movement, the blond man reached down and with a great lift hauled him to his feet. Without saying a word he helped Black into his shirt and coat. When that was done he lifted his head and looked about and said:

“But a little while longer and tha wouldst have beaten me.”

His voice sounded sad and far away as he went on:

“Ah, and if tha nobbut had! For when there comes another like unto me, then Ah am released and may go ma way!”

Black sat with his head bowed. The big man looked about him, turning his head.

“Eigh, but Ah maun go. Fare thee well, lad.”

Black Cawper rose suddenly and held the other’s arm.

“Nay, tha maun’t go,” he said. “Ah want thee to coom hoam wi’ me and meet ma wife.”

“Thy wife? What for?”

Black Cawper stood up firm and held the other’s hand proudly.

“Well lad,” he said, “Ah’m a Yorkshireman born and a Yorkshireman bred, soa Ah can nobbut speak like a true sportsman. Tha’s bested me at cunning and tha’s bested me at speed; tha’s bested me at strength and tha’s bested me at feighting. Soa there’s nobbut one thing left for an honest lad to do.

“Ba gum, Ah’d like to tak’ thee hoam and hev a pup off’n thee!”

The blond man shook his head, quickly.

“Nay, Ah maun be off,” he said.

He started away, and then suddenly he stopped as if struck by a surprising idea. He spoke almost as if to himself.

“For when there is another like unto me, then am Ah released and may go ma way,” he said. “And another can guard the Keep against the invader.”

Quickly, gladly, he reknotted his kerchief. He started to smile and say: “Ah’ll go wi’ ye,” but then faintly, yet loud as faint sounds are at dawn, there came a cockcrow from the village far away. Sadly, sadly, the blond man looked at the east and cried:

“Nay, nay! Ah maun go!”

He turned and raced away before they could stop him and was gone from sight like the winking of an eye. But from the hills came his booming voice, fading away, and

Sam says he heard him call, saying:

“A month from today! Full moon! Ah’ll be back and tak’ ye up on that—a mooonth from todaaay!”

Then his voice rumbled off into the hills and became one with the muttering thunder of a dawn storm.

Now that is the story that Sam Small tells. He says he can remember the exact date—as most men in the village can. For Sam was young then, and worked as a collier lad. It was long before he went into the mill and invented his famous self-doffing spindle.

And coming down from the moor that gray morning, Sam Small and Black Cawper were so late they had no time to go home to their cottages. For they were on the 6 A.M. shift at the pit, and so they went right to work.

And that very day was the day of the big do at the Silkstone Pit Number Two. It was the day of the disaster when Sam, racing from his gallery, saw Black Cawper standing like a Colossus, his great back arched and holding up a sagging cross-timber.

Everyone knows that is true, for they still tell you about it in Polkingthorpe Brig—how Black Cawper held up that great timber and roared in his bull voice to the men to hurry, and how as the men in his gallery ducked under his arched body that great timber pressed him down, lower and lower.

Black Cawper never came out of that pit, for as Sam Small ran along toward the shaft there came a rumble and a roar and the roof behind them caved in. Sam Small and seven others reached the cage in safety, but in that level sixty-seven lives were lost. Sam and the other seven came out to tell the story.

So no one can mistake the date on which Black Cawper died. And no one can mistake the date on which Ian Cawper was born—ten months later.

Now we are not too handy on arithmetic and such tricky matters; but, as we say in the village, there seems to be summat varry, varry foony soomwheers.

But, naturally, nobody ever says anything much about it because—well, Ian’s affable enough most of the time; but if he ever got real angry, and ever took such an idea in his big, blond head, why he could break any man in two with his bare hands. It’s almost supernatural, how strong Ian Cawper is.

ADVENTURE III

SAM SMALL'S BETTER HALF

*Here's to me—and ma wife's husband—
not forgettin' masen.*

"IF THERE'S one thing I'd like to do," Mully Small said, as she sat before the hearth, "it's travel. Now we're wealthy and retired, as tha maught say, I'd like to go round the world."

Sam ignored the gambit altogether as he put down the evening paper.

"What," he asked, rhetorically and pugnaciously, "would the British workingman be without his pint of ale at the day's end?"

"That's something the world'll never know till one of 'em tries it," Mully snapped. "And as I don't suppose tha's in the mood for noble experiments, for goodness' sake away ye go down to the pub, for I see I'll get no peace until tha does. Although I did think, since I'm poorly, that tha might have spent one evening at home."

Sam got up and stood undecided. Truly Mully didn't look so well, and he wanted to stay. But he wanted his evening mug of ale, too. A sort of short, but bitter, tug-of-war took place inside him—and the ale won.

"Now I'll not be long," he said, in a tone of hopeful appeasement.

Mully refused the scant olive branch.

"Ah'll gamble," she said sarcastically, in her broadest Yorkshire dialect. "Chucking out time!"

"Now isn't that just like a woman's dirty suspicions, for thee?" Sam asked the vacant air. "I'll be back long before chucking out."

At the time Sam really meant what he said—if only to prove to Mully how grossly she wronged him with her accusations. But when he got to the pub, unfortunately there was an argument going on. Moreover, it was just the sort of argument that needed the sagacity, erudition, and forensic abilities of Sam Small—and Sam Small was the best man in all Yorkshire for giving his opinion in an argument.

"It's this way, Sam," explained Rowlie Helliker. "It says here as how a doctor thinks this Hitler chap has got——"

He peered at the newspaper.

"—anyway, the word means a split personality, it says."

"Oh, aye," responded Sam nonchalantly. "Schizoperennial."

"What's coming off here?" asked Huckle, the publican.

"That's just the technicological name o' the disease," Sam said. "It means a chap splits into two personalities—that's what."

“Ah’ve seen two personalities,” offered Annie, the barmaid. “It were in t’cinema once. One were——”

“Ah’ve come to a decision,” interrupted Gaffer Sitherthwick. “If ye mean to stand theer and tell me that a chap can divide into two, then what Ah say is—it ain’t human, it’s just dirty propaganda.”

“Hold on, Gaffer,” Sam said. “Ye see, science has discovered that every one of us is a couple of people, really. And ye can’t beat science when it comes to—to—to science, can ye?”

“Science is off to get itself into a hole some day, if it goes on discovering things,” warned Capper Wambley darkly.

“Well, ye’ve heard o’ twins, haven’t ye?” Rowlie Helliker offered. “Happen this here schizoperennia’s like that, only a chap becomes twins after he’s born instead of before.”

“Nonsense,” the Capper said. “Ah would have heard of it before this. Ah’m the oldest chap here, and I never heard of that happening.”

“But it’s only just come out, like,” Sam explained.

“Ah still don’t believe a chap can split in two,” roared the Gaffer.

“Nor me, nawther,” agreed Capper Wambley.

“Hold on, British fair play every time,” Rowlie Helliker shouted. “Two against one. Now what I say, is this. . . .”

And so the argument rumbled, with words flowing ponderously and sagely in the Yorkshire way, and the white arms of Annie, the barmaid, flashing up and down as she gave the long pull on the mild and bitter pumps. Until, in no time whatsoever, as you might say, there rose the voice of Huckle above the din, his voice sounding the well-known British curfew, “Time, gentlemen, please! Time!”

Sam Small stood, like Cinderella hearing the stroke of midnight.

“Eigh, by gum,” he muttered, aghast. “And I promised Mully faithful I’d be home afore chucking out. . . .”

Off Sam went, through the door as fast as his stubby legs would carry him. As he skeltered up along the Green, the thought seeped into his mind that if he got home quickly he might be able to say he had left before closing time, but had strolled home lazily.

He began to feel guilty—not because he was preparing the evidence for another lie, but because he had left Mully alone all evening. He wished he hadn’t done that.

He was feeling angry at himself, and then . . .

It happened!

There was a flash, a sort of silent explosion, a whirling of planets and comets in an endless purple void, and Sam Small found himself sitting on the pavement, half-dazed.

“By gum,” he muttered thickly. “I must have bumped into the lamppost.”

But then, as he collected his senses, he saw another man, similarly situated on the pavement.

“So—it was thee bumped into me,” Sam began pugnaciously. “Why doesn’t tha look where tha’s going?”

“It’s six o’ one and half a dozen o’ t’other, lad.”

“Now don’t argue wi’ me,” Sam groaned. “Gie us a hand up.”

“How about thee gi’ing me a hand up?” the other said.

“Why, I never met such a nasty, unobliging chap,” Sam said. “But I’ve no time to argue wi’ thee. My wife’s poorly and I promised to be home afore chucking out time, and here I am. . . .”

“Beer-swiller!” accused the other. “If thy wife’s poorly, why doesn’t tha sit with her? That’s what I’ve been doing at ma home over the Green.”

“Thy home?” breathed Sam.

His voice rose in suspicion, and a chilly vibration ran up his spine. For he had an eerie feeling that the voice of the other man was familiar—too familiar, somehow.

“Who are ye?” Sam cried.

They both rose from the pavement, and Sam dragged the other under the street light. Then he gasped. For Sam Small found that he was looking at none other than himself!

For a second only was Sam nonplused, and then his brain functioned. He grabbed the other tightly.

“A blooming imposter!” he said. “I’ve got thee!”

“Imposter thysen,” the other said. “I’m Sam Small.”

“Oooo, you liar. I’m Sam Small.”

“Now, now, don’t contradict. Look at me and see if I don’t look like Sam Small.”

“By gum, so tha does,” Sam admitted. Then he moaned, “Eigh, don’t go mixing me all up, or ye’ll have me so conflumoxed I won’t know what to think. How can ye prove ye’re Sam Small?”

“Well,” the other began, glaring suspiciously. “I have a wife whose name is Mully. And I have a daughter rising seventeen whose name’s Vinnie, and . . .”

“I’ll be jiggered,” Sam said. “I see tha’s a very clever imposter indeed. At least, tha’s looked up all ma background. But tha’s slipped up, my lad, for I know where I have thee!”

As he spoke Sam tugged at the heavy gold chain on his waistcoat and drew out a great turnip of a gold watch, and snapped open the back with a gesture.

“There,” he said. “Read that. For I know it by heart. It says on it, ‘To Sam Small, from his loyal wife, Millicent, on their wedding day.’”

“Well, I’ll be jiggered,” said the other. “For it says exactly the same—here!”

And, with a similar gesture, tugging at a similar chain, he snapped open the back of a similar watch.

“Oooo, by gum,” Sam moaned. “I *am* in trouble. I must have done summat wrong. And here I stand, not knowing whether I’m me, or tha’s me—or I’m thee—or whether us is both we.”

He stood a second.

“Why, that’s it,” he yelled.

“What’s it?”

“We’re both me—both of us. It’s schizoperennial. Ma personality’s split wide open, just like we’ve been arguing about down the pub—and I’ve become two on us.”

“Well, by gum. Think o’ that, now,” said the other. “But—but what can us do about it?”

“Look, this is a very important happening, lad,” Sam said. “And we’ve got to go careful about it. I think, before anyone sees us and spoils it all, we’d better take a walk out on the moor and discuss it proper. For the sake of getting it straight a bit, suppose I call thee Sammywell, and call mysen Sam? That’ll get us separated for purposes o’ discussion, as ye might say.”

And off they went over the moor, with Sam explaining his view of what had happened.

“If we handle it carefully,” said Sam, “there’s a fortune in it. For instance, doctors and such wi’ scientific curiosity—why they’d pay a right lot o’ brass to meet a couple of chaps like us.”

“I don’t care for doctors, Sam. Happen they’d want to operate on us,” Sammywell ventured.

“Aye, I don’t care for ’em, either. But happen we could get a tent and travel round wi’ the feasts—we’d be champion curiosities, and people’d pay a shilling to see us.”

“I’d object to being a freak, like,” Sammywell droned.

“Nay, there’s nowt wrong wi’ making a little honest brass, lad, and I’ve not got it all worked out yet, but there’s brass in the general idea. Just look at t’brass Ah’ve just made off ma self-doffing spindle.”

“Aye,” said Sammywell, “but an invention’s a fact.”

“So is this a fact,” Sam said. “Think on it! The Government might take an interest in us, as tha might say. Why, if they could multiply every man by two they could double the man power o’ t’army!”

“Aye, but us can’t sit out here all night, lad, while tha works it out. There’s Mully waiting up for me at home.”

“Well, we can’t go home,” Sam expostulated, “not the two on us.”

“That’s so,” Sammywell agreed. “But one on us could stay out here tonight and puzzle out what’s best to do. T’other can go home and say nowt to Mully. It won’t be cold sleeping out here for thee, Sam—and in the morning I can slip out and bring thee a few licks to eat, like.”

“Hold on a bit. I don’t like that idea—thee going home to my wife. It—it ain’t moral!”

“But since tha explained it to me that we’re both one, when I go home it’s really thee, too, tha knows,” Sammywell said. “Now be sensible; one of us has got to take a back seat for a while until we get this all figured out. Why don’t you go away for a few days and we’ll both put our thinking caps on?”

“Me go away?” echoed Sam.

Then he thought a while. He began to see possibilities in the suggestion. If he went away he could have a right good beano.

Sam glowed inwardly. But he put on a sad face.

“Eigh, it’s sad and all to think of a man giving up the rightful comfort of his own hearth and home, and going forth, an uncherished wanderer on the face o’ t’earth, as ye might say. But for the sake of Mully and her peace o’ mind, I make the great sacrifice. Good-by.”

“Where are ye going?”

“Why—I’ll cut over the moor and be in Bradley by morning. Then I’ll drop in the bank and get a little cash——”

“Hey. Thee be careful wi’ my savings account,” Sammywell wavered.

“*Our* savings account, Sammywell, lad. So long.”

And then Sammywell was alone.

“Sam,” he shouted into the darkness. “When’ll ye be back?”

“Expect me when ye see me,” floated back the voice of Sam. “Keep the home fires burning, Sammywell. Keep the home fires burning!”

“Do you want a railway ticket, lad?” asked the man behind the little bars at the station, helpfully.

“Aye, that’s it exactly,” Sam said. “But Mully generally tends to all this part of it, and I’m at a bit of a loss wi’out her. What sort o’ tickets have ye got?”

“Oh, first, third, excursion, return.”

“I’ll have a return.”

“One return. Good. Where to?”

“Why back here, of course, gormless.”

The chap, thinking Sam was kidding him, got quite upset. So the argument began. Sam got his Yorkshire up and wouldn’t be pinned down as to where he was going.

“Now any fool can let people buy what they want,” Sam pointed out. “But I’ve read it takes a real salesman to sell a doubtful customer.”

“But *where* do you want to go?”

“How would I know afore I hear what expense I’m off to run into? No sensible man runs ahead of his brass. So cite me a few bargains.”

The man blew out his breath and picked up a printed list.

“Llandudno, very special, twenty-six and six?” he offered.

“Couldn’t spell it,” Sam said. “I wouldn’t live in a town I couldn’t spell. I’d feel all defeated, like.”

“Scarborough, fifteen and——”

“Dearie, no. I had a chum went there once, broke his leg, he did. I’d be that sad thinking on him. He was putting his trowsis on, he was, and just toppled over and broke his leg.”

“They could set it, couldn’t they?”

“Aye, but his wife were that upset, ’cause his leg didn’t look the same. She were always after him to break the other. They never had a peaceful day together after that. A plumber, he were. Name o’ Billy Sandysen. Ever meet him?”

“No! Blackpool, twelve and six, ten-day excursion?”

“Blackpool? Now tha’s getting me interested.”

“Shall it be Blackpool, then?”

“Don’t rush me. I were there once. I ate so many whelks wi’ vinegar I were sick on the train coming home. Eigh, I had a champion time.”

“Then it’ll be Blackpool?”

“Hold on a minute. If I don’t use the return part in ten days, can I cash it in on a full fare coming back?”

“Yes,” sighed the man. “Yes.”

“Then sold!” said Sam.

And off he went to Blackpool.

Sam did have a rare old time at Blackpool. There was so much to do that he’d sally out each morning and never even go back to his boardinghouse for meals. But this didn’t matter as there were any number of places where a chap could buy winkles and cockles and fried fish and pease pudding and ices. And since it was a holiday without Mully, Sam didn’t feel so bad about flinging his money about.

And Sam winked at all the lasses there on their holidays—for though a bit snowy in the pow, Sam was feeling quite a dog.

One day, by the bandstand, a big, fine-looking woman smiled at him. Sam bought himself a walking cane on the strength of it. The next day she smiled again, so he got himself a straw hat for one-and-tuppence.

Then one day it got warm, and everyone went wading on the sands. The sands were a bit squoggy at Blackpool, but Sam, full of holiday freedom, didn’t mind. With his trousers rolled up, he paddled and splashed to his heart’s content—all through the day, until the sun began to go down, blood-red, and a chill wind came in suddenly from the sea.

Sam Small shivered.

“Happen I got ma trowsis wet,” he said to himself. “Wouldn’t Mully give me a talking-to?”

He went up higher on the sands, intending to put on his stockings and boots, and then go by the bandstand to see what the fine-looking woman thought of his straw hat. But somehow, when he was dressed, he didn’t feel like strolling. And yet—he wanted something.

“Now what can it be?” Sam said to himself. “Happen I want summat to eat.”

So he thought of pork pies and saveloys and sausage rolls and oysters, and all the things sold at the shops; but it wasn’t any of those he wanted.

He tried to puzzle it out, considering a walk on the promenade as against a stroll on the pier, a look at the zoo or a go at the merry-go-round, or perhaps the ferris wheel. But it wasn’t any of these things he wanted.

As he sat the sun sank, the wet sands glowed in the dusk, and a sort of cosmic sadness washed in from the dying day and seeped over him. The lights in the shops behind him popped on, one by one, and the electric signs came on to spangle the holiday front of the town, and people laughed and screamed. And over the ocean the day ebbed away to other lands and there was nothing left of the sea but its hushing.

Finally Sam gave up trying to puzzle it out and went back to his boardinghouse. He was in a strange bad temper.

“I think I’ve copped a cold,” he told his landlady.

“More like some o’ the stuff tha’s been eating,” she said. “Tripe and cowheel and chitterlins and eel-pies and poloney and trunnel-pies and hokeypokey and blood pudding. . . .”

“Are ye selling summat?” Sam said. “If I weren’t upset when I come home, I am now.”

“Then I’ll gie thee some lickerish powder. I allus used to give ma husband lickerish powder. A fine chap he were. . . .”

“Thy husband? Where’s he now?”

“Eigh, he’s deead.”

“I tell ye, it’s nowt I ate. What’s more, if it were I wouldn’t take lickerish powder. I tell ye I’ve copped a cold.”

“Then I’ll fix thee a mustard footbath.”

“I don’t want no footbath. Mully gi’s me hot rum and treacle.”

“Well, I’ve no rum. I’ll gie ye the treacle now and ye can take the rum tomorrow.”

“By gum, there’s no help from women. Tha sounds like Mully hersen.”

“Heaven pity her, if she has to put up wi’ thee.”

“By gow, I should ha’ known better than to expect either sense or sympathy i’ Lancashire!”

“Huh!” snorted the landlady. “Yorkshire!”

“That’s done it!” roared Sam. “That’s the final insult. First thing in the morn I’m off home to Mully.”

And home he went.

As Sam Small swung along by the Green in the twilight, suddenly his happiness fled. For, as if for the first time, he remembered Sammywell.

“By gum,” he breathed, “if I walk in and he’s there, Mully’ll find out the whole thing, and want to know where I’ve been—then I’ll cop Halifax. I’d better go sly.”

So Sam crept up to his cottage and looked in the window. And there he saw Mully, knitting as she rocked in the chair before the fire, with Sammywell reading aloud to her.

Sam felt queer and hopeless and unwanted, seeing another man before his fire, with himself outside and tired—and badly in need of a good cup of tea.

He retreated into the garden and began flipping bits of stone at the window. After a long time the door opened and a beam of light poured out. With it, from far back in the

room, came Mully's voice. Sam heard it pouring over him, like a rush of warm blood in his chest.

"If that's them Kidderley bairns again, Sam, shout out to them not to be naughty."

"Psst," Sam hissed. "Sammywell! I want a word wi' thee. Meet me up the Green corner."

"What is it, Sam, love?" came Mully's voice.

"Nowt," called back Sammywell. "I think I'll get ma jacket and take a stroll, Mully—and a smoke. Then I won't choke the house up wi' baccy smoke."

"Aye, do. A breath of air'll do thee good, Sam," said Mully's voice.

Then the door closed. Sam stalked up to the corner of the Green. Over and over again he heard Mully's words—and the tones. Her voice had been soft and warm. And she had called Sammywell "Sam, love." That wasn't like Mully. She never called *him* "love."

By the time he saw Sammywell approaching, Sam was fair hopping with anger and jealousy.

"Tha's off to take a walk wi' me, lad," Sam growled.

"Why, what's wrong, Sam?"

"Never heed what's wrong. I've just decided that it's high time I came home and took ma rightful and proper place beside my wife—ye—ye—Judas!"

"But, Sam, I thought ye wanted to go away and have a fling."

"Well, I've flung—and now it's thy turn to go away."

"Oh, no, Sam," said Sammywell self-righteously. "I'm that comfortable. I stay home evenings wi' Mully and——"

"Aye. I heard her gi'ing thee the softsoap voice. An' her ma wife?"

"*Our* wife, Sam."

"Now don't conflummox me," Sam groaned. "Tha's had a comfortable week—now it's ma turn. Go away for a visit."

"But Sam, tha's the one who likes to go away. I'm the one who likes to stay home."

"Ooah, ba gum," moaned Sam. "Do I have to argue wi' thee? Look, I'm hungry—I haven't had ma tea yet—and I've been poorly. Now hop it like a good chap."

"Not me," said Sammywell. "My place is in the home, and there's where I'm off right now."

"Well, I'm off wi' thee, then."

"And have her find out? Nay, I'm not bahn to have her upset."

"Now look here, Sammywell. If I know Mully, she's off to find out sooner or later—so it might as well be sooner, and then I can have ma tea!"

"And I say ye'll not. . . ."

But away darted Sam, full tilt. For he realized that if he got home first, then the whole problem would be shifted onto the shoulders of Sammywell.

Down the Green went Sam with Sammywell legging it after him. They were both, of course, evenly matched. But unfortunately Sam had to open the gate and the door.

He managed the first all right, but before he reached the door Sammywell grabbed him, and down they went, wrestling and struggling. They were so intent that they hardly realized the door had opened until they heard Mully's voice.

"What's up now?"

They stopped wrestling and blinked into the light.

So the three stood!

"Ooah, ma dear," moaned Mully. "Get in this house, here—before anyone sees us."

Shamefacedly the two men went into the cottage and stood on the hearth. Mully looked at them, and then flopped into the rocking chair and began to cry.

"Now what tricks are ye playing on me, Sam Small?" she cried. "Whichever one on ye is Sam?"

"We're both Sam," Sammywell said.

"To think ye never told me ye had a twin brother," sobbed Mully. "But one of ye's Sam—and when I find out which one it is—he's off to wish he'd never been born."

"Now hold on, Mully," Sam said. "We're both us—that is, we're both me."

Then he explained as best he could about how his personality had split the week before.

"Well, which one's been here this past week?" Mully asked.

"Me," said Sammywell, quickly. "He's been on a trip to Blackpool!"

"Ha, ye scallywag," said Mully triumphantly. "Now I know which one's Sam Small. It's thee! So tha would go gallivanting away and leave thy true wife wi' a stranger. . . ."

She advanced on Sam, but Sammywell interposed a hand.

"Nay, Mully," he said. "Don't be angry. Hasn't it been better with him away? Haven't I stayed by thy side this week and nursed thee through a cold?"

"Aye," she said. "Tha's been that considerate and kind—I knew there must be summat wrong. I were too happy for it to be true."

She sat down and wept, and Sam stood, head hanging, and shuffled his feet. For a while he thought, and then went to his wife.

"Mully Small," he said. "Do ye mean that? Have ye really been so happy wi'—wi' yon, while I've been away?"

Now Mully was, after all, a woman. And she couldn't help being a bit spiteful in her answer.

"Sam Small," she said. "I've never been so cherished in all ma born days. It's been the best week of ma married life."

Sam stared into the fire and drew his breath.

"I see," he said softly. "Well, somehow there ain't much for a chap to say when he finds out he's failed, is there? What I mean is—well, t'would be a poor man who'd stand in the way of his wife's happiness, so—good-bye—and good luck, lass."

Sam turned on his heel and made for the door, while Mully watched as in a trance. Perhaps she would have let him go, but Sammywell's voice wakened her.

“Ye see, Sam,” cried Sammywell triumphantly. “I told ye I were the man to make her happy.”

That started Mully.

“Now hold on,” she said. “I’ve got summat to say about all this. Come back, lad, and sit here by the hearth. If this is true about this here split personality, what us has got to do is think it out.”

“Aye, but us has done all the thinking us can. Why couldn’t we all stay here?” Sammywell suggested.

“What, me live wi’ two husbands?” breathed Mully. “That’s bigamy.”

“But me and Sam is both the same husband,” Sammywell pointed out.

“Aye,” said Mully. “We know that, because we’re open-minded, but I’m afraid the British law hasn’t caught up wi’ such modern things, and’ll come to the conclusion that two husbands is two.”

“Hold on,” said Sam. “Tha’s nobbut had one marriage.”

“Then one on ye’s churched, and the other’s unchurched, and that’s still against the law.”

“Aye,” Sam said.

“Don’t interrupt,” said Mully. “Now all keep quiet till I think this out.”

For a long time she sat, and then she sighed and rose.

“Well, I’ve decided,” she said. “Ma mother allus used to say to me, ‘When in doubt, go to sleep.’”

“So,” crooned Sammywell, smiling.

“So,” she said. “I’m off to bed and go to sleep—and ye two are off outside.”

“But look here, Mully,” Sammywell groaned. “I don’t like——”

“Neither do I,” she chipped in. “But ye doubled yoursen wi’out ma help. Happen ye can best sort it out the same road.”

And firmly she chivvied the two of them to the door and pushed them out. Only as Sam went past, she said, quietly, “Don’t come home till there’s nobbut one of ye.”

Then the door closed, the bolt clicked, and the two were out in the night.

“Now, we’d better take a walk and think some more,” Sam said. “And thee stick close to me if ye know what’s good. We’ll take a turn on the moor.”

As the two reached the Green, they still wore the same thoughtful expressions.

“Have ye thought of owt?” Sammywell asked.

“Look, I’m fair sick to deeth o’ thee,” Sam warned. “Now be quiet.”

He paused and looked about. They were by the lamppost.

“Here’s where we first met,” Sam mused.

“If tha’d nobbut stayed away,” Sammywell began.

“Now look here, ma lad,” Sam burst out. “One more peep out o’ thee, and tha’ll get a thick lip. Why, for two pins. . . .”

Then, as Sam lifted his hand, he seemed to hear the words of Mully, whispered as if for him alone, “Don’t come back till there’s nobbut one of ye.”

The idea raced through his brain.

“Sam Small,” cried Sammywell, in terror. “Tha has murder in thy heart.”

Sam smiled gently.

“Tha’s ruddy right, I have,” he said. “Come on, Sammywell, put up thy dukes and stand up like a Yorkshireman.”

“But I don’t like brawling, Sam.”

“Well, I’ll sweeten ye up to it, then, Sammywell, ma lad. There!”

And Sam popped a left on one side of Sammywell’s nose.

“And there!”

And he popped a right on the other side.

“Well,” Sammywell said, outraged. “The Good Book says if ye’re slapped on one cheek, turn the other. But it gives no instructions what to do if that gets slapped. However, I suppose that means a chap’s got to use his own judgment. So—there!”

And he banged a beautiful and righteous left smack in the middle of Sam’s nose.

“Ow,” said Sam. “Here I come!”

Then, with fists flailing, the two went at each other in as strange a fight as you could wish to see. For, both being Sam Small, they were evenly matched as never were any two men before in prize ring history. Each had the same strength and each mind worked exactly alike. If Sam swung with the right, Sammywell blocked with his left. It was like boxing before a mirror. So on and on it went, with neither gaining an advantage, and both becoming more and more tired.

Then Sam got an inspiration.

“Thing to do next time he leads,” he said to himself, “is not to block, but to take it and just let him have one with everything I’ve got.”

And at exactly that second, Sammywell was thinking exactly the same thing.

The result was, they both swung, neither blocked, and then for each there was nothing but a blinding flash, a crack, and an interstellar polka-dot display.

Suddenly Sam felt his spirit lifting. Below him he could see the two bodies lying, unconscious. And beside him was another soaring spirit.

“Ooah, ma gum,” Sam moaned. “So now there’s four on us.”

“No, Sam,” said Sammywell gently. “Look.”

As they watched, the two bodies below slowly drifted together and began to merge.

“Now,” Sammywell said. “Come, Sam. We’ve both got to fit in there.”

So they floated down and began to squeeze and wriggle themselves into the body. And then Sam heard voices.

“Poor owd Sam,” said someone. “He must ha’ bumped into the lamppost.”

Sam wanted to tell them that it had been a fight, but the words wouldn’t come out. And in what seemed to be a sort of flash-past of time, he was in the cottage and Mully was bending over him.

“Eigh, Sam,” she moaned. “I’ trouble again.”

“Nay, Mully,” he said, thickly. “I’m not drunk.”

She bent near him.

“Neither tha is,” she agreed.

Sam looked into her eyes.

“I killed him,” he said.

“Who?”

“Sammywell!”

“Sammywell? Sammywell who?”

Sam thought this over and began to smile.

Women—they were the wonderful ones. They knew what part of a man’s life to pretend to forget.

Sam felt a rush of warmth and love for Mully—plump Mully who was now bathing his head with a cool damp towel.

“Dosta forgive me, Mully?”

“Eigh, Sam Small,” she sighed. “I been forgiving thee so many years I wouldn’t know how to get out o’ the habit now.”

“Mully,” said Sam. “I’m off to treat thee nicer. For one thing, I weren’t happy away at Blackpool, and for another, well—after I killed Sammywell tonight, we sort of amalgamated. A merger, as ye might say. So now I’ve got him inside me, too, and he’s the good side of me—and from now on I’m off to let my good side come to the front.”

“Hush,” Mully said. “If ye do ye’ll be sort of anatomically twisted.”

“And I’m never going down The Spread Eagle any more. I’m bahn to stay home every evening and read to thee while tha knits.”

“Heaven forbid,” Mully said. “I’d never have a moment’s peace then. Eigh, I like ye just as ye are, Sam, ye old scallywag.”

“Dosta, Mully? But I’m determined—fro’ now on I’m off to be more like Sammywell; he’s really ma better half.”

“Nay, tha’s got nobbut one better half,” Mully said. “And that’s me. Upsydaisy. Up ye come to bed.”

ADVENTURE IV

THE FLYING YORKSHIREMAN

*There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

THE conviction that he could fly didn't come over Sam Small gradually. It just hit him all of a sudden.

That night he and Mully had been down to Los Angeles to hear Sister Minnie Tekel Upharsin Smith at the Temple. First off Sam hadn't wanted to go, but before it was over even he agreed that it was quite a bit of a do, and Mully had as rare a time as she'd had in all her born days.

Sister Minnie sang a hymn she had written herself, which started:

Won't you buy my violetsss—m'dam?

When that was over she had all the people who were from California stand up and turn round and shake hands with the people who were sitting and who weren't from California, and say: "God Bless you, Brother or Sister," as the case was.

Sam felt right funny what with a stranger pumping his hand, but Mully began to warm up to the whole thing; so that when Sister Minnie asked the people from foreign lands to get up and say where they were from, Mully kept nudging Sam to stand on his legs like a man and put their ha'porth in. But Sam wasn't having any. People got up and shouted that they were from Germany and Italy and China and Hawaii and Mexico and Canada. There was even one chap from India.

Finally Mully couldn't stand it any longer, so she tied her bonnet tight under her chin and got up and shouted at the top of her lungs:

"Mr. and Mrs. Sammywell Small, Powkithorpe Brig, near Huddersfield, Yorksha', England."

Then she sat down with her face all flushed, while everybody applauded and the woman next to her, who was from the city of Ioway, struck up acquaintance with her, and Mully decided that California was the right nicest and friendliest place they'd struck since they'd started on that trip around the world.

Sam tried to make out as if he didn't think much to it all, but even he got interested when Sister Minnie tore into her sermon.

It was entitled: "Faith Will Move Mountains," and a rare champion thing it was, too, all full of quotations and rhetoric and little halts to give the people chance to applaud, and big halts where everyone sang the chorus of a hymn and clapped their hands to keep time. During these long pauses Sister Minnie would work up another store of energy and come out for the next round fresh as a daisy.

Everything depended on Faith, she said, and for her part she believed in it so much that she just *knew* that if the 5000 or so Brothers and Sisters present tonight, Praise be to God, were to head right out of that Blessed Temple and drive down to San Bernardino, she would bet you right now that if they would have Faith together they could make Mount Baldy shift ten feet toward the sea. The only thing that stopped her from putting it all into execution, she said, was that her legal advisers had told her it would cause too many possible suits for damages; because naturally, if you moved a mountain ten feet there was going to be a lot of disturbance. There'd be a ten-foot gap on one side, like as not running down through a lot of good real estate developments, and on the other side there'd be a churning and a whortling of the earth that wouldn't be too good for California. People with spiteful tongues were ready enough to talk about earthquakes anyhow, even when you could call up the Chamber of Commerce and find out it was never a thing at all but the Battle Fleet off San Diego in firing practice that was making the ornaments on the mantelpiece sound like Fred Astaire in the introduction part of the Packard hour on the radio.

But nevertheless, as she was saying, Faith was a very, very wonderful thing, in fact, a marvelous thing, and if the Sisters and Brothers believed in our Dear Lord Jesus and believed in the power of Faith, there was nothing they couldn't do. Nothing!

That was the sermon on Faith, and everybody applauded and clapped their hands in rhythm, being pleased with not only Sister Minnie's faith, but her evident faith in their faith, and her clever explanation of why they were not going to have to drive ninety miles on a chilly evening to do anything about demonstrating it.

That was about the end of the do. They closed up with some more hymns, one half the audience singing and then the other half to see who could be loudest; then the women singing and after them the men all by themselves, to see who could be loudest. And then it was over and everybody streaked for the doors.

Mully had had a good time, and there was no two ways about that. When she and Sam had pushed out through the crowd and were standing on the corner, waiting for the Wilshire Boulevard bus, she got enough words together to say:

"Well, Ah don't know how tha feels about it, Sammywell, but Ah've had a rare good time, and Ah think this is the right nicest place us has struck in all our travels."

Sam didn't doubt that she'd enjoyed it, but he knew, too, her remark was all part of the campaign to keep him in California. Neither Mully nor Lavinia, their daughter, ever missed a chance to put in a good word about Southern California. Vinnie wanted to stay so's she could have a bit of a dab at becoming one of these cinema stars; and Mully wanted to stay partly because of Vinnie and partly because she could never get over it that palm trees really grew in a white man's land. On top of that, there was no doubt about it that Sam had given the women quite a turn with the bad attack of bronchitis he'd had when they were visiting Vancouver.

So, of course, they never missed any opportunity now to keep after Sam about how good California was for his chest, and how that since he now was retired and a chap of independent means, as you might say, there was no use leaving this sunshine to go dashing right back to England.

Now Sam knew all about the way the women were working on him, and he knew why they were doing it. He knew, too, that it wasn't over sensible to battle with them because probably they'd wear him down in the end. But still and all, a chap can't help putting his ha'porth in once in a while. So he blew his nose and said:

"Aye, taking the rough with the smooth, this ain't a bad place—for Yankeeland, o' course. But still and all, Ah'd give ten quid, Ah would, reight now, to be sitting back hoam i' t'Spread Eagle wi' ma chums on either side o' me and a good pint o' Guinness's in front o' me and a nice gert big coal fire to warm ma behind on."

Mully snorted.

"Sammywell," she said, "didn't Ah tell thee to put a clean henkercha' in thy pocket afore tha coomed out toneight?"

Sam knew he was licked if he got drawn away from the subject into any minor skirmishes. Everyone's cock on their own midden tip, and he wasn't off to argue about handkerchiefs, where Mully was on her own ground. So he just jammed his shameful bandana into his pants pocket and kept quiet. Mully kept on giving him a little bit of hell—the way a woman will; and finally Sam stopped listening to her—the way a man will.

And while she barneyed on, his mind went floating away in a hazy sort of a manner and settled on two things. First he began wishing the bus would hurry up and come so Mully would stop talking; second he got to thinking about Sister Minnie's sermon. He began wondering if there was anything to it all—this Faith business. He began wondering if a whole bunch of people, all having Faith together with a sort of yo-heave-ho effect, really could move a mountain—if only for a matter of an inch or two.

He thought about it a long time, and decided that if a chap was going to do anything with Faith, he'd be smart if he picked on something rather easy at first and progressed gently to stubborn things like mountains.

Now all the time Sam had been thinking that, he'd been standing there waiting for the bus—and it gets rare chilly in California when the sun goes down. And that was what put the bus idea in his head. He said to himself that if a chap decided to try moving things by Faith a bus would be a champion thing to begin on—it having wheels which, as you might say, would aid the whole proposition.

It was no sooner thought than done, because, as Sam said to himself, it doesn't cost a chap a ha'penny to have Faith. Even if it doesn't work out, what have you lost?

So Sam shut his eyes and said to himself: "Ah have Faith that by t'time Ah open ma een that so-and-so bus will have arrived."

And by gum, he had no sooner said it than Mully was poking him in the shirt ribs and saying:

"Wakken up, gormless!"

And he opened his eyes, and there was the bus standing there.

Now naturally Sam was both surprised and pleased. As he said to himself, it might have been just a bit of coincidence, but still and all, it fair gave a chap something to think about. The best thing to do about it, he decided, was to give it a good thinking over. So when he got himself settled nicely on the bus he started putting his mind to

thinking about Faith, and kept at it all the way home, being only interrupted once as the bus went past the Beverley-Wilshire and Mully said she saw Nelson Eddy coming out of the Brown Derby.

After that Sam got back to his thinking and kept right at it until they got to the end of the line. Then he and Mully got off right by the statue of Santa Monica on the Beach Drive palisade, and walked slowly and wearily along the palisade toward their boardinghouse.

They were both quite a bit played out after their exciting evening, and they went along slowly, arm in arm. Mully always liked that good-night walk along the alameda, because it was peaceful and romantic and so tropical. Bordering the gravel walks there are no less than *three* kinds of palms: date palms, royal palms, and palmettos. Then, too, it's on a cliff high up over the shore, and as you walk along you can look out over the rustic wood railing and see far out to the ocean, or you can look straight down on the shore and see all the beach castles of the movie stars. They are all very splendid and big, but the biggest and most splendid one belongs to Marion Davies. It is such a sight that the tourist buses always stop by that palisade and all the sightseers get out and have a five-minute stop to look down on the very home that Marion Davies lives in sometimes.

Mully never tired of looking down from that palisade. She never liked to go to bed without a sort of good-night look at it; because she always thought that some night she might see a light in an upstairs window, and that would be Marion Davies going to bed, perhaps.

So when Sam and Mully got up by Marion Davies' house, they stopped and looked over the rail. There was Mully, full up of the awe of standing underneath a real palm tree and looking at a real cinema star's palace, and never aware of what Sam was thinking. For Sam, now he'd stopped walking, was able to think again. He had his pipe going good, and there he stood, looking far out over the ocean to where the fifty-cent all-night fishing barge lay, lit up and festooned with lights so that it looked like a twinkling diamond brooch of a ship.

And it was there and at that moment that he first got his amazing conviction. Perhaps it came from being so high up, together with the sermon and the upsetting episode of the bus coming by Faith. No matter what it was, he got the conviction as surely as ever a man had one. What he felt was that he could fly. That was the conviction he had. He had it so strongly that he couldn't keep quiet about it.

"Mully," he said, "tha knaws, sometimes Ah hev a feeling that a chap could put out his arms and launch himself off of here and fly—if he nobbut hed Faith."

"Aye. If!" Mully retorted. "And if thy aunt hed of hed you-know-whats she'd ha' been thy uncle."

In spite of her determination to live up to the position of wife of a rich retired man, Mully could be quite Yorkshire at times. And her last remark wasn't calculated to help a chap who wanted to talk things over. Not things like Faith and really moving mountains.

It really made Sam a bit mawngy. But there's one thing about a Yorkshireman. The madder you make him, the more determined he gets. And as Sam got undressed that

night he couldn't help feeling stubborn.

"Well, at that," he said to himself, "Ah'll bet a chap *could* do it—if he hed Faith enow."

He kept thinking that after he got into bed. He felt he'd like to fly, just to show Mully that she wasn't right all the time. And as he lay there, he had Faith, and had Faith, and then his hair almost stood on end. For he could feel his body lifting, and lifting, until it was completely clear of the bed beneath him.

It was so amazing that he could hardly believe it himself. So, cautiously, he passed his hand under his body. It was true! As far as he could reach, he was free of the bed. It was so staggering that he had to drop back into bed to think it over. He must have been quite clear of the bed, because when he dropped back the mattress squeaked, and Mully said, snippily:

"Ba gum, Sammywell, if tha doesn't stop jiggling this bed Ah'm bahn to get up and sleep on t'sofa."

But Sam hardly heard her. He was too upset at his discovery. He decided to wait until Mully was surely asleep and try it again, but unfortunately he fell asleep himself.

In the morning when he woke, his first thought was to tell Mully of his wonderful discovery. But, somehow, it didn't seem too easy in the daylight, sitting there at the breakfast table, with the California sunshine spanking down on the tablecloth and on the tea pot and muffins and marmalade and porridge and eggs and a little rasher of ham and cold steak-and-kidney pie and two or three nice bloaters that Mully had bought down in a Scotch bakery and grocery shop she'd run across down by the Santa Monica pier.

Moreover, Lavinia came in to breakfast, and it's hard for a chap to talk about imaginative things like flying of his own accord when right across the table there's his own daughter with her face all cold cream and her body wearing silk lounging pajamas that start a chap wondering if she's really brazen enough to be walking around without her corsets on, even if it is your own daughter.

So all Sam said was:

"Tha knaws, it's funny, Mully; but Ah dreamt last neight Ah were really flying around. Ah were floating i' t'air like one o' them bloody Zeppelins what come over i' t'wartime."

"Hmmm," said Mully. "What was it that tourist office lad said we maun ax for in this country when us wants brimstone and treacle?"

"Sulphur and molasses, mother," Lavinia said.

"Nay now, it ent ma blood that's off," Sam protested. "This were a varry real and onusual dream, so much so Ah still think Ah were awake."

"Oh, fawther," Lavinia said. "There's nothing unusual about it at all."

"Nowt onusual abaht a chap believes he were flying?"

"Of course not. It's one of the most common of dreams. It's a prenatal memory that's left from the time when you were a foetus swimming and floating in fluid inside your mother's womb."

“Here, here, young lady,” Mully said. “What kind o’ talk is that to be using at the breakfast table? If Ah hear thee speak like that ony more, cinema star or no cinema star, Ah’ll smack thy bare backside for thee. The idea! And of your Pa’s own Ma, too; dead though she may be. Now thee eat thy breakfast and hurry about it, too. We’ve got to see t’casting director at Selznick International i’ Coolver City by ten o’clock.”

Sam said nothing more about flying; but he determined that the minute he was alone he would try it again. He had quite a wait, because the minute Mully and Lavinia were gone, the maid came in to clean up the apartment. There was the maid, dusting and sweeping and humming to herself in a come-day, go-day, God-send-Sunday sort of California way, and Sam thought she’d never be through.

But at last she was. Sam shut the door, tapped out his pipe and got ready. He lay on the sofa and willed and willed, and almost before he could catch his breath there he was floating in the air with the greatest of ease. For a while he just lay there, suspended in space, and amazed at this wonderful new power. He turned his head and looked down. He was fully a foot above the sofa. Very gently he floated to one side, where he was a good three feet above the floor. There could be no mistake about it. Amazed at himself he floated back to the sofa.

“Well, Ah’ll be a monkey’s ooncle!” he breathed to himself. “That Ah will indeed! Why even Ah can scarcely believe it’s so.”

To prove it to himself he tried it again. This time he floated up in the air, then drifted out clean into the middle of the room. He felt quite uncomfortable, somehow, but he thought that only natural.

Then he turned over to look down at the floor. Very slowly he began revolving his body. And the minute he did that all feeling of awkwardness left him. Once he was face-down toward the floor, a new and tremendous feeling of security and power seized him.

“Why, of course,” he said to himself. “Ah were upside down—like a burd trying to fly on its back. This maun be the right way up!”

So now, imbued with a new and very great confidence, he stretched out his arms and zoomed down toward the sofa. A foot from it, he banked with his palms, brought his body upright, and lit on his feet as gently as a thrush.

“Well, if this ain’t a do!” he breathed.

He spread his arms again, pushed gently with the tips of his toes, and took off again. He soared along like a glider, making a complete circle of the room about a foot below the ceiling. As he did so he was seized with a tremendous exhilaration. All hesitation now was gone, and he used his new power with a fierce joy. He found flying took almost no physical effort whatsoever. Nor did he need any conscious mental effort in controlling himself; that is to say, he did not have to *think* how to do things. When he came to a corner the muscles of his body and the delicate distribution of his weight adjusted themselves by some instinct so that he banked perfectly.

The world became a new place to Sam Small. To us who merely walk, the world is a two-dimensional place; but to Sam it was now three-dimensional.

The room in which he flew thus took on aspects unknown to us who could only know it from a monotonous five-foot eye-level. He could see the tops of doors and of

cupboards and could get a bird's-eye view of the chairs and table—which looked very silly pieces of furniture indeed from that angle. He noted, too, that while the room might be clean down below, it certainly wasn't up where he was. There were cobwebs over a closet and dust galore atop every door.

“Ah'll just hev Mully give that maid a good talking-to,” he resolved.

Then he gave himself over to the beautiful pure joy of flowing and effortless flying. He swooped around the room, landing lightly as a feather where he would, taking off again with the merest preliminary drive of his toes. He practiced landings in awkward corners, to test the range of his new abilities.

Unfortunately he was so occupied that he didn't hear Mully and Lavinia come back; and when they walked into the room, there he happened to be, perched atop a highboy.

“Well, Ah'll goa to Helifax,” Mully snorted. “Sammywell Small! What in the name o' God is ta laiking up theer for? Coom dahn here afore tha breaks thy bloody neck!”

Sam was so surprised and upset by being discovered that he forgot about flying and jumped down in quite an ordinary, mortal sort of way. He landed with a horrible crash that nearly drove his spine up into his back teeth, and of course there was quite a bit of a do about it. Mully rubbed Sam's back with a little Elliman's Embrocation and sailed into him so hard that Sam got stubborn and wouldn't have told her about his new accomplishment even if he had got a chance to get a word in edgewise.

“Sammywell Small,” Mully said, “Heavens knaws Ah've swallered a lot o' things since Ah married thee; but this caps the bloody climax, it does. Ba gum, lad, if tha goas on like this, folk'll begin to think tha's balmy i' t'crumpet. Eigh, sometimes Ah rue the day we took out a license.”

“Aye?” Sam came back. “Well, it cost me seven and sixpence. Ah could ha' got a dog license for t'same price.”

“Aye, and there's soom days Ah wish tha'd bowt a dog,” Mully rebutted. “And today's one on 'em.”

For several days after that Sam did nothing about flying. For one thing, he was quite jarred up from his jump off the highboy. For another, Mully gave him no chance to be alone.

But one night Sam woke up, and there was Mully sleeping as sound as an Egyptian mummy. So Sam tiptoed out of bed in his nightshirt and took off. For a couple of hours he flew around in the living room, zooming and volplaning and banking to his heart's content. It was quite a sight, for Sam was steady as an albatross in flight. Just one lift of a palm, and he was banking; a slight bend of his knees and he zoomed. It all came natural to him and he flew and flew with a sort of wild ecstasy.

After that, night after night, when Mully was abed, he would swoop around the house, having great fun cutting capers and corners, sailing through doorways, swooping within an inch of the carpet and then banking swiftly upward again.

He began to set himself difficult tasks. For, curiously enough, although all the movements that a bird makes normally in flight came natural to him, he had to learn of his own accord the evolutions that an airplane can achieve. He taught himself to loop the loop and do the barrel-roll, the wing-over, the falling leaf, the tail-spin. Finally he

became very proficient in this sort of thing. But it was his desire to emulate not only a bird, but a machine, that got Sam into a bit of trouble.

He was soaring about in the dining room one night, concentrating on his latest stunt, the Immelman turn (which is a sort of mixture of a half inside loop and a barrel-roll, bringing you to the top of the loop the right side up). For the first time that night Sam managed to do it right nicely. The surging thrill of this new evolution intoxicated him, and he sailed about the room, wildly doing Immelman turns. Unfortunately, in the dark, he forgot about the fine cut-glass chandelier right over the dining room table, and crash! He went into it head first!

Sam, all tangled up in cut-glass chandelier, came down with a jangle and a thump that would have wakened Lazarus himself.

When Mully came charging in there was a pretty sight to be seen indeed. She switched on the light, and there she saw Sam in his nightshirt, sitting in a welter of bits of cut glass and blood and wire and bursted electric light bulbs.

“Eigh, bless ma heart and soul! What’s tha been oop to now?” Mully snorted wearily.

Sam was as dizzy as a goat in spring, for he’d taken a crack on his head that had laid about four inches of scalp open, and likely would have split the skull of anyone else but a Yorkshireman.

“It were a forced landing,” he said. “Help ma oop out o’ here.”

“Help thee oop! Ah should think soa! And a pretty picture indeed tha is, ligging there in thy nightgown and showing all tha’s got! A man o’ thy age, too!”

Sam did his best to make himself decent, for just then Lavinia came walking in, and the girl started giggling fit to die. At this Mully turned and caught the lass a skelp over her backside that lifted her nearly a foot in the air.

For no matter what Sam had done, Mully was determined that Lavinia should grow up with the decent respect for parents that any good girl should have—Hollywood or no Hollywood.

“That’ll teach thee, my fine young lady, to watch thy P’s and Q’s,” Mully said. “Now off tha goas back to bed. Ah’ll stand no sauce from thee.”

She was that put out she gave Lavinia an extra clip on the lug for good luck. Then she pulled Sam out and got him to bed, and got a doctor on the telephone who came over and put six stitches in Sam’s head. What with one thing and another Mully had a right eventful night.

For a couple of days Sam was in bed and Mully said never a word about the goings-on. But Sam could see by the way she held her lips tight together that she was just saving it all up. And the day Sam got up, Mully hustled Lavinia out of the house, and sat Sam on the sofa, and had her say.

“Now Sam,” she said, “Ah want thee to bear in mind that Ah’m quite remindful of the fact that, after all, tha did turn out to be an inventor, what with thy self-doffing spindle and all. But what Ah say is this, there’s limits to what a man can do, even an inventor, in a manner of speaking.

“But this much Ah will tell thee. When a chap of thy age starts gating up in t’middle o’ t’neight, and swinging in his shirt-tail from the chandeliers like a hoorangootang, well, all Ah gate to say is, if tha keeps it up they’ll be sending for thee from Menston yet.

“Now Ah wean’t say no moar about it, but enow’s enow, so pull thysen together, lad. And if tha wean’t do it for me; at least remember tha hes a daughter what’s gate her life and career before her, as you might say.”

Then Mully jumped up and went and locked herself in the kitchen and had a champion good cry. After that she made a nice pot of tea and fixed up a tray for Sam with a duck egg and a little bit of ham and some brown bread and butter, and a few odds and ends of pickellets and toasted muffins and scones and a couple of curd-lemon-cheese tarts and a little pot of Stilton cheese—just the things that Sam liked especially well. And they sat down and had tea and never a word more was said about the chandelier.

Of course, after that tea, Sam was contrite, just as Mully had known he would be, and he resolved to behave himself.

“Ah’m that sorry, Mully,” he said. “It were just that Ah been a little funny-like i’ this land. Let’s goa hoam to Yorksha.”

“Now Sammywell, tha knows our Vinnie’s right on the varry brink and threshold of a cinema career. Why can’ta stay here?”

“Well, could Ah hev a tyke, then—happen just a bit of a tarrier?”

“Nay Sammywell, lad. Tha knows t’landlady wean’t have no doags i’ this house. Ah doan’t see why tha can’t goa out and mak friends. Goodness knows there’s plenty of well-to-do chaps like thee that manages to find this place interesting.”

“Them? Eigh Mully, they’re nowt but a lot o’ mawngy owd toffs—sitting on the park benches each day waiting for t’undertakker to coom along and measure ’em. Ah can’t mak friends wi’ the like o’ yon. Why, they got such a bloody funny accent Ah gate nobbut one word i’ ten o’ what they’re yammering abaht. Now, if Ah nobbut hed a dog. . . .”

“Tha can’t hev noa dog!” Mully stated. And that ended it.

Sam really did put up a terrifically hard battle to keep from flying again. But naturally it was too much for him. If you yourself were suddenly faced by the fact that you were the first man in the history of the whole world who had developed the power to fly by your own efforts, you would not be able to dismiss the matter lightly. And neither could Sam.

In the days that followed, as he sat in the sunshine on the Ocean Drive, or walked along the paths under the palm trees, he would watch the sea gulls, lifting and soaring in the magnificent air currents. He never got tired of watching them. Now he was, as you might say, practically a bird himself, Sam found himself thinking like a bird, and thinking and knowing things that the ordinary man never gets in his head. Mostly he sensed and felt about air currents.

There would be days when he sat there and he would be greatly troubled, for the air currents were short and choppy—what Sam called “wivvery.” He didn’t know where he

got the word, but that explained it. On those days his body would be almost torn by a sort of anguish, and he would sit there watching the gulls fight and turn and twist and make myriad delicate readjustments of their bodies every second as they flew. Sam himself could feel those currents, and as each gull went by he would squirm and twist his own body as if to help it along in its battle, just as a crowd of people at the tense moment of a championship golf match will twist their bodies and strain when they see an important putt going an inch to one side of the cup, as if their straining would bend the ball toward the cup.

After such a day Sam would go home, weary and irritable, and would only half-listen to Mully chattering on about how their Vinnie was right on the verge now of being given a screen test by an important company.

But then there would be other days when the air currents would be broad and untroubled—great anthems of sweeping simplicity that came chanting in from the Pacific. Then Sam felt at peace, for the magnificent breezes would move in from the sea and, meeting the face of the great earthwall, would shoot up untroubled to great heights. Especially was this so in the late afternoons when the seldom-failing sea breeze came powerfully to the land.

It was exactly like music, only instead of a vibration that could be heard, it was a music that Sam could feel on the skin of his face, thrumming and tingling so beautifully that he forgot the earth-bound world. Then, in spirit, he was with the gulls who would come over from feeding at the fishing boats by the breakwater. Those gulls would pick up the air column that ran along the face of the Santa Monica pier, volplane over the sand and then, reaching the great upcurrent at the cliff, would go screaming away on the moving tower. Up their bodies would shoot, high—high! Then, quartering to the current, they would go sailing along up the coast, over his head, all the way up to Malibu. There they flicked their bodies and quartering the other way, came sailing back on the lifting breeze, never moving a wing, but merely playing with their pinions on the ecstatic air that vibrated beneath them.

Sam would sit there, and the sun would sink ruddy up the coast as the gulls played in the evening breeze. For they did play. Sam could tell that they were flying, not for food, but just for the pure joy they found in that unheard music of soaring.

For it was soaring rather than flying that gripped Sam's mind. He himself, it must be understood, never used a "wing-beat" of any kind. His propulsion through the air came rather from a dynamic play of air currents beneath him as he passed over. Although he could float, merely by a lightness of his body, if he wished, he got little pleasure from this. His great ecstasy came from the swift passing of his body over air currents, as a soaring bird does.

He had little real interest in the swift-winging birds like the hell-divers. He found a great deal more to his liking in the pelicans, who were extraordinarily clever in petty currents: as going trickily over the sea about a foot above the water so that they could catch the minute upshoots that came as the wind drove at the back of a shore-coming breaker. They were very clever at this, following along the line of the wave as they went up the coast, balancing precariously on the narrow, moving sheet of air. And, too, he gave the pelicans top score in their ability to utilize the air currents left by another bird. That's why the pelicans flew in formation, like a squadron of seaplanes. The

leading bird would use a vagrant, lifting current to soar for a while, the bird behind would take advantage of the eddying air that the first bird left, the third pelican would use the vibrating tangles left by the first two, and so on.

Yes, Sam had a certain admiration for the pelicans, but, after all, they were only the smalltime gamblers of the airways. His heart really was with the gulls, plunging boldly into the great sundown air columns. He would watch them rocketing up, borne high into the sky, there to scream at the setting sun. And Sam would sit there, his heart lifting with the birds far above, until Mully would come along the path.

“Eigh-ooop, lad,” she’d call. “Time to coom hoam afore it gates too chilly.”

They would walk home and she would tell him of Lavinia’s progress, and Sam would say aye and nay at appropriate places; but he never really listened. His mind was half a mile up in the air.

Sam really meant to keep his promise to Mully and behave himself. Though each day, on the palm-covered walk high up above the shore road, his senses and muscles cried to be sporting up on the air currents, he did no flying.

For one thing, Sam’s Yorkshire practicality overcame him. As he said to himself, it would look right queer now, if a chap were to suddenly go sailing up and down in the air with the sea gulls in front of all those people, sitting there on the benches and taking the nice California sunshine. Everyone would be that capped, and likely as not there’d be all sorts of bother afterward.

No, Sam held himself well in hand; but he couldn’t help his senses feeling as they did. The delicious play of the harmonious air currents on his face, this new soundless music that he alone could feel, drew him in spite of himself. And one day, he could not help leaving his bench and walking to the edge of the palisade. There, far down below him, was the shore road and the sands and the movie stars’ beach palaces; and the wind came thrumming up that cliffside like a great harp struck in sweeping chords.

Sam drew nearer and nearer to the edge. He wasn’t going to fly, mind you. He only wanted to feel more awarley the heavenly play of the air. Before he knew it, he was over the fence. No one was in sight. With a sigh of pleasure, like a tobacco-starved man with his first cigarette in weeks, he leaned against the upshooting current. He did not let his feet leave the ground. He merely leaned forward on the column of air, letting it play and vibrate about his intoxicated body.

And then he was grasped rudely. All his delicate balance was destroyed as he was yanked over the fence, and found himself wriggling in the hands of a policeman.

“You dizzy old—” the cop yelled. “What the hell’s the idea?”

“Hey up, lad,” Sam protested. “Ah weren’t dewing nowt.”

He struggled and struggled, but the cop held on grimly. There was no escape.

“You’d better come along with me,” the cop said.

So, of course, Mully heard about the whole thing. When she got home that afternoon the landlady rushed up with the news that the police had telephoned for her.

“For me?” Mully said, a little alarmed despite her free conscience. “What in the name o’ goodness would they want wi’ me?”

“Well, it seems sort of like they’ve got your mister down there.”

“Ma Sammywell! Ooooah, fer the luv of Heaven! What in t’name o’ God hez he been up to now!”

So hardly knowing whether she was standing on her head or her feet, Mully dashed around and got her best black gloves, and they put her in a taxicab and off she dashed for the City Hall at Fourth and Santa Monica Boulevard, all the time stewing and fuming and covered with shame as she pictured Sam a criminal and either locked up behind the bars or else sitting in a room with a white light in his face and six detectives with their hats on and cigars in their teeth giving him the Yankee third degree. By the time she reached the station she was about ready to write to the British Embassy and get the Grand Fleet over to California to see that a good British subject had his rights defended.

She was in such a stew that it made her as mad as a setting hen when she walked in and found Sam sitting calmly in the station house, puffing on his pipe.

“You scallywag,” she cried. “And what’s ta been up to now?”

“Now Mully,” Sam said. “Now, now!”

“Doan’t thee now-now me,” she said. “What’s ta been up to?”

Sam shut up in a regular stubborn Yorkshire way and wouldn’t say anything, so the police lieutenant, who turned out to be a very affable sort of a lad, took Mully aside and explained that Sam had tried to commit suicide by jumping off the Ocean Drive cliff.

“Suicide?” Mully said. And then the big tears began rolling down her face and she dabbed and dabbed away.

“Now,” the lieutenant said to Sam, “aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Causing all this grief to your wife there! Aren’t you ashamed!”

“Eigh, doan’t scold him, mister,” Mully begged. “Properly it’s all ma fault. He’s been feeling poorly ever since he had a touch of bronchitis i’ Vancouver, and Ah hev’n’t been a good wife and takken care on him like Ah should.”

“Now Mully,” Sam comforted. “Doan’t thee tak on. Tha hez been a good wife—barring one or two little bits o’ things, Ah couldn’t ha’ wished for no better wife.”

“Well, what’s tha want to goa and commit suicide for?” Mully wailed.

She was so overcome that the lieutenant invited them into his private office and sat down and wrote on a lot of papers. Then he frowned at Sam.

“Now, Mr. Small,” he said, sternly. “I want to tell you something. Underneath this building we’ve got six cellars. And the further down you go the darker it gets. And in each cellar there’s sixty cells. And the further along you go the smaller the cells get.

“Now by rights I ought to take you down into the very bottom cellar, and take you right to the very last cell, and lock you in there, and then come up here and throw the key away! That’s what I ought to do!”

“Oh, please,” Mully begged. “Doan’t do that. He’s gate a tarrible poor chest. All his side of the family has. He’d dee o’ pneumonia. Oh, please, just lock him oop in a varry nice cell where he can see a little daylight, in a manner o’ speaking.”

At this the lieutenant tapped his teeth with his pen, and looked at Mully and then scowled at Sam, and finally he said:

“Mrs. Small, I’m moved to compassion by your evident love for your husband. And don’t think I’d do this if it wasn’t for her,” he snapped at Sam. “But just in this case, I’m going to take a chance. I shouldn’t do it by rights, because I should put him away where the sun can’t shine on him, but I’ll take a chance and release him in your custody.”

“Oh no,” Mully said. “Ah wouldn’t want to connive at owt wrong. If the law says he’s got to go behind the bars, then tha’d better do that.”

“No, I’ll take the responsibility,” the lieutenant said.

“Nay, now. Th’law’s th’law,” Mully insisted. “Hard on us as it may be, we maun observe it.”

“Now, Mully,” Sam said, “if t’policeman is off to let me goa, doan’t thee upset t’applecart.”

“Th’law’s th’law,” Mully said, stubbornly.

It took quite a while for the two of them to get Mully to give in, but finally she did.

“I’ll take care of the law; you just take care of your husband,” the lieutenant said. “Now remember,” he said to Sam, “you’re being released in her custody—and any more monkey business! The *very last cell* in the *very lowest cellar*! Now go home and behave yourself.”

“Ah’ll see he does,” Mully said, wiping her eyes. “Coom on, Sammywell. And just wait till Ah gate thee hoam!”

Of course, for the next week or so Sam never heard the end of it. Mully kept her eye on him every minute of the waking day. He couldn’t even take a walk alone. Naturally, he got very fed up with this.

“Ah’m no owd codger that can’t tak a walk alone,” he would complain.

“That so be as it may,” Mully would sniff. “But just the same, Ah’m off to keep an ee on thee.”

This, of course, meant that she had to let Lavinia make the rounds of the studios alone. But, just to show how strange things happen, Lavinia seemed to get along much better, and before a week was up she really had a screen test at G-M-G Pictures, and it looked as if the cinema was going to be interested in her after all.

The only thing, she said, that she thought was holding her back was what she called background.

“Tha means tha’s ashamed o’ me and thy feyther?” Mully challenged.

“Oh no. Nothing of the sort, Mother. I mean this place here.”

“What’s wrang wi’ this place?” Mully asked. “Ah’m sewer there’s no lord or duke or belted earl in all England’s gate a kitchen that’s any bonnier looking. Indeed, Ah nivver thowt Ah’d live to t’day when Ah hed me a kitchen wi’ yaller, black, and white tiles coovering ivvery blessed inch o’ t’walls.”

“I know, Mother, but it’s so small—and in what a neighborhood! We ought to have a home, not an apartment—a place where I could have a party and receive guests—and have a cocktail party and meet influential people and make contacts with directors and producers.

“Now I read that for two hundred and fifty dollars a month . . .”

“How much is that i’ pounds?” Sam asked.

“Fifty pounds a month,” Lavinia calculated.

“Well, Ah’ll be a moonkey’s ooncle,” Sam gasped.

“Sitha, ma fine lady,” Mully added. “That’s moor ’n us ivver paid in us lives for a whole year in a house. And if tha thinks that we got brass to chuck away on thy fancy ideas, well tha just gate another think coming.”

At this Lavinia burst out bawling.

“Well, I don’t know what you want to do with the rest of your lives, but I know what I want to do,” she sobbed. “I don’t know what Father ever wanted to invent the Small Self-DoFFing Spindle for, and make a fortune out of it, if he just wants to go right on living like a mill-worker.”

“We’re not bahn to move,” Mully stated flatly.

“Well, Mother, you might just look at the house I saw. It’s not too grand. And it’s got a beautiful garden where . . .”

“Tha hecard what thy mother said!” said Sam. “We’re not off to move.”

“Well, there’s no need to bark at t’lass like that,” Mully said, turning on him. “Heavens knows she nobbut made a bit of a suggestion.”

“Ah didn’t bark at her,” Sam said.

“Why tha did, fit to snap her yead off. Just because t’lass hes a desire to improve hersen . . .”

“Hey, whose side is tha on i’ this argument?” Sam demanded.

“Well, if tha’s on one side Ah’m on t’other, for Ah nivver knew thee o’ t’reight side i’ ma life,” Mully came back.

“And onyhow, this place hez a gardin, and happen it’d dew thee good to do a bit o’ digging. Tha could put in reddishes an’ a few swedes and some leeks and a nice row or two o’ lettis.”

“Ooh drat ma blasted buttons,” Sam said. “Ah wish Ah were back hoam i’ Yorksha’—that’s what Ah dew!”

And, of course, the upshot was, Mully and Lavinia got the nice big house.

It was up on Pacific Palisades, just beyond where Vicki Baum and Elissa Landi live, and it had orange trees and an avocado grove and a patio with a fountain and an automatic, self-sprinkling lawn all complete. It was quite a mansion.

Lavinia gave a party complete with stuffed celery and influential people, and as luck would have it the conversation turned to flying. A transport plane had just crashed in San Francisco bay killing all the people aboard and everyone at Lavinia’s party had a new idea about why it had happened.

“Nay, ye’re all wrang,” Sam put in. “Like as not the reason he crashed was because the air was wivvery.”

“It was what?” asked a young woman with a cut-glass voice.

“It were wivvery,” Sam said.

Everyone stopped talking and Sam, seeing he had his audience, expanded.

"It's ma own word," he said, "but Ah'll explain it to ye. Now sometimes the air is all nice and flat as you may wish . . ."

"Oh Father," Lavinia cut in, "wouldn't you like to put up the ping pong net for us?"

"I' just a minute," Sam said. "Now there's other times, when it gets all reyther in mucky little bits, like. And that's what Ah calls wivvery. See now, supposing Ah'm an airyoplane."

He spread his arms to show them. Everyone looked very amused, and truth to tell, Sam did look a bit of a comic figure, what with his arms spread and his gray head cocked on one side.

Mully saw them smiling, and she began to boil over. She walked over and gave Sam a nudge that nearly buckled in a couple of ribs.

"Time for t'ping pong net, lad," she said with emphasis, like a villain in the cinematographic pictures.

So Sam put up the net on the table in the patio, and all the influential people began batting the little ball around. For a while he watched the game, then he wandered uselessly round his fine big house. He was feeling a bit sorry for himself, when one of the guests, a tall, likely-looking lad, came up.

"Mr. Small," he said. "My name's Harry Hanks."

"Ah'm that pleased to meet you," Sam said, dolefully.

"Mr. Small, I was interested in what you were saying about wivvery air. You were interrupted."

"Well," Sam said, "it's this way."

He began to stretch his arms again, but then he looked round to see if Mully was in sight.

"Come i' t'kitchen, lad," Sam said. "We're not so liable to be disturbed."

They got in the kitchen and Sam explained all about how the air got wivvery at times, and how of course a bird managed to stand it pretty well because its wings and feathers were pliable.

"But an airyoplane wings, tha sees, hes got no give to 'em," Sam explained. "Well, there tha is, lad. There's bits of air pushing up, and bits of it pushing dahn, and there's no give to the wing."

"Very interesting," the young man said. "Go on."

Encouraged by such a good listener Sam went on, pointing out how the wivvery air condition was especially bad some days right where the ocean air met the land air, and it was always worst of all about 4:30 in the afternoon when the shore breeze was setting in.

"Now we got this," Sam went on, marshaling his argument. "It were soa wivvery fower days agoa that the sea gulls was flying like they had the ague.

"The warst place to be is reight where the sea air meets the land air.

"The warst time to be there is about fower-thutty when the breeze changes.

"And that's the day, the place, and the time that this poor chap's plane drops smack i' t'ocean, ain't it?"

“Say, you’re right at that,” the young man said.

“Well, well,” Sam smiled. “Here, it’s dry wark talking. How abaht a nice bottle o’ beer?”

The party was all over before Mully thought to look for Sam in the kitchen. The young man said he had to dash. Mully pursed her lips and waited till he’d gone. Then she stared at the six empty beer bottles.

“So! Up to thy owd tricks again,” she began.

Sam knew his Mully, so he escaped, and stayed away until dinner time. He had to go down for his meal, so he ate quietly while Mully and Lavinia sniffed and ignored him in the way women will when a man’s in disgrace.

Finally Lavinia broke into tears.

“Now, let’s have noan o’ that,” Sam begged, wearily.

“How can the lass help it?” Mully started, glad to get into battle. “Goodness knows we try and try to mak’ summat on us-selves, and tha upsets t’applecart ivvery time. Showing off abaht things tha knaws nowt abaht—and salming up beer i’ t’kitchen.”

“Now, now. We nobbut hed two-three bottles apiece. And it’s Yankee beer at that—wi’ no body nor goa to it, as you might say.”

“Tha hed ivveryone laughing at thee,” Mully prodded.

“Well, that’s their bad manners then,” Sam observed. “Ma faith, Ah doan’t talk nonsense when Ah dew talk. The lads at The Spread Eagle were allus varry interested in ma observations on owt that were current.”

“That bunch!” Mully snorted.

“This isn’t The Spread Eagle, Father,” Lavinia sobbed. “This is Hollywood. And you go and take Mr. Hanks in the kitchen.”

Sam began to lose his temper.

“Well, the lad were interested,” Sam stormed. “All we did was sit there and tak’ a little beer, and Ah explained to him a few things about flying.”

At this Lavinia gave a yowl and covered her face with her hands.

“Now what hev Ah done?” Sam moaned.

“What hesn’t ta done?” Mully retorted. “This Mr. Harry Hanks is nobbut one o’ t’biggest producers i’ Hollywood, who were off to sign up our Vinnie. And on top o’ that he’s nobbut the avvyator that howds all t’reords for speed and height and distance. That’s all he is. And so thee, Mister Bighead, Sam Small, Esquire, hez to sit down and tell *him* all abaht flying.”

“And now you’ve ruined my chance of getting a contract,” Lavinia said. “He’ll think I come from a family that’s mad.”

“Now, Mr. Smart Sam Small, tha sees what tha’s done!” Mully picked up.

What with Mully and Vinnie going in relays, poor Sam had quite a time. It was getting worse and worse, until he stood up.

“Now hev done!” he thundered. “And that’s an end to it.”

He stared at Mully and Vinnie, and they were quiet. For Sam used that tone of voice about once a year, and when he did, it was time to keep your nose clean, as Mully

would say.

And, after all, what was the use of being married to a man if you couldn't harry and chivvy him a little every day? But by the same token, who would want to be married to a man who didn't show a woman who was boss a couple of times a year?

So Mully and Vinnie sat quiet as mice and Sam stared at them.

"Now then," he said. "Ah'm off out for a walk—and what is more, Ah'm off to walk alone wi' no one wetching ma."

He waited, but there was no contradiction. So out he stalked and clapped on his best derby hat, and away he went. Without knowing it exactly, he headed for the seashore. He strode to the palisade beneath the three kinds of palms and stared away out, high over the movie stars' shore palaces and the breaking waters half-seen in the twilight. He looked up the highway to where the lights shine at the Lighthouse Café. Then he turned, placed his hat neatly on the bench, walked back to the edge, and took off.

Out he plunged into the gentle updraft by the cliff face, and then with a swoop he soared high, high above the Santa Monica cañon. With the wild music of the air currents playing on his face, he zoomed and quartered, feeling the first ecstasy of outdoor flight.

He forgot the original angriness that had sent him to the shore. Everything was gone except that glorious four-dimensional thrill of powerless flying. For heretofore Sam had only flown in the still, stagnant air of his room. This was altogether a different thing. Here were vagrant drafts and petty currents, all surging in a Wagnerian movement of air. The muscles of Sam's outstretched arms, the position of his body, made myriad minute and lightning adjustments to the play of the air.

He dove down into the cañon above its blaze of neon lights where the hot-dog stands and service stations clustered. The drive of his weight shot him over to the opposite mesa where he again picked up the lofting air on the cliff face. He quartered and tilted one arm and shot obliquely on the air column, up the beach toward Malibu. Below him he could see the tiny lights of the automobiles crawling up the shore road. The puny size of them and their snail-like pace filled him with amused pity.

Poor, earth-bound people!

At Malibu, where the cliff face ends and the hills are rolling, he hovered, balancing gently on the breeze. Then, suddenly depressing his feet, he plunged down, toward the lights, felt the earth rush at him gloriously as he headed toward it in an outside loop, felt his body race keenly through the screaming air as he began the up part of the loop, and shot high, high, up, up, into the dark again—until he stalled. Then doing a lazy wing-over he soared calmly away inland, flirting on the multiple currents over the broken land, until he was high over the highest mountain.

Now, far beyond him he could see the twinkling iridescence of Van Nuys and San Fernando. To his right was the brilliant blaze of Los Angeles, Hollywood, Beverly Hills. And there, farther toward the shore, glowing and dancing like strings of fire-pearls, were the towns of the sea front with their petty bijous of illuminated roads and piers and amusement concessions, all their lights vibrating in the arc that swept around the great bay to the heights of Palos Verdes.

The shimmering beauty of lights when seen down through the layers of air, instead of laterally through but one layer, moved Sam to a half-formed state of pity and compassion.

He did not think of Mully and feel sorry for her. Rather he was touched by a mood that enveloped all Mullys and all women who love and suffer and bicker for a man. And with this feeling coloring every fiber, he rocked over on his side, and then glided slowly through the darkness, back to the Santa Monica palisade. He turned his arms and brought himself to a tiptoe landing beside the bench. He picked up his hat again and walked quietly home, through the street darkness where the night-blooming jasmine sent out its perfume to tell a man that nothing in that land was real.

The wild exhilaration of Sam's first outdoor flight remained with his memory, but the ineffable sadness of the mood it had produced clothed his spirit and filled him with lonesomeness. And Sam didn't want to feel lonesome. Above all else he loved gregarious pleasure.

For Sam was not a philosopher who would find warmth in feeling that he had discovered the puny ridiculousness of man and his works. He was a very ordinary sort of chap who wanted nothing quite so much as a good skinful of fish-and-taties from Hobson's shop, or a mug of ale before him at The Spread Eagle and a few of the lads beside him to go thoroughly into some such subject as the Grand National or Stanley Baldwin or the football results.

His gift of flying, however, was unique, and he was made as lonesome by it as the last of the one-time billions of passenger pigeons, which lived three years in captivity, there to coo and call to a mate that would never come. And Sam didn't want to feel lonesome.

Apathetic and useless, he wandered about the streets each day, walking for mile after mile and discovering only greater lonesomeness in that strange land of palm trees and neon lights and blue mountains and people who all spoke with a funny accent.

It was that desire to find someone like himself that made him stop one day in Beverly Hills as he saw a sign. It said: "How About That Canine's Washing and Stripping." Underneath was a big question mark. And under that it said: "Dick Hoggleswaite. Thirty Years' Experience in England and America."

"Happen it's a dog Ah want," Sam said to himself. "And who would be a better chap to talk to than someone who's had experience in England? And even if Mully wouldn't let me have no tyke, there'd be no harm i' talking to the chap, like, to see what prices they get ovver here."

So Sam ducked under a low-hanging palm frond and pushed open the screen door. There inside he saw a little chap stripping a wirehair. Sam watched him work a while, then the chap looked up and said:

"Well, whet can Ah dew for tha?"

"Eigh, how long's ta been away fro' Huddersfield?" Sam asked.

The chap stopped his work.

"How did ta knaw Ah were fro' Huddersfield?" he asked.

"By thy bloody accent, o' course."

“Well, Ah’ll goa to hell,” the chap said, surprised. “Ah been here going on thutty year, and Ah thowt Ah’d lost ma accent.”

“Eigh, tha does talk a bit like a Yankee,” Sam agreed, “but there’s enow left soa a chap could tell. Ah’m fro’ near Huddersfield mysen.”

“Soa Ah could tell,” the chap said. “Here, owd this booger’s chops a minute. The mawngy little bastard, he’s spoiled.”

He gave the terrier a slap on the nose to show him who was boss, and Sam held on a while as he trimmed up the tail.

“Now ye booger, ye,” the chap said as he finished, “tak’ a run for thysen.”

The terrier bounded down from the bench.

“Well, it lewks a bit moar like a tyke now,” Sam said, approvingly.

“Aye, fair to middling. But ye doan’t see too many good dogs here. The boogers wouldn’t know what to do wi’ a good ’un if they had it.”

“Aye, it’s a bloody foony cuntry,” Sam agreed.

“Well, a lad can addle a nice bit o’ brass here,” the other said. “These movie stars all have a few dogs, but they don’t know nowt about ’em. Ah tell ’em off proper, Ah do. No beating around the bush wi’ me.”

“Well, tha’s Yorksha,” Sam reminded.

“That’s reight. Here, grab that tarrier and coom i’ t’back room. Ah gate to wash a Sealy.”

They went in the back room where a regulation bathtub sat amid the tiered cages and kennels.

“Aye,” the chap said, as he soaped up the Sealyham, “they don’t know owt about dogs here.”

He cocked his head.

“Eigh, owd this Sealy a minute. There’s someone out front.”

Sam stripped off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Since a chap shouldn’t be idle when there’s work to do, he nearly had the Sealy finished when the kennel chap came back. He was carrying a miserable bundle under his arm.

“In the name o’ Helifax,” Sam breathed. “And what is that?”

“Th’woman just browt it in,” the other said. “And she sez, she sez: ‘Can you do owt wi’ my dog?’ And Ah sez, ‘What in the name o’ God is it?’ And she sez, ‘It’s my Yorksha tarrier—Ah give him a bath and Ah can’t get him combed out ony more.’”

He held up the poor tangled mite, that looked like a tarred and feathered Chihuahua, for Sam to see. And Sam started to laugh. It was the best laugh he’d had since he’d left England.

“Eigh, ba gum. Ah nivver thowt Ah’d live to the day when Ah gate to a land what’s soa dumb the people tries to wash a Yorksha tarrier,” Sam gurgled.

“Didn’t Ah tell thee, lad?” the other said.

He held up the poor bedraggled dog, and the men lay back and laughed till they could hear nothing but their own laughter. Washing a Yorkshire terrier was the funniest thing Sam had ever heard.

“It’ll tak thee a month o’ Sundays to get it combed out again, lad,” Sam would say. He’d wipe the tears from his eyes, but then he would be able to see the terrier again, and that would start him off laughing again.

From that day on Sam’s days were full, and thoughts of flying again were far from his mind. His waking hours were spent with Dickie Hoggleswaite in the little dog shop, where they would wash and pluck dogs, clip a few dew claws and stand aghast at the ignorance of Americans where dogs were concerned. For Sam, like every Yorkshireman, was born with a fully fledged omniscience in all things canine.

With the aid of Dickie Hoggleswaite he picked up a collie bitch that didn’t have a thing wrong with her—beyond a bit of a gay tail and a touch of a prick ear. But as Hoggleswaite pointed out, there wasn’t a thing off with her that couldn’t be corrected with a judicious amount of coping—and anyhow, she would make a fine mother.

So when she came in season they pinched a breeding for her from a grand champion collie that a millionaire had sent in to be bathed, and all in all they had a fine time. They washed dogs and talked and made a few bets on the Santa Anita races—for this Dickie Hoggleswaite was by the way of being a bit of a sporting chap.

In fact, they might have gone on indefinitely as they were if it hadn’t been for a boarding Pekingese that squeezed through the fence.

Sam and Dick were in the back yard letting the boarders out for exercise when Dick gave a yelp that shook the blobs off the acacia trees.

“Cop that bloody Peke,” he yelled. “She’s i’ heat and she’ll run to hell and gone.”

Sam made a grab, but he was too late. All he got was two whiskers off the Peke’s tail as it went through the hole in the fence.

The minute he saw it Dick started out through the front shop, and he was moving fast, because before his eyes was a picture of that Peke disappearing up into the hills and meeting a Siluki or a Keeshond, or even maybe a great Dane—and then he’d have a hell of a job explaining a fine litter of mongrel puppies to the Peke’s owner, who was a movie director, and dizzy enough as it stood.

So Dick did record time out through the shop and around into the back lot. And when he got there, there was Sam with the Peke tucked under his arm.

“Well, Ah’ll be boogered,” Dick said. “How did tha get out here?”

“Joomped over t’ fence, lad,” Sam grinned. “Here, wetch!”

So just taking off from tiptoe, he sailed over the fence. Then he landed, turned, and jumped back again. That is, it looked as if he were jumping, but of course, it was the merest, simplest little bit of flying for Sam.

“Eigh, lad,” Dick said. “That’s a varry special gift tha’s gate there.”

“It is, that,” Sam replied.

They went back into the shop.

“That were a champion jump,” Dick went on. “That there fence is all of seven foot if it’s an inch. And tha did it wi’ a Peke bitch under thy arm, too. Why did’ta tell me tha were a champion athalete?”

“Nay, Ah nivver done no athaletics in ma life beyond knocking a bit o’ knerr-and-spell,” Sam said.

“You don’t mean to tell me,” Dick ruminated. Then he fumbled in a drawer and found a tape measure and measured the fence. It was seven feet two inches.

“Eigh,” he said to Sam. “We got to dew summat about this. Here tha can jump seven foot two, and offhand Ah think the world’s record is nobbut six foot eight or summat like that. Ba gum, lad, Ah gate an idea we could clean up a pretty penny on this.”

Because this Dickie Hoggelthwaite was a sporting sort of lad, his mind, of course, ran in that direction. And his big idea was to enter Sam in the Veterans Relief Games at the Victor McLaglen stadium.

“Here, dosta think it all reight for ma to goa capering around at ma time o’ life?” Sam asked.

“Ah doan’t know,” Dickie said. “But Ah do know there’s nowt wrang wi’ taking a little brass of these here blooming Yankees. They been winning t’Olympics that long it’s time a ruddy good Britisher showed ’em up, and won a few pounds doing so.”

“Aye, there’d be nowt wrang wi’ winning a honest bet,” Sam agreed.

So Sam went into training. Dickie was the manager and after watching Sam work out in the dog-run for a week, he entered his man in the running high jump, broad jump, and pole vault. He fed Sam a diet of raw eggs and sherry and toast, and gave him massages with his very special embrocation, which he had invented for massaging hurt dogs, and which was made of alcohol, camphor, and vinegar.

All in all he did everything a serious trainer could do.

“Now Sam, lad,” he said on the day of the meet, “ah’ve gate thee in as fine a shape as ivver a man o’ thy age could be got. Ah’ve done ma part. Now thee do thine.”

Off they went to the stadium in a taxi, and Dickie went out and placed his bets. When he came back to the dressing room, his face was lit with a religious glow.

“Ah gate five dollars at five to one on thee for each of the three events,” he said. “And Ah gate a bet of two dollars against a hundred that tha tak’s all three.”

“That sounds like a lot,” Sam said slowly. “How much is that i’ pounds?”

“Now nivver thee mind that. Us hes gate it i’ t’bloody bag, as these Yankees say. Now just thee relax.”

So Dickie gave Sam a final rubdown, and then helped him pull on a sweat shirt and a long pair of sweat pants. Then he wrapped a dressing gown round him and out they went to the stadium.

“Now doan’t worry,” Dickie said. “Ah know full sure tha can do it.”

“If tha feels like that, Ah’m all reight.”

The high jump was first on the schedule of Sam’s events. Dick stood there and passed up the jumps until it got to five feet ten. Then he pulled off Sam’s robe.

“We passed up jumps, so that maun do it first time, lad,” he said. “Now tha can do it easy.”

Sam said nothing. He felt a little nervous. But he felt Dick's faith behind him, so he trotted up to the bar and sailed over. There were three other lads, and two of them made it.

The bar went up to five eleven. Sam made it, but one of the other lads dropped out.

That left only Sam and one more competitor, and they jumped and jumped, the bar going up a bit at a time, until the loud-speaking arrangement in the grandstand began to say:

"Equaling the outdoor Olympic record in the running high jump. The high jump, ladies and gentlemen. Sam Small of Great Britain now jumping."

Sam trotted up and sailed over. The crowd applauded. The other lad gave a mighty leap and jumped over. The crowd applauded again.

Then the loud-speaker began to shout about how this would be a new world's record, and all the photographers came rushing over and Sam took his little trot, and soared over with inches to spare. The noise and excitement was tremendous. Then the other lad tried, but he couldn't make it. A crowd began to gather about Sam, and the officials rushed over with tapes to make sure the bar was set right. They had a great argument, till Sam said:

"Well, lads, to make sure, just shove it up a couple more inches."

Quite amazed, they did so. And Sam sailed over.

Then Dickie Hogglethwaite ran up and threw the dressing gown round Sam and pulled him away. The officials wanted Sam to see how high he could go.

"Nothing dewing, lads," Dickie said. "Now Ah'm his manager and Ah'm his trainer too. We got two more events and Ah won't let ma man tire hissen out."

Then he got Sam in a corner of the stadium and began rubbing his legs again with training fluid, for all the world as if Sam were Jem Mace or Jack Dempsey or somebody.

"The dirty buggers," Dick muttered. "They pulled a ringer in on us. That jumping lad were one o' t'best i' t'country. But Ah were sure tha could beat him."

"Aye, Ah could ha' done moar nor that," Sam said.

Dickie fluttered about Sam like a hen with a chick, and after a while took him out for the pole vault. Of course, it was the same story. Sam made a new world's record at 15 feet 3 inches. Then came the broad jump, and Sam was tempted to jump one hundred yards, but he considered that might cause trouble and Dickie wouldn't get his bets paid off. So he just jumped thirty feet for a new record.

All in all, the two chums had a fine day and they felt righteously happy as they went home and fed all the dogs and counted their winnings. Then Dickie sent out for four cans of beer and he let Sam break training and drink one of them.

It was quite a day, indeed.

When Sam set out home that night the reaction from the excitement of the day set in. He felt lonesome and depressed and homesick. He wanted to talk over with someone his new and strange power, and who, of course, would be better than Mully?

But when he got home Mully and Lavinia were all adither. Vinnie had just signed a five-year contract with G-M-G Pictures, and of course, the excitement was tremendous.

Sam couldn't get a word in edgewise, and he went to bed feeling very lonely.

The next morning Sam's troubles began. The newspapers were all full of it, about the man who had broken three world's records in one day. The front pages had photographs of Sam in his jersey and sweat pants, sailing over the bars with his white mustache floating in the wind behind him.

And the articles were, as they say in Hollywood, terrific. One Los Angeles paper had one paragraph of Sam and the rest of the column saying it showed what California climate could do for a man of 53. Another one said it was partly the climate and partly the California orange juice that allowed a man of 57 to break world's records.

One paper thought that it was the high amount of California sunshine that put extra glycogen into the blood and allowed all California athletes to be better than those from the rest of the world. Another said it was the exhilarating California air that made athletes on the Coast do better; while a tabloid said it was the much higher quality of California tracks that accounted for it.

The papers in the East said it was another California hoax, and that the officials in California always used special California tape measures which accounted for the records. In Florida there was a petition sent to the A.A.U. to disallow the new records because one of the men who fired the starting pistols in the sprints didn't have A.A.U. sanction.

One sporting editor said it showed the United States, with the help of Southern California, would be sure to win the next Olympics; and another said that since Sam was British it showed the United States couldn't win the next Olympics unless Southern California took even more of the load.

A San Francisco paper had an article saying that as long as Southern California could develop men like Sam we were safe from Japanese imperialism, and another paper said that since Sam wasn't American it showed clearly that Congress should do something about new fortification programs along the Pacific.

One famous columnist took nearly his whole column on Sam and said it only went to show that although there were undoubtedly some races in Africa which produced men who could jump even higher than Sam, a white man's brains were many cubic centimeters larger than a Negro's, or a gorilla's, for that matter, although a gorilla was stronger than either, and that while 40,000 Japanese planes could wipe out Los Angeles in less than an hour if they could fly as far as from Japan, it just showed what it was to be a white man.

There was no doubt about it, Sam was important news, as he and Mully soon found out before the day had really started. He was upstairs when Mully found him.

"Now what's tha been up to?" she began.

Sam burrowed down into Mully's clothes closet.

"Why, nowt," he said. "Ah were just sayin' to mysen, Ah sez: 'Ah'll just give Mully's boots a bit of a blacking and get 'em right nice and shiny the way she likes 'em.'"

"Nivver mind soft-soaping ma about ma boots. What's ta been up to?"

"Why, Ah telled thee, nowt at all," Sam said, innocently.

“Nowt! Then what’s twenty newspaper reporters yammering downstairs to see thee for? And what’s this?”

She jammed a newspaper under Sam’s nose, and there was a picture of him doing the broad jump.

“Why, Ah were just dewing a little bit of athaletics yesterday as you might say. It ain’t a varry good likeness, dosta think?”

Mully grabbed the paper from him.

“Eigh, Sam Small. They’ll be cooming fro’ Menston for thee ony day now. Ah doan’t know what’s happened to thy yead. A man o’ thy age, callorpering and hopping around at athaletics. What in the name o’ God coom ovver thee o’ late?”

“Ah ain’t gate a word to say,” Sam muttered, stubbornly.

Mully looked at the paper, and then she looked at Sam, squatting there in the closet with her best boots in his hand.

“Sam Small,” she said, “come and sit ovver here o’ t’sofa.”

Sam did as he was bid.

“Now lad,” she said, “there’s summat behind all this. Spit it out. Now what is it?”

Sam looked at Mully, and he swallowed once or twice, and then he decided it was no use lying to Mully.

“Well, Mully,” he said, “it’s summat like this. Ah found out Ah could fly.”

“Tha found what?” Mully asked.

“Fly,” he said. “Sitha! Ah’ll show thee.”

So he took off and did a couple of turns round the room and then glided down on tiptoe beside Mully again.

“Now, tha sees. Ah can fly,” he said, triumphantly.

“So tha can,” Mully agreed. “And varry nicely tha does it too. What caps me is that tha didn’t tell me about this when tha married me.”

“Nay, it nobbut come ovver me lately.”

“Well, a varry handy accomplishment it is, too, if tha axes me,” Mully said. “Tha’ll be able to wash windows that Ah cannot reach and mony things like that. Here, Sam, just hop up and wipe off that cobweb on t’ceiling there. It’s been worrying me for two days now.”

“Sitha,” Sam said, as he went up after the cobweb. “Ah can fly like a sea gull or like a pigeon, but Ah can’t yet fly like a lark.”

“Well, don’t be discouraged, lad. Happen that’ll come wi’ practice. Ah think tha does reight well for a beginner. How long’s ta been at it, did ta say?”

So Sam told her the whole story, about Faith and Mountains, and the truth about the suicide arrest and how he’d met Dickie Hoggleswaite.

“Well, he were a nice sort o’ chap, and a Huddersfield lad on top of it, and when he axed me to do soom jumping, like, well, it were a chance for him to clean up a few bets.”

“Well, there’s nowt wrang wi’ makking a little brass,” Mully agreed. “Ah always like to have a sixpence on the Darby mysen if Ah can. But it seems tha’s stirred up

summat, what wi' all these newspaper lads downstairs, and a committee o' gentlemen to ax thee to try out for the British Olympic party."

"Well, us can settle all that reight fast," Sam said. "All us has got to do is just explain the truth, like—that Ah'm no athalete, but Ah just did it by flying. Thee just run down and tell 'em while Ah gate these boots blacked nicely for thee. Tell 'em Ah'm sorry Ah hoaxed 'em and there's noa newspaper story for 'em, properly speaking."

Despite the fact that he had made a fortune on his self-doffing spindle, Sam still liked to black boots—especially Mully's. It gave him a great deal of pleasure, putting on the dauby blacking, brushing it off, then taking a nice soft cloth and rubbing and rubbing until the boots were burnished like glacé kid. So he lost himself in the job, feeling sure that Mully with her apt tongue was enough to settle any bunch of reporters.

After lunch, which was sheepshead stew with suet dumplings, with a few side dishes of mashed turnips and pickled beets and fresh doughcake, with curd-lemon-cheese tarts and a pint of ale and a few toasted biscuits and Cheddar cheese, Sam took a stroll to sort of ease off his belt a little. The minute he got on the road a young chap came up and said his name was Jim McGillicuddy.

"Is ta a newspaper lad, happen?" Sam asked.

The young man said he would tell the truth, but he was.

Sam went on walking up the hill, beside the orange groves with the irrigation standpipes neatly between each row of trees, and the young chap walked beside him, explaining that he had to have a good story. If he didn't get a good story he would be ruined. Really he was only starting in as a reporter, so he wanted a really good story.

All the other chaps had gone back to write a funny story on what Mully had said, but he wanted a story from Sam himself and that's why he waited around.

"Well, there's nowt moar to it," Sam said. "Ah can fly, that's all."

"Fly?"

"Aye!"

"You mean, in an airplane?"

"Nay, just on me own hook."

The chap didn't say anything for a while and they went on walking in step.

"Well, Mr. Small," he said, slowly, "I don't want to trouble you too much, but—if you're in the mood now—would you mind just—flying?"

"Surely, lad," Sam said. "Here's a nice bit of a place here."

So he went over to where the road was near the slope of the cañon and took off. He did a turn or two over the cañon, circled over the edge of the Rogers' ranch, glided back and came neatly to earth beside the reporter.

"Holy jumped-up Geesis," the young man said. "Holy jumped-up Geesis!"

Then he went off running down the road.

"Bloody balmy Yankee," Sam said to himself.

He went on up into the hills, leaving the places where the automatic lawns lay neat, and then coming to a sort of hilly desert land where the sagebrush and tumbleweed and cactus grew. He went on a path, past this, higher up, and suddenly the land changed

again as it does in California, and there Sam found it was exactly like England, with rolling turf-covered crofts and bleak skylines. It was a lonesome place, so Sam took off and had a fine hour, gliding around, catching currents that came up the cañons, and feeling the exaltation of the music on his face.

Then he went home and was just sitting down to tea when the reporter lad showed up.

“Come in,” Sam said, in his usual affable way. “Sit thee down and have a little tea.”

“No, thanks.”

“Eigh, come on,” Mully said. “Have a little summat—some shortcake, happen? Or some scones, muffins and raspberry jam, cheese tarts, a little sliced ham or pork pie—or there’s a bit o’ cold pigeon pie here? Or happen some poloney or a bit o’ cold finnan haddie here?”

But the lad only shook his head.

“Is ta feeling poorly, lad?” Mully asked.

“Aye, what’s up?” Sam put in. “Tha looks like tha wished tha’d died when tha had t’measles.”

“I got fired.”

“Tha gate what?”

“Fired! Bounced! The gate! Discharged!”

“Oh, tha means tha gate t’sack,” Sam consoled. “Why lad, Ah’m that sorry to hear it. Ah thowt Ah’d gi’n thee a reight exclusive story.”

“I went back and wrote it,” the lad cried. “And they fired me. They said I was drunk on the job. I told them it was the truth—the story I mean. And they were too dumb to believe it. They’re just like the guys who got the Kitty Hawk story on the Wright brothers—two sticks on page umpty-nine. And this is bigger than the Wrights! Bigger than the Dionne quintuplets! It’s the biggest story the world has ever known. Do you know that?”

“Tha’s being varry polite,” Mully said.

“I may be drunk or I may be crazy, but I definitely am not polite, ever,” the young man said. “I do believe I’m nuts, though. Look here, maybe I am nuts, but would you—that is—if I did see you before, will you do that again—fly?”

“If tha likes,” Sam said, not wanting to put himself too much forward.

“No, really. I’d be utterly delighted.”

“Righto,” Sam said. And he took off in a straight-up Immelman, went around the dining room, hovered a while over the table and then floated, inch by inch, back into his seat.

“It’s that simple,” Sam explained.

“Simple!” the chap exploded. “Why, you don’t seem to realize that this is the biggest thing in the last fifty centuries of man’s progress. Man can fly under his own power. It’s big! It’s colossal! It’s terrific! Why, with me as manager, we’d set the world on fire. We’d make millions!”

“Millions?” Mully asked, getting interested.

“Yes. We’d give exhibitions.”

“Think o’ that, now,” Mully breathed.

“Ah were thinking o’ giving an exhibition,” Sam said. “Ah were thinking t’other day, that since it were at Sister Minnie’s Ah first got t’idea, happen she’d like me to fly so it could be a sort of evidence of what faith’ll do, in a manner of speaking.”

“Sister Minnie, hell!” the chap said. “You don’t think she’d give up the center of her stage to a man that could fly. No, sir. Look, you sign with me and we’ll make a tour—a world tour . . .”

“Nay, Ah doan’t want to mak’ no world tour. Ah just made one,” Sam moaned, “and Ah doan’t want another one only so far as it goas back to Yorksha.”

“Sam!” Mully warned.

“Now, Mully—it’s ma flying and it’s off to be ma judgment on what Ah do wi’ it.”

“Aye, and it were thy self-doffing spindle, too,” Mully rebutted. “But if it had been thy judgment Owdicotts’ mill’d still be using it for their own. Whose judgment were it we should gate us a lawyer and sue for their rights? It were mine, weren’t it? But for that we’d still be on two pound ten a week as a mill foarman, instead of rich as we are, wouldn’t we?”

Sam said nothing.

“When it comes to addling brass, thee leave it all to me,” Mully said. “Now if a little bit of a thing like flying can mak’ us another fortune in America, then us’d be ninnies not to tak’ it. Now thee forget t’money end, and me and this young chap will settle everything.”

“What about our Vinnie? We’re not off to leave her.”

“She’s gate her own career to think on. Now, Ah fancy she’d be glad to have us goa and clear up her background. Onyhow, when us has made a few millions, us’ll come back here and retire.”

“Oooah, ma goodness,” Sam moaned. “Ah wish Ah were back hoam, Ah do.”

The next day the papers were all drawn up and signed.

“Now, we’re set,” the young man said. “It’s no use fooling with the movies, because people seeing a picture would only think it a fake. We’ll hire Madison Square Garden in New York. All you’ll have to do is just once each day, take off and fly round in the Garden. I’ll get the plane tickets and we’ll fly East tomorrow.”

“Fly,” Mully said. “Why lewk, then. Happen tha’d better get nobbut two tickets, and Sam could fly alongside us. Us’d save one fare that way.”

“That’s a champion idea,” Sam said. “But there’s ma luggage.”

However, Jim would have none of it and when he pointed out that Sam might freeze solid going over the Rockies, Mully gave in and agreed that he should ride inside the plane.

The next day they took off and after that Sam hardly knew what did happen. Things came so fast that the poor lad got fair dizzy.

The minute they landed at Newark they were raced off by motor car to the grand suite of a hotel in New York. Then the room got full of people who talked to him and talked at him and pinched him and prodded him. Then they asked him to fly.

“Hey, why should all these people see it without paying?” Mully asked.

“This is a publicity stunt,” Jim explained. “It’s the press. We’ve got to stir up interest.”

So Sam did a few turns round the hotel room, but you never saw anything as suspicious as that bunch of New Yorkers. They climbed on chairs and felt for wires; they prodded Sam again to see if anything was fastened to him; they asked Mully to leave the room so she couldn’t possibly hypnotize them, and finally they asked Sam to take his clothes off and fly so they could see there was no trickery, like a little motor in the seat of his breeches.

“Ah will not leave this room,” she said stoutly, “and if ye think ma owd man’s off to fly round naked as the day he was born showing everything he’s gate, well ye’re all bahn to hev another think cooming. Now put that in your pipes and smook it.”

They went out and more people came and Sam flew around for them. Doctors tapped his chest and tested his metabolism and took his blood pressure; psychologists asked him if a ton of feathers was lighter than a ton of lead; he was examined by a hypnotist, an alienist, and a committee on psychic research.

Then the photographers started, taking pictures of Sam standing and Sam flying and Sam looping the loop, and the room got so full of smoke that Sam could hardly breathe. So finally he escaped into the bedroom. There he saw a little old man sitting on the bed.

“Nah lad,” Sam greeted.

“How do you do,” the old man said, courteously.

“Well, that were a good show Ah put on for ’em,” Sam said. “But Ah’m rare fagged out.”

“It was a good show,” the old man said. “But they won’t believe it.”

“Won’t believe it?”

“No, alas! The cheap modern education of the scientific world abhors that which surpasses its factual knowledge. So your newspapermen will write all about mass hypnotism and wires and Barnum and auto-suggestion. They’ll use lots of phrases they don’t understand about matters they can’t comprehend. They’ll find any excuse but the simple truth—that you are capable of levitation—in other words, that you can fly.”

“Ah can that,” Sam said.

“Of course you can,” the old man said gently.

“Thank you kindly,” Sam said. “Here, have a pipe o’ my baccy. It’s varry good. And what did tha say thy name was?”

“Oh, it’s just a string of vowels and consonants,” the old man said, stuffing his pipe with Sam’s tobacco. “You wouldn’t be interested. I’m just a student, that’s all, at the Research Center. I’m trying to find out how to defeat the rebellion of man’s body and brain against modern life, modern cities, modern foods, and modern thoughts. Why is cancer growing, mental ills? Why do cells multiply malignantly?”

He lit his pipe slowly and looked at Sam fondly.

“Now you! I am still sitting in wonder that I should have the luck to be alive in an age when you should manifest yourself again.”

“Again?”

“Yes. Are you becoming rarer? Will this age develop more of you? We’ve had you before, you know—Daedalus, Icarus. They could fly, too.”

“Then Ah’m not the first?” Sam asked.

The old man shook his head.

“Lots of you,” he said. “You have been excommunicated and tortured, drowned and burned at the stake as wizards and vampires and incubi and succubi. All because the world is weak and ignorant and—human. And I, too, am human. I wish to circle your life, observe you, make a laboratory specimen of you. But I won’t. I’d just like to ask one question.”

“Nay lad, Ah’ve been axed soa mony another wean’t hurt.”

“Tell me, do you find it harder flying at some times than at others?”

“Nay lad,” Sam said. “Well, Ah like best flying alone and outdoors. . . .”

“At night?”

“Aye, at neight. That’s reight. And it does get a bit hard for me when people’s around. Like this afternoon—it were like the air were varry sticky and soft and a bit harder to get through.”

The old man nodded and puffed his pipe. Then he got up, and patted Sam on the shoulder.

“It has been a rare privilege to talk to you, Mr. Small,” he said. “I wish I could protect you, but I can’t. You see, the world will do anything but believe. Although they see, they won’t believe.

“Even back when the world was much simpler they wouldn’t. They tried to explain it within their knowledge. When Icarus went soaring into the blue and kept on flying away from their disbelief and never came back, they said undoubtedly his wax wings had melted because he’d flown so high he was too near the sun.”

“Why, the higher up tha goas t’colder it is,” Sam said, soberly. “That would set wax even harder.”

“Undoubtedly. But the explanation satisfied them within their limited knowledge. And so, even today, man will get an explanation to satisfy him within our present limited knowledge. Today that knowledge is even more fiercely narrowed between the bits of misinformation we scientists have predigested for man. And you—poor lonesome Icarus, returning through the centuries—arrive at a world in which the more we prove the less people believe.

“For you have come back to a world where biologists prove virgin birth; chemists can turn water into wine; doctors with insulin raise men from the dead; surgeons perform miracles; electricians make telepathy practical; scientists prove matter lives forever, and mathematicians show that the hereafter in time and space is indisputable. And all this in a world that no longer believes in the virgin birth, miracles, telepathy, and the hereafter. The more we prove, the less the rational mind believes.

“There is no more faith, simple and blessed. For the world has had too much proof and too much logic—and in getting them we have lost the faculty of having faith in the incomprehensible.”

“That’s funny,” Sam said. “It were a sermon on Faith that started me out flying, as you might say.”

“Of course,” the old man said.

“Nay, Ah doan’t care what they believe,” Sam said. “Ah know Ah can fly, doan’t Ah?”

“Yes, Mr. Small. But don’t you see that their disbelief could . . . well. No, I cannot interfere. I must not do any more harm to the world. You must go on alone—but just one thing. If at any time . . . if you find it gets harder than usual . . . just say to yourself: ‘I can fly. I can! I *can!*’ and don’t ever disbelieve it.”

And the little old man pattered away.

Sam hadn’t much time to think of what the little man had said, for his days were full of other cycles of doctors and reporters and agents and psychiatrists and photographers. Then, as suddenly as a clap of thunder on a summer day in Cumberland, the big night possessed him and he was in a dressing room and Mully was handing him a bunch of spangles and a few inches of silk.

“Ah will net wear it!” Sam raved.

“What, after all t’bother Ah hed makking it! Tha’ll wear it or Ah’ll know why.”

“Eigh Mully, Ah’d lewk like one o’ Tetley’s Brewery horses at the Sunday School feast,” Sam protested. “What is it?”

“Ah embroidered it,” Mully said. “Sitha, there’s a Union Jack on thy right chest, and a Stars and Stripes on t’left, out o’ courtesy, as you might say. Now coom on, lad, put it on just to please ma.”

So Sam looked at Mully and felt that sorry about her sitting up nights doing the embroidery that he put on the costume. When Mully came back he was seeing how his backside looked in the mirror.

“Eigh Mully,” he groaned, “Ah lewk like t’lad on t’flying trapeze, Ah do, for a fact.”

“Well, tha couldn’t expect to go out there flying around in thy best serge suit,” Mully said. “And it’s ovver late to change thy mind now—change thy su-it and tha’ll be sure to rue it,” she quoted.

“Well, Ah changed me suit already,” Sam pointed out. “And that’s bad luck reight off.”

But they had no chance to argue. Jim came rushing in and dragged Sam down to the entrance. They went through corridors and Sam felt just like a bullock going down the chutes in that Chicago slaughterhouse trip.

Jim held him by the doorway, and Sam could hear the loud-speaker systems announcing him.

“Now you’re sure you can do it?” Jim asked. “Because there’s the biggest crowd the garden ever had—at a twenty-two dollar top, too. You won’t miss out?”

“Of course not,” Sam said, irritably.

Then he was being pushed out, and there stood Sam Small, dressed in pink fleshings all embroidered up, and his white mustache jutting out. He stood dazed a minute, staring at the lights and blinking. He put out his arms to take off, and then, suddenly, he began to think of what would happen if he didn’t fly.

There he stood, down in the middle of the enormous building, a funny little figure in pink silk and spangles, with his arms out and his jutting white mustache echoing the arms, parallel. Terror seized him and he stood still. For the thousands of people had begun to laugh. That laugh boomed and echoed and gathered until the whole place rang with it and laugh echoes bumped into new laughs and strange overtone laughs were thus created that no one had given birth to.

Poor Sam stood wishing the earth would swallow him. He was so struck with stage fright that he turned to run away. But Jim stood in the doorway, waving and motioning frantically.

“For God’s sake—go on and fly,” Jim shouted.

Sam turned, and putting his arms out again, got ready to take off. But his arms seemed heavy.

He was gripped by a horror. Perhaps it had all been a dream heretofore—and now perhaps he couldn’t fly at all?

He was seized with panic, and he ran forward a few steps with his arms out, attempting to get the feel of the air. But it was like being paralyzed. He couldn’t feel the air. He knew it would never hold him. Something was holding him down.

So he ran and ran with his arms out—and that’s what the people saw: a funny little man running round like a chicken—a man attempting to fly.

And they laughed and roared, and the harder they laughed the faster Sam ran and hopped. He jumped and skipped until he was almost dead of exhaustion, and then he stopped, knowing he was hearing a different sound. The people were booing and roaring with anger. He looked up and saw programs and newspapers sailing through the air.

In a half-daze, he felt himself being hurried and dragged along the corridor. He had cinema-like sensations of policemen drawing their clubs and pushing people back. And then he was in the dressing room again, and Mully was beside him and Jim was looking into his eyes.

“It’s all reight,” Sam said, thickly. “Gi’ ’em all their brass back again. Ah’ll pay for the hall and everything if it tak’s ivvery penny us has got.”

Jim stood up.

“All right, Mr. Small,” he said. “I don’t want you to feel bad.”

“That’s nice, lad,” Sam said. “Hurry away and tell t’folk they can have their money back.”

Then Sam sat alone with Mully, and she looked at him.

“Ah suppose tha’s mad at ma,” he said.

“Nay lad,” she said. “Ah’m not mad, but tha did lewk a bit funny out there, hopping around. Go on and change thy clothes, and let’s nivver say no moar about flying again.”

Then she went out, and Sam changed his clothes.

“Happen Ah only dreamt Ah could fly,” he said to himself. Sadly, he got dressed. What hurt him more than anything else was the way Mully had looked at him. She would never again have faith in him. Faith! But that had started the whole thing!

Then it happened. Just as Sam was pulling on his breeches he remembered the little man—the little professor with the beard, saying: “Say to yourself: ‘I can fly! I can! I *can!* and don’t ever disbelieve it.’ ”

Quick as a flash Sam slipped his braces over his shoulders, and in one breath yelled:

“And, by Gow, Ah *can* fly. Oppen that bloody door!”

As the door opened he took off and went out over the heads of the policemen, who ducked and fell flat to get out of the way of his soaring body.

He shot down the corridor over the heads of the people, and then zoomed out into the great auditorium.

“You bloody buggers,” he yelled, “Ah’ll show ye!”

He raced up in a tremendous climb and looped over so his belly almost brushed the ceiling. Down below most of the people had gone home, but he saw a small knot, faces white in the lights as they stared up at him in disbelief.

“Ah’ll show ye, ye buggers,” he yelled, and he shot down at them like a plane in a power dive. They scattered in terror and fell over themselves, and Sam streaked away for the entrance. He screamed over the heads of the jammed crowd and shot out into the street.

“Now, can Ah fly?” he shouted, and he looped and zoomed and dove in the night, streaking past lighted windows, skimming over taxis and heads of people, shooting up to the tops of the houses.

Lightly he perched on a roof, and watched the scene below. Taxis smashed into each other and people grouped round women who had fainted. Police whistles blew, sirens screeched as police cars and ambulances and fire engines raced up.

He heard people yelling at him and saw below the white mass of their faces. The fire apparatus began to raise the ladder.

“Come down off there, or you’ll break your damned neck,” a policeman shouted.

“Ah’ll show ye,” chanted Sam.

“O.K., tough guy,” the policeman said. He started up the fire ladder, his gun in his hand.

Sam advanced one foot off the parapet, and then stepped out. Women screamed and collapsed. But Sam merely laughed. He flipped over, did a slow spiral round the fire ladder, and suddenly shot down at the crowd. At the last second he banked up again a few hundred feet.

Then he swooped again and raced along over the heads. He tore up through the city, he zoomed round Broadway and floated up the side of the *Times* building. He shot along the streets, leaving tangles of traffic in his wake.

Then, suddenly, his anger left him, and, feeling weary of all the people, he circled slowly, up, up into the night, until the city was a spangle of lights down below. He

could hear only faintly, now, the roar of the metropolis. Beneath him was the island, a lace of light: the shimmering strands were streets, the delicate filaments of fiery beads were bridges over rivers, the crawling glow worms were ships in the harbor, the incandescent little caterpillar that inched along far away was a train. In the majestic blackness far above the city there was nothing to share the purity of the lonesomeness with Sam except the drone of an airplane, far to the south in the vast night sky.

The music on his face brought him sad calm and then sanity. He glided down slowly toward the city. He looked over it in wonder and confusion. And as he did so all his native caution came back.

“Eigh now, Sam Small,” he said to himself, “tha has gone and done it. How the blooming hell ista off to find out where tha lives?”

He looked down, but not knowing New York, he thought all the streets looked alike. He had only a vague idea that one of the tall buildings below must be his hotel. But they all looked the same. Sadly he flew up and down, but he knew he couldn’t recognize his hotel even if he saw it.

“Eigh, what a dew. Ah wish Ah were home i’ Yorksha,” he said.

Disconsolately, he flew around until he saw a roof that looked fairly comfortable. It was a sort of projecting roof that had a little lawn and a fountain, and best of all, a porch swing.

“Eigh, gardins way up on top o’ buildings,” Sam said. “What an idea! However, lad, here’s a soft place to kip, and t’first thing i’ t’ morning, tha can get down quietly and find out where tha lives.”

When Sam woke he found the sun shining brightly on his face and a policeman holding his arm.

“By gum, Ah maun o’ overslept,” Sam said.

“Now, how did you get up here?” the policeman asked.

“Why, Ah flew up, lad,” Sam said, honestly.

At this a woman in the background, standing by the penthouse door, gave a scream:

“The bat man!” she yelled, and then fainted dead away.

“So, I’ve got you,” the cop said, drawing his gun. “And don’t you try any flying tricks on me to escape.”

But the minute Sam saw the gun he decided. He was sick to death of the whole silly business, so he shot straight up in the air twenty feet, went over the edge of that building, and raced away in a power dive. It was so fast that the cop had only time to take six wild shots. Sam heard them banging behind him, and felt the bullets tearing through the air—for he had become so sensitively attuned to air vibrations that he could feel even the rip of a bullet that was not near at all.

The bullets scared Sam very badly, and made his heart flutter so fast that he had to stop and rest. He came to rest on a convenient parapet. He had perched there for only a minute when he heard a sound behind him. He turned and saw a nice-looking young lady, naked as the day she was born, taking a sun bath on a mattress.

“Hoops, ma’am,” Sam said, turning away politely. “Ah’m right sorry Ah interrupted.”

The woman gave a scream and fainted away, too. Sam perched there, scratching his head and wondering whether or not he should get help, when the woman’s husband came racing out with a shotgun and began blazing away.

“Drat ma bloody buttons,” Sam said, “they maun think Ah’m a cockpartridge or summat, and this is t’open season.”

Of course, he was thinking that as he flew, because he was going away from the sun-bathing lady at top speed.

That morning was something for a man to remember. Every time Sam came down to land, the people below began yelling:

“The bat man—the bat man,” and they raced up the streets keeping Sam in sight. All Sam wanted to do was to land and find his hotel, but each time he got near the earth the people crowded and clutched at him and traffic stopped and there was no chance for him to slip down unobserved.

“Ba gum, Ah’m fair sick o’ this,” Sam moaned.

He flew up again and finally came to rest on one of the gargoyles of the Chrysler Building. Even then there was no rest, for people opened the windows and stared at him and shouted. As the morning went on they began to run sightseeing airplanes past the tower, and people inside shouted to Sam and begged him just to do a little bit of a flight for them.

Then there was a stir on a balcony below him, and a policeman shouted to him to come down.

But by this time Sam had lost his age-long respect for the majesty of the blue uniform.

“Now lad,” he warned, “if tha climbs up here Ah’ll just fly away to some other building and tha’ll have it to do all over again. Ah’m staying where Ah am, and the only person Ah want to talk to is ma Mully. Fotch Mully here and Ah’ll talk to her. Ah’m fair sick of all this, Ah am. Ah’m right sick of it, Ah might almost say. So tak thysen and thy gun away and fotch Mully here.”

Sam hopped off and flew a little higher, until he was sitting right against the pole of the spire on the Chrysler Building.

And there he sat, hour after hour, until it was late afternoon. They tried to coax him down, but Sam had his Yorkshire up and was just stubborn and set that he wouldn’t come down till they brought Mully.

Finally there was a shout below, and Sam saw Mully’s bonnet showing up on a little bit of a balcony. She came climbing up, and Sam flew down and gave her a bit of a hand until they were both on a ledge, snug as could be. Mully stared at him and almost got tearful for a moment.

“Eigh Sam,” she said. “In thy shirtsleeves all night, perched up here like a cock-sparrer. Tha maught ha’ caught thy death o’ cold.”

“Mully,” Sam pleaded, “now doan’t start in plaguing ma. Help ma gate out o’ this mess, and s’welp me, bob, Ah’ll never lift ma two feet off the ground together again. These bloody bobbies hev been shooting at ma. Tell ’em Ah nobbut want to get down and goa on hoam to Yorksha again.”

“Nay lad,” Mully said. “Tha’s put thy foot in it and there’s owd Nick popping below.”

“What’s up now?”

“What ain’t up,” she said. “Tha hasn’t awf done it, now. Tha’s tangled the city up. There’s been dozens killed in traffic accidents from people staring at thee. A skyscraper company has offered a hundred pounds a day if tha’ll just light on their flagpole once a day.”

“Nivver heed that, lass. Let’s get down fro’ here and get away.”

“Nay, lad. Tha’s started summat. Tha sees, Sam, tha’s upset things. People are suing thee for damages and Ah doan’t know what. Like one lass were in the family way at that place last night, and when tha flew out she hed a slip and now she’s asking a half million dollars for thee killing her bairn that weren’t born.”

“Oooah, drat ma buttons,” Sam moaned.

“That’s not awf on it,” Mully said. “One awf o’ t’city wants thee shot as a bat man, and scientists say tha can’t be true, and ministers say tha maun be a devil, and ivvery woman i’ t’city is barring her windows. Tha’s a menace, that’s what tha is. They hed to call off all t’schools, for mothers is flaid tha’ll fly away wi’ their bairns. Police want to lock thee up because tha could rob ivvery skyscraper i’ t’city at neight by flying i’ windows.

“Them that doan’t think tha should be shot want thee deported as an undesirable alien, and just as mony folk want thee kept here behind bars.”

“What on earth for?”

“Well, tha can fly, lad. Why, one chap wi’ slant eyes offered ma a hundred million dollars if Ah’d gate thee to goa to his country.”

“What for?”

“Why, soa tha can teach his army how to fly, then they could strap a bomb on every sojer, and the whole army could fly on its own hook ovver any city i’ t’world and bomb it to pieces and then land and capture it wi’out trouble.”

“Ma gum,” Sam said, “that’s so! If there was an army of chaps could fly like me we could conquer t’whole world. What did’ta tell him?”

“Why, Ah told him straight that tha were a Britisher, and if any army is off to have men ’at can fly on their own hook, it’s the British army. But a newspaper chap heard ma say that, and now all the papers demand that they doan’t let thee leave this country till tha gives up thy secret.”

“Ah have no secret,” Sam moaned. “Ah can nobbut fly, that’s all.”

“Aye, but they doan’t know that. Eh lad, tha’s upset the whole world. Why, the minute they saw tha could fly, airyoplane stocks all went to bits, and then railroads and boat shares went to bits and steel followed them, because they summed it up that if

people could fly they're not off to need any airplanes or boats or railroads or motor cars to ride in. It was so terrible they had to close up t'markets."

"What did they do that for?" Sam asked. "They still got to buy groceries, hevn't they?"

"Ah don't know sewerly," Mully sighed. "But t'paper said t'President ordered t'markets closed. Then he called a special meeting o' their Parliament or whativver it is to pass a bill for new money to build national defenses against flying men. In fact, to put it in a nutshell, Sam Small, tha's mucked up the whole bloody world."

"Eigh," Sam moaned, "it were that California 'at's to blame. It were a balmy climate for fair—it turned me balmy onyhow. And all Ah ivver wanted, Mully, was to be back hoam i' Yorksha, wi' a good pint o' ale, and a few lads to pass a nice evening wi'—or sitting hoam workin' on a nice rag rug. And now Ah'm in a proper mess."

He perched on the ledge, moodily.

"Well Mully," he said, "it's ma fault. Go thee down and tak a train for California and stay wi' Vinnie. Ah'll tak care o' mysen."

"Nay," Mully said, indignantly. "Ah'm noa less to blame than thee, making thee come to foreign countries where a chap gets ideas into his head that's contrary to common sense. So here Ah am, and here Ah stay, wi' thee!"

Sam thought a while, and looked out over the city. The sun still shone where they were, but below it was getting almost shadowy and dusk. Then he looked at Mully decisively.

"Millicent Small," he said, "dosta luv ma, lass?"

"Nay lad, doan't talk so soft."

"Ah mean it. It's important. Dosta luv ma?"

At that Mully began to weep—much to Sam's astonishment. Finally she looked up at him.

"Sam Small," she said finally, "tha hesn't axed ma that for nigh on twenty year."

"Well, Ah'm a man o' few words," Sam said. "Happen Ah've often thowt about axing thee; but tha knows how a chap is. Soa now, Ah'm axing thee."

Mully sniffed and looked at Sam.

"Sammywell Small," she said, "Ah've stuck by thee for twenty year, Ah have. Ah took thee for better or worse, and happen it were worse than Ah thowt it would be. But still and all, Ah stuck by thee through t'strikes when we didn't have a penny and us popped ma wedding ring to get summat to eat; and Ah nursed thee the time o' thy accident i' t'mill; and Ah've put thee to bed when tha's been poorly. Ah've bore thy bairn and washed thy clothes and cooked thy meals and shared thy bed. And then tha axes ma if Ah luv thee. If Ah doan't, lad, then for the last twenty year Ah've been living under false pretenses."

"That's all Ah want to hear," Sam said.

He got up and squared his shoulders.

"Now put thy hand in mine," he said, "and don't be flaid. Just have Faith in me, that's all."

Mully got up and looked down at the evening streets, hymenopterous with humans, far, far below.

“Eigh, lad, there’s off to be a hell of a bloody splash if tha mak’s a mistake,” she said.

But she put her hand in his.

“Awf a minute, Sam,” she said. “Happen this’ll work, happen not. But if it doan’t, there’s one question that’s been burning ma for a long time.”

“Fire away, lass.”

“Well—Sam—did’ta really have owt to do wi’ that widow i’ Harrogate that summer we went there on us holidays?”

“Mully,” Sam said, “true as us is facing us Maker reight now, there’s nivver been nub’dy but thee.”

Mully looked at him a second, then she tied the strings of her bonnet tighter under her chin.

“That’s all Ah wanted to hear thee say, lad,” she said.

She put her hand in his again.

“Count three for me, lad.”

“One—” said Sam.

Mully took a deep breath.

“Two—” said Sam.

Mully shut her eyes.

“Just have Faith in me,” Sam told her.

“All reight,” she said. “Ah do believe in thee, Sam.”

“Then here we goa! Three!”

Mully stepped forward with her eyes shut. She felt the air rushing past her. It was a sweet, glorious flow of air. She opened her eyes. Then she smiled; because there was Sam right beside her, the tips of his fingers touching hers, and they were swinging around in a big circle, volplaning as smoothly as a couple of albatrosses. And like that, together, they went up and up in a great spiral.

And that’s the last New York ever saw of them. The people in the buildings, staring out, and the black crowds far below on the streets, craning their necks backward, could see that twin flight of two bodies, near to each other, matching their movements with the telepathic exactitude of birds, going up and up until they were dots against the washed sadness of the evening sky—up and up until they could be seen no more.

And thus it was that Sam and Mully Small escaped New York and flew back to Yorkshire and settled down again.

And if you ever go to Yorkshire and get to a place called Polkingthorpe Brig, near Huddersfield, you can test this story. Any evening you wish you can go down to The Spread Eagle, and there, with a pint of nice ale before him, a blazing fire behind him, and a handful of chums beside him, you can find a chap named Sam Small.

He’s been all ’round the world. He has a wife named Mully. He has a daughter named Vinnie in the movies, who was married not long ago to a young American chap

named Jim McGillicuddy.

But it's no use asking him if he can fly. Because if you do he'll look you straight in the eye and say:

“Nay, lad, that's not me. Tha maun be thinking o' t'other Sam Small—the chap what dropped his musket and held up t'battle o' Waterloo.”*

* Sam here refers, no doubt, to a more famous Sam Small, who was also a Yorkshireman. But our Sam makes a highly regrettable error in saying his namesake “dropped his musket.” He didn't drop it. It was knocked down by the sergeant, which started the whole ruckus. Sam maintained, not without reason, that the sergeant having knocked it down, the sergeant should pick it up. Lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, brigadiers, all came successively to argue with Sam, but he was true Yorkshire and wouldn't retreat from his stand, and there was all history held up with armies waiting and Napoleon scheming and Blücher marching. Finally none less than the old Iron Duke himself showed up and took the matter in hand. Being a great general he had a command of language that was not only fluent but quite the sort of stuff Sam could understand. According to the Yorkshire poem, unexpurgated edition, Wellington roared:

“Sam Small, you —— —— ——! —— you! Do as you're —— well bid! Pick up that —— —— —— musket!”

And eigh, ba gum, Sam did.

“Now,” said t'Iron Duke,

“Let t'battle commence!”

Which it did, with results that are familiar to every schoolboy, as *Punch* might say.

ADVENTURE V

SAM SMALL'S TYKE

*Alas a dirty word,
alas a dirty third, alas . . . little
dogs resemble little girls.*

—GERTRUDE STEIN

OF COURSE, the whole unbelievable affair wouldn't have happened if Sam Small hadn't been left at home alone. There's no doubt whatsoever about that. But Mully had been set and bound to take another trip to America.

"Now Sammywell Small," she snapped, "Ah want no more arguing. At such a time as this our place is reight beside our Vinnie. So we're off for America."

"Not me, Ah ain't," Sam droned belligerently. Then his voice changed to a pleading tone. "Now look here, Mully. Ah were in Yankeeland with thee once—and Ah hev'n't forgot what happened to me that time. Now why can't our Vinnie come back home and have her baby here?"

"Because her husband's an American, that's why," Mully snapped.

She clicked her needles furiously on the tiny coat she was knitting, as if that would help settle matters.

"But dash ma soul," Sam cried in an exasperated voice, "that's just it. Thee and Vinnie don't seem to get it through your heads that if she stays there, her baby's off to be born a foreigner. Think o' that."

Mully sighed deeply, signifying despair.

"Did it ever occur to thee, Sam Small," she said, "that foreigners *might* like to be foreigners—and they might even like their *children* to be foreigners, too?"

"Don't talk silly," said Sam.

"Oh, aye? Then why do they have so many babies born foreigners?"

"'Cause they don't have a chance to be born i' Yorkshire, that's why. Why it's simple. If our Vinnie were to come visit us, her bairn'd be Yorkshire when it was born, and if . . ."

"Aye, and if t'Queen o' Sheba had worn pants she'd ha' been t'King," Mully snapped.

"She did wear pants, the way Ah heard it. Now our Vinnie . . ."

"Sam Small," interrupted Mully, glaring at him. "Understand this once and for all. Our Lavinia is off to stay i' Calyifornia beside her husband, like a reight lass should—and Ah'm off to be beside her when her first bairn's born, like a reight mother should. Now that's final, so put it i' thy pipe and smoke it."

Sam sulked for several minutes and poked at the fire disconsolately.

“Ah’m not going to foreign lands no more,” he said, finally. “And *tha* can put that in *thy* pipe and smoke it.”

“All reight, lad. Ah’ll go alone, then.”

“Then *tha* can go alone,” Sam muttered.

And that’s the way matters stood. Since they were both Yorkshire—which means the maximum ordinate in stubbornness—neither of them would give in. The days passed, and though secretly both wished they hadn’t decided it that way, neither made a sign.

Time and tide, which got its official British government recognition of waiting for no man back in the time of King Canute, brought them to the day of parting.

At the railway station at Hallby, Sam looked up forlornly at the window of the third-class carriage. He was just on the point of telling Mully that he’d changed his mind, when he saw the train was moving.

“Oh, Sam,” Mully moaned, as if she, too, had discovered that they had done something foolish. “Sam, lad. Oh, Sam. . . .”

Then the sound of the steam from the engine cut off her words. She was being carried away. Sam stood on the platform, bewildered. He scratched his head. Then, suddenly, he pulled out his red bandana handkerchief. He waved it furiously. And there were a lot of strangers on the station platform, too, who could observe this display of emotion. But Sam felt so desperate he didn’t care. He waved his handkerchief until the train was gone.

So off went Mully to America, and off went Sam across the moor back to Polkingthorpe Brig and his home. When he got there, he sat a long time in his chair, facing Mully’s empty chair, and tried faithfully to remember all the things she’d told him, like not coming in with his boots muddy and remembering to take the laundry to Mrs. Hellifeather’s every week.

And the more Sam thought the more he became convinced that he was a stubborn, irascible old tyke, and Mully was an angel minus wings and plus a few extra pounds at appropriate places.

He got into a deep, sentimental mood, from the milk of which rose the cream of virtuous determination.

“Now look here, Sam lad,” he warned himself. “In order to make it up to Mully, *tha*’s off to behave *thysel*f, and show her what sort of a chap *tha* is. So this time—no monkey business, now. No flying wi’out wings, and no split personalities, and no nowt foolish like *tha*’s forever getting into. This time *tha* behaves *thysel*f!”

Sam heard the echo of his own words in the cottage, for he was talking out loud.

In the days that followed, Sam Small often found himself talking out loud to an empty cottage. And he knew that most dire of all afflictions that can strike a man who has been long married—loneliness.

“Come, come, Sam lad,” he would say. “Happen tha needs a nice cup o’ tea to cheer thee up.”

But he soon found out that it wasn’t any fun making a pot of tea when there was no one there to say how good it was, and how of all the people in the world there was no one quite had the touch of Sam Small in making a pot of tea—when he put his mind to it—nobody who knew just how to warm the pot, and pour the water right at the very moment it reached the boil—nobody with such a deft finger for putting in exactly the proper amount of tea leaves—nobody with such an unerring instinct for knowing precisely how long it should mash with the tea cozy round the pot—nobody who . . .

No, it wasn’t a cup of tea.

“The thing tha’s got to do, Sam lad,” he told himself finally, “is to keep busy. That’s the ticket.”

So he burst out in a flurry of ambition. He whitewashed all the rocks beside the garden path, and he put up bits of shelves all over the kitchen where they’d be handy-like for pots and pans and things. He replaced a cracked pane of glass that he’d been promising to fix for a year, and put in a patch of plaster on the bedroom wall where the doorknob had bumped a hole.

He did all these things—and merely found again that there was neither virtue nor satisfaction in doing odd jobs when there was no one to stand in admiration afterward and say that for neat whitewashing, carpentering, glazing, or plastering and for thoroughness, tidiness, and ingenuity exemplified in their doing, there was never a man born yet to match Sam Small.

Sam began to come to the conclusion that there was no balm left in life. Of course, there was the pub to go to. But the lads only gathered at The Spread Eagle in the evenings. They were busy during the day. An empty pub, with no chums there to give respectful ear to Sam Small’s opinions on dogs, football, and international affairs, was a poor place indeed. Sam found that out. He discovered that good ale, no matter how fine, needs the condiment of agreeable company.

As the lonely days went past Sam returned to odd jobs, now seeking them in a kind of desperation. In this sad state of affairs he pulled out every pair of boots in the house. He ripped off all the soles, and then, with the last between his knees, he began cobbling them up, working with wooden pegs, awl, and waxed string, stitching on soles of stout oak-tanned leather. But his work only brought him to the awful day when the last pair was done. There were no more boots to cobble!

Then indeed did loneliness come creeping over Sam Small, creeping like a great snake, slowly wrapping coil after coil around him. By force of lifetime’s habit he woke long before dawn. The blank day stretched before him, bleak, unbearable.

He felt it couldn’t go on much longer. Something would have to happen. Of course, it did.

Ian Cawper, who is the biggest and strongest lad in all Yorkshire—which, without any doubt, means in all the world—was lumbering on his way home from work when he saw the gypsy-looking chap arguing at Sam’s garden gate. Now Sam Small is a little, stubby man, and since the gypsy was quite a likely-looking build (and a stranger

to boot) what was more natural than that Ian should stroll over to see what might happily arise.

“Is there owt up, Sam?” Ian asked, keeping his eye on the gypsy and wondering whether he weighed nearer to 240 than 230 pounds.

“Now, lad, Ian,” greeted Sam, happily. “Why, this here lad has had the terrible bad luck to lose a tyke, and he has the funny idea, though heavens knows why, that it might have wandered into ma home. Ah’ve been just assuring him it ain’t here.”

“Ah see,” said Ian, putting his thumbs into the waistband of his jeans, and coming to the kernel of the discussion. “Would tha like a bit of a wrastle, lad? Or happen a go at a straight fight?”

The gypsy looked at Ian, scowled, and then turned back to Sam.

“I saw you coming over the moor with my dog,” he said, evenly.

“Who? Me?” Sam warbled with that soprano rising inflection which indicates the epitome of innocence outraged.

From that point on the argument went on according to exact schedule. Any Yorkshireman can tell you freehand just what words were said, who said them, and in what tones. For scores upon scores of years, though goodness knows why, malicious people have been accusing Yorkshiremen of finding dogs—especially dogs of likely-looking breeding. And, what hurts the county’s sensitive pride even more, these purveyors of a cruel canard even go to the depths of alleging that Yorkshiremen will find a dog before he’s *very* lost, as you might say.

Because of the frequency of these foul allegations, all Yorkshiremen have built up a standard defense. Nay, the defense by this time is almost born in them—elements of it mixed up in the genes and chromosomes or whatever it is. In fact, there is a record of a West Riding baby whose very first spoken words were, “It’s a bloody lie. I didn’t steal thy dog!” After that he learned how to say mama and dada.

So everyone knows how the stock argument about a lost dog goes, and where it goes to. The only trouble in this case was that Sam Small wasn’t the build to take it anywhere. So what was more natural than that Ian Cawper, in a peaceful, decent, and neighborly way, should pick up the thread.

“Now hop it afore Ah gie thee a smack in the bluggy lug,” Ian said, which was quite according to schedule.

This is generally the end of the defense plea. After that a man either fights or remembers important business elsewhere. But the gypsy lad seemed to be an unusual case. When he heard Ian, he merely half-smiled. His eyes narrowed to slits and he made a weird sort of gesture toward Sam’s house. Then he intoned, “*Mene, mene, tzigani om!*”

“Here, here,” blustered Sam. “What’s coming off? We’ll have no language like that round here!”

“Now,” said the gypsy, “you may have the dog for all the good she’ll do you.”

He began to laugh in a hollow sort of booming way. At that moment there was a low rumbling of thunder, and they got mixed up, so that you couldn’t tell which was laughter and which was muttering thunder. And away the gypsy went.

“By gum,” Sam said. “Must be a bit of a storm blowing over from Wuxley way.”

Then his mind came back to the gypsy.

“Thieving bluggy lot, them gypsies, Ian,” he said. “The varry idea,” he added, with a self-righteous tone. “Accusing me of pinching his tyke.”

Ian nodded. The two stood, watching the man until he was out of sight.

“The—the varry impertinence of him,” Sam breathed.

“Aye,” Ian said. “Well, Sam—let’s hev a look at it.”

“A pleasure, Ian. Come in.”

Sam led the way into the cottage and there, on the rug, was a sweet little collie bitch, tricolored, and about a year old.

“Ba gum,” breathed Ian. “Ah’m proud o’ thee, Sam. For she’s a right-looking pup. Where did tha find her?”

“Sit down, Ian, and Ah’ll tell thee. Well, Ah were just taking a bit of a stroll this afternoon—Ah don’t have much to do wi’ ma afternoons what wi’ Mully away, tha knows. Well, Ah’m happen a mile this side o’ Silverstone Pit, or maybe a three-quarter mile, but call it a mile anyhow. And Ah sees this pup here sort of going along in a trot.

“That very minute, Ah says to maself, ‘Ba gum, tha’s lost by t’look o’ things and if tha isn’t, tha will be soon wi’ no one to look out for thee!’

“Because there was nobody round, Ian—and if this gypsy lad were there he must ha’ been behind me—and Ah wouldn’t see him there, of course, for a chap hasn’t eyes i’ t’back of his head. So Ah gives a bit of a whistle to this tyke, soft, tha knows, and she comes trotting over. Ah warned her proper and honest. Ah said, clear as Ah could, ‘Tha’d better go home, lass.’

“But she stood there. Well, heaven knows Ah’d done ma best to send her away. So Ah said to her, ‘Well, if tha wean’t goa home, tha’s much too good a looking tyke to be round loose, and first thing tha knows somebody’ll be pinching thee. So Ah’d better slip this handkerchief round they neck to protect thee fro’ dirty thieves.’ ”

Ian nodded solemn approval.

“Aye, goodness knows Ah’d give her her chance, Ian,” Sam went on. “A chap can’t no more than ax a dog to go home, which Ah did. Well, that’s all, Ian. Except Ah wasn’t home five minutes when this gypsy-lad comes running up and accuses me o’ stealing his tyke.

“The very idea, Ian! Why, any chap who ever handled dogs could tell thee that no gypsy ever born knew how to breed as clean a looking pup as that. Huh! In all probability, Ian, the bugger has stole it fro’ somewhere. Aye, Ah know them’s harsh words, but Ah wouldn’t put it past them thieving gypsies to steal a man’s dog.

“So tha can see plainly, in a manner o’ speaking, we’re nobbut doing what is right, proper, and honest in seeing this here tyke gets back to a white man in a manner o’ speaking.

“Why, Ian, if we’d give this pup back to yon gypsy, Ah wouldn’t wonder we’d ha’ been compounding a felony or summat. Then we’d ha’ stood liable to be summonsed for being accessory after and before the fact—and tha wouldn’t like that, would tha, Ian?”

“By gum, no,” Ian stated, stoutly.

“Indeed,” Sam waxed, expansively, “it seems clear to me that we’ve nobbut done our duties as loyal Britons in thus upholding the law by keeping this dog here.”

Ian scratched his head, slowly.

“Well, Sam,” he said finally, “the way tha puts it, we’ve done nowt but what any honest, law-abiding chap would ha’ done. And it *will* be a bit o’ company for thee while thy missus is away. Tha can spend thy time training her. And finally—well, she is a bluggy nice-looking dog, isn’t she?”

“That she is,” Sam said, in a rosy humor now that he had established an air of virtue over the whole proceeding. “That she is.”

Sam Small had no warning of what was going to happen. The only unusual thing he saw about the dog was that she was about the brightest thing he’d ever handled. Of course, he had plenty of time to give to her training, and so he expected her to learn quickly.

He christened her Flurry and in practically no time she’d learned her name. Then he taught her the usual routine: to come and go, to stand, to sit, to lie down, to stay put on command.

She picked this up so quickly that Sam started her on high-school training. He scattered coins around the floor of the cottage and told her to bring them. Every time she brought one he rewarded her with a tiny piece of beef liver. She learned this so expertly that soon a coin would no sooner touch the floor than Flurry would dart over, pick it up, bring it to Sam, and await the pleasant reward.

This is a very neat trick, as any Yorkshireman knows. It is taught because, as any thrifty person will agree, one cannot forecast when a dog, running loose, might chance to come across a coin that some careless passerby has dropped in the gutter, and would pick it up and come running home with it. This point must be made clear. It is for this purpose that Yorkshire dogs are trained to retrieve coins—not, as some ignobly minded persons have hinted darkly, so that they will snatch up a dropped coin and race homeward with it before the loser has had time to bend down and pick it up.

But, quickly as she learned this, Sam had no foreboding that even more wonderful things were in store. Then it happened, on an evening exactly two weeks after the gypsy had gone muttering away into the thunderstorm.

Sam was just praising Flurry for picking up a threepenny bit. There he was, holding the collie’s muzzle in his cupped hand, looking into her eyes, talking aloud as a man will when alone with his dog.

“Ba gum,” he said, “if tha isn’t a smart un. Tha’s gate everything—confirmation, class, breeding Ah’ll warrant, and tha’s t’smartest pup Ah ever did see.”

The dog turned up her large brown eyes and gazed at him adoringly, and in a way that was pitifully eloquent.

Sam shook his head, sorrowfully.

“Tha knaws,” he said, “tha’s so perfect that sometimes Ah’m almost flaid for thee. Tha’s too good to be true, and Ah almost feel at times as if . . .”

He did not finish, for the dog suddenly drew away and began to circle the hearth-rug uneasily.

“Why, what’s up, lass?” he said.

The collie dropped her head and the whites of her eyes showed in a way that meant uneasy fear.

“Now, now,” Sam went on. “There’s nowt to be flaid on.”

He patted the dog to comfort her.

“Aye, tha’s that bonnie. So bonnie and neat and bright. Why, Ah’ll warrant we won’t have much trouble keeping thee here when Mully gets back, set as she is again’ me having a tyke round the house.”

Flurry walked away, dejectedly, and went to a corner of the room where she stood, half-trembling.

“Ba gum,” Sam thought. “It’s most as if she really understands what Ah say.”

A prickly sensation began to run up the back of his neck. There was a curious tangy smell in the air. And then Sam lifted his head and snapped his fingers. There was a rumble of thunder in the air.

“Ah,” he cried. “That maun be it. A little bit o’ thunder. That’s what’s making thee act so unusual. Aye, tha’s like all collies. Ah never did see one yet that wasn’t a baby about thunder. Coom here then, lass. Coom!”

The dog walked to him uneasily. She struggled briefly in Sam’s clutch as a nearer peal of thunder rumbled.

“Now, now,” Sam reproved. “It’s nowt just thunder, that’s all. It’s just rain coming, and it can’t hurt thee. Ah wouldn’t let it hurt thee.”

When he spoke these last words, the dog looked up at him so trustingly, with eyes so steady and eloquent, that Sam was touched again.

“Eigh, tha looks as if tha’d understood every blessed word,” he breathed. “Ba gum, Ah wish tha could talk.”

The dog went and curled up on the rug.

“Well, Ah can if tha wants me to,” she said.

“Of course tha can,” Sam said. “And tha . . .”

Then he jumped right up out of his chair.

“Well, Ah’ll be boogered!” he cried.

He looked around the room, and then he poked his fingers in his ears and shook his head. Finally he looked at the dog again.

“Am Ah going balmy, or did Ah hear someone—that is—well, someone say summat?”

“Of course tha did,” the dog said, calmly. “Tha said tha wished Ah could talk, and Ah said Ah could if tha wanted me to.”

Sam sat down as if he’d been shot.

“Aye,” he said, weakly. “That’s what Ah thought happened, but—er—Ah sort of wanted to check up on masen.”

He sat weakly a moment, still looking at the dog who lay nonchalantly on the rug.

“Well, Ah’ll be blowed,” he said, finally. “What on earth made thee do it?”

“What, talk? Ah’ve just told thee . . .”

“No, Ah mean, what on earth made thee keep it a secret so long? Why didn’t tha tell me afore tha could talk?”

“Well, tha never axed me,” Flurry said, politely.

“Eigh, if this isn’t a do,” Sam said. “Why, tha’s been pulling the wool over ma eyes proper and all, tha has. Here Ah’ve been sitting, barneying away at thee neight after neight, and tha’s been sitting there, never saying a word. What made thee do it?”

“Nay,” said Flurry. “Ah think it nobbut just coom over me, all of a sudden, as tha maught say. There were thee, saying tha wished Ah could talk, and then, like a flash, it coom over me that Ah could.”

“But,” said Sam, his native caution coming to the fore, “isn’t it a bit odd, in a manner of speaking, having a dog talk?”

“Ah couldn’t say about that,” the dog went on. “But tha must agree that it’ll be a change. It certainly were getting a bit monotonous, tha knaws—thee just jawing away at me hour after hour and me never saying a word back again.”

“Well, now tha mentions it, it does appear a bit lopsided,” Sam agreed. “Certainly it’ll be a bit more homelike i’ future, wi’ someone to talk to. But first of all, we’ve got to give this all a bit of a thinking over.”

Sam sat for five minutes, with his chin cupped in his hand. And he gave it a bit of a thinking over.

“Well, Ah’ve reached a conclusion,” he said.

“What is it?” Flurry asked.

“We’ve got to be careful,” Sam said.

“Careful? What about?”

“Well, that’s just it. Now Ah’ve had experience in such matters afore. And Ah’ve learned by this time that unless a chap is careful, he gets hissen into a varry pretty pickle indeed afore he’s through. So we’ve got to be careful.”

“But careful about what?”

“That,” said Sam, “is what Ah’ve got to give a bit o’ thinking to. When Ah’ve determined what we’ve got to be careful about—well, then—Ah’ll know what it is we’ve—er—got to be careful about. Understand?”

“It sounds very complicated to me,” the dog said.

“It is,” Sam agreed. “That’s why—well—why we’ve got to be er—sort of—er . . .”

“Careful?” the dog suggested.

“That’s it, exactly,” Sam cried. “Tha’s hit t’nail reight on t’yead! Ba gum, tha’s a smart dog. Now let’s settle down to some serious thinking.”

As the result of Sam’s thinking over a course of several days, he finally came to the conclusions as to what he was to be careful about. Boiled down, it went like this: he had to be careful that no one else found out his dog could talk.

The best way to achieve this, he decided, was to keep anyone else from getting near the dog. In addition he warned her gravely that she mustn't speak in front of anyone else—only when he was alone with her. She agreed to this, but to make doubly sure Sam determined that no one else should ever come near his tyke.

This meant, necessarily, that he had to stay home with her at all hours. But he didn't mind this, for now his home was changed. No longer was it empty and lonesome.

As for Flurry, there were so many things she wanted to know that she never got bored. She would chatter on, in her sweet girlish voice, asking brightly all sorts of questions in her Yorkshire accent. Of course, it was only natural that she'd speak with a Yorkshire accent, for it was the only kind of English she had ever heard.

And what pleasant evenings they had together in the once-lonesome cottage. Many a happy hour they whiled away together, as you can readily imagine, before the warm fire. Just see them: Sam in his easy chair, puffing his pipe, and reading aloud to Flurry who lay coiled at his feet on the rug. What a picture there is in that—gray-headed age expounding his life's wisdoms, and fresh young youth, bright and alert, asking incessant questions. For Flurry's curiosity seemed insatiable. She wanted to know about everything.

At first, for instance, she was highly curious about reading. She was almost suspicious about it, and thought Sam was kidding her.

"Tha says there's words theer?" she said, in a rising tone.

"Aye, that's what Ah'm reading," Sam said.

"Let me see it."

Sam held down the *Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury* he was reading. Flurry squinted at it, and sniffed it, and then cocked her ears forward at it.

"Ah don't hear nowt," she said, scornfully, after a pause.

"Nay, there's nowt to hear," Sam explained.

"But tha just said there was."

"Nay, Ah've explained afore. It's nobbut words when Ah say it. Look, Ah'll put it this way. When it's on the paper, it's writing. But when Ah say it out loud, then it's reading. Now dosta understand?"

"Ah do not," Flurry said. "First thing tha says it's one thing, and next minute tha says it's another. Ah think we'd better drop the whole subject."

"But Ah've just said . . ."

"Ah'd rather not hear no more about it," Flurry said. "Go on and read me something."

"How about cricket scores?"

"We had them last night."

"But these is different scores."

"No, we've been into all that before."

"Ah, then how about Parliament?"

"What's Parliament?"

Sam started out gladly, for if there ever was a chap glad to give his ideas on subjects of importance, it was Sam Small. He told how men went to London to represent the people.

“Why aren’t you there?” Flurry wanted to know.

“That’s what Ah often wonder. They could do worse.”

“Go on. Then what?”

“Well, there’s two parties—like the Ins and the Outs. The Ins—they’re the Guv’ment. They draw up laws.”

“What do the Outs do?”

“Well, they oppose ’em.”

“That sounds very silly to me.”

“Nay, ye’ve got to have that. That’s democracy.”

“Never mind pulling in other matters. What happens then? The Ins pass the laws. Is that all they do?”

“Nay, it isn’t quite as easy as that. Varry often the Ins are soa busy combating the Outs, and trying to oopset their plans for oopsetting *their* plans that—well—it occupies most o’ their time and they don’t get round to passing the laws.”

“What do they do that for?”

“That’s politics.”

“How silly. Let’s talk no more about it.”

“Nay, lass. The great institution o’ democratic guv’ment is . . .”

“Ah’d really rather not discuss it further,” Flurry said firmly. “It sounds very gormless to me.”

Sam scratched his head.

“Well, Ah suppose it is a bit silly if ye look at it that way,” Sam agreed. “Well, how about letters to the editor. Here’s a chap writes he’s heeard t’first white-billed hedge-golinkus three days ahead of any record of it ever being heeard afore. How about that?”

“Wait a moment. Let’s go back. What’s an editor?”

So off Sam went in another explanation.

Ah, what a picture was there. Night after night, it was the same—a fine sturdy Yorkshireman who had once been lonely, sitting by his hearthside, reading devotedly to his listening dog. What nobler scene could you wish?

It was Sam himself who broke the routine. As he said to himself, waste is a sin. And therefore it would be a pity to waste the wonderful opportunity presented by a dog that had the qualities Flurry had—and you must admit they were unusual qualities.

So what did he do but take Flurry down to The Spread Eagle, going in casual-like, greeting the chaps, and then sitting down with his pint before the fire with Flurry coiled at his feet. He knew someone would soon comment on the dog.

“Now Sam, lad,” said Gaffer Sitherthwick. “How’s tha been?”

“Now Gaffer,” returned Sam in greeting, “Well, and how’s tha been?”

“Well,” Gaffer said, and that exhausted that part of the conversation.

Gaffer took a sup from his mug, burped politely and gravely, and then turned his eyes down to Flurry. Sam pretended to be interested in a bit of an irritation on the side of his nose.

“Likely pup,” Gaffer said.

“Fair to middling,” Sam answered.

“Barring a bit short i’ t’skull, and a mite broad atween t’lugs, and a trifle gay on t’tail, and a midge low i’ t’saddle—and all in all a bit small-boned. But outside o’ that—not a bad pup.”

“Thankee, Gaffer,” Sam said. “To tell t’t truth, she is a bit this way and that, in a manner of speaking. But she’s a smart tyke.”

“Smart?”

“Aye, smart.”

“How smart?”

“Smart enow, Gaffer.”

By this time Rowlie Helliker and Ian Cawper and Capper Wambley and the rest were gathering around, sensing a bit of a do coming.

“T’smartest tyke Ah ivver seed,” the Gaffer said, casting his eye up at the ceiling, “were Black Tad, that their Lancashire sheep trial champion. Now theer’s a smart tyke.”

The men grunted general approval.

“Eigh, aye, that Black Tad’s smart,” Sam agreed, and took a long sup. He coughed. “But this pup’s smart too,” he added.

“How smart?”

“Smart as ony that comes, Gaffer, and Ah’ll lay money on that. Why, she can pick up pennies—aye, fardins and megs and threepenny bits.”

“Once,” said the Gaffer, cocking his eye at the ceiling again, “Ah seed a tyke in a pub near Huddersfield, that could really dew summat. Ony tyke can pick up coins; but this one would not only pick ’em up, but could bring ’em as named. To specify exact, if tha put down a florin, a bob, a tanner, a bit, a penny, and a meg, this here tyke would bring back ony in t’order named. Now could thy tyke dew that?”

Sam began to protest cunningly.

“Well, now,” he cried. “That’s summat varry special.”

“Nay, nay now, don’t weasel out,” the Gaffer cried, looking around for backing. For he was a sharp one on making a tricky shilling, and always kept his wits about him.

“Sam said his tyke was as smart as ony that cooms, didn’t he?”

“Aye,” they agreed.

“And he said he’d lay money on it.”

“Aye,” confirmed the chorus, dutifully.

Sam did some very clever acting. He squirmed and wriggled and wiped his forehead.

“Well, it were a manner o’ speaking,” he protested.

“Nay, tha said tha’d lay money on it,” the Gaffer insisted. “And soa Ah’ve gate ten bob that says thy tyke can’t equal i’ smartness this here dog Ah seed in this here pub once near Huddersfield.”

“A bet,” said Sam, taking out his money.

There was a hubbub in the pub, for the way Sam’s words closed like a trap on the offer announced to one and all that summat, as they would say, was up.

“Rowlie here’ll hold t’brass,” Sam said, handing out his ten shillings. The Gaffer, beginning to feel that he’d bitten on a bait, did the same. But he comforted himself with the knowledge that there never had been a dog in a pub near Huddersfield who’d done what he said—and if a dog had never done such a trick it didn’t seem probable that a dog would do it.

But Sam and the lads were clearing off a space on the great flags of The Spread Eagle floor, and putting the coins in a row. Sam made a great show of exactness, and the Gaffer weaseled as much as he could, mixing them up in size so that the biggest wouldn’t be next to the next-biggest.

“Now,” Sam announced. “Ah want first to announce t’trick to ma pup—for she’s nivver done this trick afore. But Ah’m full sure and confident she’ll make a goa of it if Ah explain. For it’s allowed to explain t’rules afore ony contest.”

“Nay, that’s not i’ t’bet,” the Gaffer weaseled.

“Nay, nay, Sam’s reight,” the mass verdict said. “Fair’s fair ivvery time.”

“Reight—and Ah thank all the fine good sports in this house who’ll see fair play done. Now,” Sam said importantly, turning to Flurry. “Here Ah’ve set down six coins. . . .”

Fully conscious of the situation and its possibilities for showmanship, Sam went on explaining which coin was which, and there sat Flurry, pretty as a bluebell in the woods, taking it all in. She stuck out her tongue and cocked her head on one side and showed by her eyes on Sam that she was all attention.

“Now,” said Sam. “Will ony sporting gentleman name t’first coin she maun bring?”

“Hold on,” cried the Gaffer. “Thee coom and stand here by me so tha’ll be behind her. No pointing out coins with thy feet.”

“Gladly,” said Sam. “Now what’s t’first coin?”

“T’florin,” cried Gaffer, cannily, knowing that this silver coin was very similar in size to the copper penny.

“Reight,” Sam announced with a flourish. “T’florin it is. Flurry, lass. Go pick up t’florin.”

And up got that bright little dog, and with a sense of showmanship that quite equaled Sam’s, she went over, dropped her nose right near the penny, and stood there as the audience held its breath. And then, with a lightning wheel, she turned to the florin, picked it up, and dropped it at Sam’s feet.

In that crowded pub there was an awed silence except for the tinkling of the silver coin that whirled, spun, and then came to rest on the stone flag. Then the house broke into a unanimous gasp of expelled breath.

After that, it was all over but the cheering. One by one, Flurry brought back the coins as requested. Sam collected his ten-shilling bet, and bought a pint all round for the chaps. They praised him and his dog, and tried to remember back to the last time in memory that ever anyone had managed to win a bet from the Gaffer.

As for the Gaffer, he accepted the pint that Sam stood all round, and then retired to the fireplace. There, darkly, he glowered and muttered to himself. He was a lonesome man.

But at last he jumped up with happiness in his face. He went to Sam at the bar and patted him on the back.

“Sam, lad,” he said. “Ah have it. Can thy tyke run sheep?”

“Ah doan’t know, Gaffer,” Sam said. “But she’d do owt Ah telled her.”

“Then that’s it, Sam. A week come Sunday there’s t’sheep trials by Wuxley. Lancashire Pettigill’ll be theer wi’ his Black Tad. Thee train this pup, and we’ll enter her. Her being an unknown and all that, Ah can risk a pound on her, and then not only get back ma lost ten bob, but Ah’ll be ten i’ profit.”

Sam shook his head and protested, but the men chorused encouragement and coaxed him and told him not to be a poor sport. Finally Sam gave in.

“Well, Flurry,” he said, when the die was at last cast, “what’s ta think about entering t’sheep trials?”

He spoke as a man does, to his favorite dog. But he quite forgot Flurry’s propensity for answering. But then he let a gasp of horror break from his lips; for plain as plain, Flurry said, “It’ll be champion!”

Sam’s brain whirled in overtime thinking. He glanced around, hoping that in the hubbub no one had noticed Flurry’s faux pas.

Then he heard a voice, “Did Ah hear a little lass speaking? They shouldn’t have no little lasses i’ t’pub. It’s again’ t’law.”

Sam turned, his brain still working sixty to the dozen. He saw the speaker was John Willie Braithwaite. He thought quickly. John Willie was a sort of amiable, half-witted lad who wandered about the village in a moony daze. He seemed to be the only one who had heard Flurry, and yet the others were turning their attention to the lad.

“Ah heeard a little lass’s voice,” John Willie droned on.

Sam grabbed up Flurry in his arms and made for the door. There he turned. “Ha-ha,” he cackled. “Fooled ye all. It were ventriloquism. Ah nivver told ye Ah learned ventriloquism when Ah were i’ t’States. But Ah did.”

Then he ducked through the door and hurried out into the night. Back in the bar the men stared after him.

“Well, what got into him?” Gollicker asked.

“Tha knows,” Rowlie confided, “sin’ his missus has been away, there’s moments when Sam acts like he’s got a tickling in his brain.”

“Is that so?” the men chorused.

“Ah heeard a little lass’s voice,” droned on John Willie.

“That’s reight, John Willie,” the men said, as they always did, in a soothing way to the oaf.

Rowlie cocked his head.

“Aye, if Sam goes on like that—well, him and yon John Willie—they’ll be two birds on one branch. Huh! Running out of here wi’out so much as good luck, farewell, or kiss the back of my hand—and yawpering summat about ventriloquism.”

But while they were discussing Sam’s sanity, Sam was home, lecturing Flurry.

“But Ah forgot,” she cried, over and over. “I forgot.”

“Tha promised me faithful nivver to speak afore other people,” Sam raged.

“But Ah forgot. Ah forgot.”

Sam lectured on and on, and swore he’d now have to cancel the sheep trial outing. Flurry begged and implored him to let her go. She swore she’d never forget again, and in the end, Sam gave in. He forgave her and she, for her part, promised faithfully that she’d always remember from that time on never to open her mouth in public.

At last the great day came. For ten days Sam and Flurry worked in practice with Farmer Cressley’s flock. She learned with miraculous ease to handle sheep—the shepherds swore they’d never seen her like. So, on the great day, all Polkingthorpe Brig and the country around flocked over the moor with their loose money in their pockets to wager on Flurry.

At last they were at the place.

The wind came clear over the great flat part of the moor near Soderby. The gusts eddied, tearing away wisps of smell—the smell of men packed in knots, of sheep, of trampled heath grass. The size of the flatland made the noises small—the sharp barks of dogs, the voices of men speaking in deep dialect.

The men of the different sections stood in separate knots. Those from Polkingthorpe were ranged about Sam, their eyes on him trustingly, half-fearfully, as if they were a little awed by what they had done, and the size of the bets they had made from village loyalty.

“Now Sam,” Gaffer Sitherthwick mumbled slowly, “tha’s sure she can do it? For Ah’ve put up one pound again’ two pound ten that she’s the winner.”

“Now hold up, Gaffer,” Capper Wambley wavered. “Tha must remember she’s never been really trained as a shepherd; but what Ah say is, the way Sam’s trained her this past week she’ll do owt he tells her best she can. And best ye can do is best, as any man’ll agree.”

“Thankee, Capper,” Sam acknowledged. “Now lads, if ye don’t mind, Ah’d like to give her sort of secret instructions—and calm her down.”

Sam led Flurry away from the knot of men, though she looked as though she needed no calming down. She was sedate and confident in her gait. At a distance, Sam knelt beside her and pretended to be brushing her coat.

“Now tha sees how it is, Flurry,” he said. “There’s t’four pens at each corner. In each is a sheep. Tha has to go to each one, take t’sheep out, and then put all four into t’middle pen. . . .”

“I know—I know,” Flurry said, impatiently. “You’ve explained it all before, so many times.”

“Well don’t be such a smartie,” Sam told her. “Tha’s getting pretty uppity. Now thee watch this one—this is t’Lancashire entry, and she was champion last year. And she’s no slouch.”

They watched the black sheep dog from Lancashire, sailing across the field at a gallop, neatly collecting the sheep.

“See how t’shepherd holds his crook like to make a door for t’middle pen, Flurry? Now that’s all Ah can do to help. Ah can point or signal, but Ah can nobbut make a sort of angle to help wi’ t’sheep at t’middle pen.”

There was a burst of applause, which meant that the Lancashire dog had set the record time for the trial.

“Come on, then, Miss Smartie,” Sam said. “It’ll be us.”

Sam heard his name being announced. He walked with Flurry to the ring. He knelt beside her.

“Now remember—no biting sheep or tha’ll lose points.”

Flurry gave him a look that should have withered Sam.

“Go,” said the judge.

Away Flurry sailed, her belly almost flat to the ground. She went from pen to pen, chivvying the sheep into a compact knot. She brought them to the center pen, driving at them adeptly so that before they could stand, sheep-wise and stubborn, and wonder where they were going, they were safe in the center pen. Then she sat at the gate, her tongue lolling out, and a burst of applause said she had made good time.

Sam hurried over to his mates. He rushed to Capper Wambley, who owned, without doubt, the finest watch in the village.

“How about it, Capper?”

The old man cleared his throat importantly and stared at his watch.

“Well. T’road Ah make it—wi’ vary exact computations—is that there ain’t a split-second difference between thee and Lancashire. But mind ye—that’s unofficial, o’ course.”

So the chums rocked in impatience as the last tests were run off, and then they stood in the common hush as the judge took off his hat and advanced.

“First place,” he announced, “is a tie between Joe Pettigill’s Black Tad and Sam Small’s Flurry, as far as time is concerned. But the judges unanimously award first place, on the basis o’ calmer conduct in haddling t’sheep, to Pettigill’s Black Tad fro’ Lancashire.”

Of course, Sam and his friends were quite put out about it, and Gaffer Sitherthwick almost had apoplexy as he thought of his lost pound. Now he was thirty shillings out in all. Thus it might have been a black day in the history of Polkingthorpe Brig had not Pettigill decided to gloat a bit. He walked over past the chums and said, triumphantly, “Why don’t ye all coom over to Lancashire and learn reight how to haddle a tyke?”

This was, of course, too, too much for any Yorkshireman to bear. So Sam came right back at him. “Oh, aye?” he said.

It wasn't a very good answer, but it was all he could think of at the moment.

"Oh, aye," echoed Pettigill.

It was just beginning to seep down into Ian Cawper's mind to ask something about settling it all by wrestling, when Sam piped up quickly.

"Ah admit tha's got a fine bitch there, Pettigill, but ma tyke ain't used to sheep. But if it came, now, to a test o' real intelligence—well, here's five pounds even fro' me and ma mates says we'll win at any contest tha says."

"Then thy good money goes after thy bad," the Lancashire lad said.

So it was arranged that an extra test would be held, with each man picking his own test to show the intelligence of his dog. Mr. Watcliffe, a well-to-do sheep dealer, who was one of the judges, agreed to make the decision as to which dog was best.

The moor rang with excited chatter as the news spread, and everyone scurried around to lay bets. The Polkingthorpe men all got side-bets down—except the Gaffer. He declined, morosely, to bet any more. So the contest got under way. Pettigill and Sam drew straws to see which dog should show off first.

Pettigill got the short straw and had to start. "Now, lass," he said to his dog, "over there Ah've put a stick, a stone, ma cap, and a handkerchief. Will some sporting gentleman call out which one Ah should bid her bring first?"

"T'stick!" a voice called.

"Tad. Fotch me yon stick," Pettigill ordered.

Away raced the dog and brought it. One by one, as requested, the champion brought back the correct articles, dropping them at its owner's feet. The men burst into applause as it ended. Then up stepped Sam. He knelt beside Flurry and spoke so all could hear.

"Lying i' front o' Joe Pettigill," he announced, "is four articles. When Ah say 'Go!' ma tyke'll first take t'cap, go to the far sheep pen, and drop it inside there. Next she'll take t'stick, and drop it at the feet o' t'biggest lad on this moor. Third she'll take t'stone and drop it at t'feet o' t'second-best dog trainer on this moor. Finally, she'll take t'handkerchief . . ." And here Sam beamed floridly. ". . . And drop it afore t'handsomest and knowingest man around these parts. Now ista ready?"

Sam looked at Flurry, who jumped to her feet, and leaned forward as if held by an invisible leash. The crowd almost moaned in a sort of excitement, for they had never heard of a dog that could understand such a complicated set of commands.

"Go!" said Sam.

Away sailed Flurry, veering past Joe Pettigill's feet and snatching up the cap on the dead gallop without stopping. Going in the water-smooth racing stride of a collie, she went out to the far pen, dropped the cap, and streaked back. She snatched the stick and loped toward the crowd. The men parted to let her through. She quested about until she saw Ian Cawper. She dropped it at his feet and the men moaned astonishment.

Back she went for the stone. She picked it up, and then stood, as if at a loss. The men drew in their breath.

But Flurry merely looked up at Joe Pettigill, walked forward one step, and dropped the stone again.

The men roared in approval.

“That means Pettigill’s second-best dog trainer,” they said. “But now for Sam!”

Flurry now had the handkerchief. She was walking to Sam, who stood, waiting triumphantly. Flurry came nearer to his feet, and then began to circle round him.

“She’s forgot,” the men breathed. “She don’t know what to do wi’ it.”

Sam looked down, with a sort of agony in his eyes, for Flurry was trotting away from him—going away with the handkerchief in a hesitating sort of way. She was looking about her. She was walking to the center.

And then everyone saw what it was.

Flurry was going up to Mr. Watcliffe, the judge. She dropped the handkerchief at his feet, walked back to Sam, and sat properly at heel.

This time there was no cheering, for in that entire crowd it seemed as if a ghost had passed and lightly touched the back of every man’s head, touching low down toward the neck where the short hairs grow, a touch that left a tingling sensation.

All one could hear was the voice of Mr. Watcliffe. “Why bless ma soul,” he was saying. “Bless my very body and soul. She’s almost human. Bless my soul.”

Then he seemed to waken to his responsibility.

“Ah judge that the test has been won by Sam Small’s tyke. If he will step forward, Ah’ll give him the wager money.”

This broke the spell. Sam went forward to collect, and the Polkingthorpe men went round with a roar to garner in the side-bets they had made in the crowd. Everyone was in pocket except Gaffer Sitherthwick, which was also something to make that day a memorable one in Polkingthorpe’s history. Seldom, if ever, did the Gaffer come out on the wrong side of money matters.

Together the chums all started home. Joe Pettigill stopped them and spoke like a true sport.

“That’s a champion tyke tha has there, lad,” he said.

“Thankee,” said Sam, with the customary modesty. “We nobbut won by luck.”

“But how about ma cap up there?” the Lancashireman asked.

“Nay, Ah nobbut said she’d tak’ it,” Sam pointed out. “It’ll cost thee another five pound to have her bring it back.”

Pettigill frowned, then grinned in appreciation.

“Here, Tad,” he said. “Go up and get ma cap.” And away sailed his own fine dog.

Away, too, went Sam, with all the men slapping him on the back, applauding his wit, skill, acumen, and perspicacity. They streamed over the moor toward Polkingthorpe Brig to tell the story of their mighty triumph.

Although Sam had triumphed for the moment, it was this sheep trial that led to the beginning of trouble.

For the night after the contest, as Sam was reading his evening paper to Flurry, there came a knock on the door, and when Sam bade entrance, in walked Mr. Watcliffe. The venerable sheep dealer gazed about the cottage, suspiciously.

“Didn’t Ah hear thee talking to someone, Sam?” he asked.

“Nay, Ah were just reading,” Sam said, indicating the book. “Tha knows how it is—when a chap’s lonesome like Ah am wi’ ma missus in America, he gets in t’habit of speaking aloud and reading aloud to hisself.”

Mr. Watcliffé looked toward the ceiling and listened, but then, as if satisfied, got down to business in a blunt Yorkshire way.

“Look, Sam Small. Ah’ve decided to buy that dog o’ thine. Now Ah’ve made up ma mind, and Ah won’t take no for an answer. So name thy price and let’s get business done, for Ah’ve never seen a sweeter, brighter tyke in all ma life.”

Sam looked at Flurry, who was staring intently at him. He knew that under no circumstances would he sell her. But Sam Small was Sam Small—he couldn’t help showing off.

“Ten thousand pounds,” he said.

Now Sam knew this was a price no man would pay for a dog. He knew Mr. Watcliffé knew it, too. But he didn’t know that Flurry had no idea of the relative magnitude of sums of money. All she heard was Sam’s offer to sell her. And in that moment her heart leaped. In wild despair she jumped up and ran for the steps. Mr. Watcliffé stared at the dashing animal, and Sam began to fear that the game would soon be up.

“Come back here, Flurry,” Sam shouted. He went to the foot of the stairs. “Come on down here, it’s all right.”

“Ah won’t,” called Flurry in despair. “Ah won’t let thee sell me.”

Mr. Watcliffé stood as if poleaxed. Then he swallowed three times, quickly.

“Did Ah hear summat?” he asked.

“Summat?” stalled Sam, thinking fast. “Oh, that. It were just t’wind in t’chimbley. Sometimes tha’d swear it sounded like a human voice.”

“Wind ma eye and Betty Martin,” said Mr. Watcliffé. “Ah heard a woman’s voice upstairs.”

“Nay, there’s no lass i’ ma house,” Sam protested.

Mr. Watcliffé looked at Sam, and shook his head, sadly.

“Sam Small,” he said, “Ah’m waiting for thy explanation.”

And there was Sam on the horns of a dilemma, which is a very sharp-horned animal. He couldn’t come right out and tell Mr. Watcliffé that he had a dog that could talk, or the man would begin to suspect Sam’s sanity. Yet, if he said there was a female upstairs—well, that would lead to trouble. There stood poor Sam trying to decide whether he wanted to be thought insane or immoral. But as he pondered, Mr. Watcliffé decided.

“Sam Small,” he said, sadly. “And at thy time o’ life, too! And me a pillar o’ t’church! Ah’m sadly ashamed for thee.”

“Why, what’s wrong?” blustered Sam.

“Now don’t make it worse by adding lies to it, Sam Small. And to think that there’s thy fond, loving wife i’ America, braving the unknown hardships of a wild and foreign land all alone, and here tha spends thy time wasting thy substance wi’ riotous living—carrying on behind her back wi’ lasses and all.

“Now Ah understand why tha axed such a ridiculous sum for thy tyke, just to get rid o’ me in a hurry. Shame on thee, Sam Small. Ah leave thy house, and Ah feel it is ma bounden duty to warn all decent folk about here not to associate wi’ thee any more.”

And out went Mr. Watcliffe, leaving Sam to picture what would happen when the story spread, and what would happen when Mully got home, as most inevitably she would.

At the prospect, he got fair blazing, so up he went to the bedroom to have it out with Flurry.

“Now, ma lass,” he started. “Tha sees the mess tha’s got me into.”

Flurry lifted her sad, eloquent eyes, in which one would have sworn there were tears.

“But tha were off to sell me, Sam,” she cried. “Tha were off to sell me. Please don’t sell me.”

Sam tried to explain to her how ten thousand pounds was just the same as saying he wouldn’t sell her for love nor money, but Flurry wouldn’t be contented.

“Well, tha’s upset t’applecart for fair now,” Sam cried, in exasperation. “For when Mully gets home, she’ll hear all kind of wild tales, and she’ll make ma life miserable.”

“Then sell *her*,” Flurry said, sullenly.

“Don’t be silly. Ye can’t sell humans. That’s—that’s slavery. It’s again’ the law.”

“But it ain’t again’ the law to sell me?”

“Ah’ve told and told thee, Ah don’t want to sell thee.”

“But tha could if tha wanted!”

“Aye, but Ah’ve said Ah won’t. Now isn’t ma word good enough?” Sam talked for an hour, trying to quiet the dog. But despite all his explanations, Flurry refused to be comforted. Weary at last, Sam undressed and got into bed. Even then there was no peace, for he woke up many times to hear a sound like that of a little girl crying.

“Now, Flurry, lass,” he protested. “Do let’s get to sleep.”

“If Ah were human tha couldn’t sell me,” Flurry sobbed.

“Eigh, now don’t thee start that again,” Sam moaned. “For that matter, Ah wish tha were human, too, and then all this trouble would be settled.”

And after that Sam dozed off to sleep, waking only fitfully to hear thunder pealing far away as a storm moved across the wild country to the mountains of the West.

“Well,” said Sam Small the next morning. “If it ain’t one thing, it’s another!”

He scratched his tousled pate in astonishment. And a man less used than Sam Small to surprises would have done more than that. For there, on the foot of Sam Small’s bed, was curled up a girl thirteen or fourteen years of age.

“Here, here, now what’s all this?” Sam managed to say.

The little girl woke up and rubbed her eyes luxuriously.

“Oh, good morning, Sam,” she said.

Sam gave a jump, for the voice was that of Flurry.

“Oh, ma gum,” said Sam, seeing through it all with his usual celerity. “So tha’s turned into a little lass now, eh?”

“That’s right,” said Flurry, proudly. “So *now* tha won’t be able to sell me.”

“Aye, but . . .”

“Oh, Sam,” pleaded Flurry, “don’t be angry at me. Tha said tha wished Ah were human. Don’t ye see, it solves everything for us? Look, Ah’ve got fingers! They’re so wonderful, are fingers. Now Ah’ll be able to strike matches and make fires, and cook for thee and sew thy buttons on. Look!”

And in exhilaration the little girl jumped up and began to run about the room, picking up things proudly with her hands to show how deft she was. She was delighted with the powers of her hands.

“Come on, Sam,” she said, tugging his nightgown. “Let me get breakfast for thee.”

“Hold on,” Sam countered. “That’d be a bit too much.”

“What, me getting breakfast?”

“Nay, it ain’t that. Ah mean, well, tha isn’t decent.”

“Decent?”

“Aye—er—no clothes on.”

“But I never wore clothes. Ah’m just as decent as when Ah was a dog, aren’t Ah? Ah was decent then.”

“Aye.”

“Then Ah’m decent now.”

“Nay, lass. Tha sees, if tha turns human, it gets complicated, and tha can’t go running round showing all tha’s got. Tha wants to be real human, doesn’ta?”

“Oh, Ah do that.”

“Well, then. Now let’s see. Oh! Ah have it.”

Sam stuck his gray old thatch into a closet and began digging in an old trunk. Soon he emerged with a pair of drawers and a shimmy and a frock.

“These belonged to our Vinnie when she were a little lass, and happen they’ll fit thee.”

They didn’t fit at all, for they were much too small. Moreover the girl had no idea of how to get them on; but Sam’s mind soon carried him back through the years to when his own daughter was a child and he had so often helped her dress. His stubby fingers managed to make most of the buttons meet the proper buttonholes, and at last it was done.

“Well, now it ain’t perfect by a long shot,” he said, “but it gives the general idea, as we might say.”

So off they went downstairs. Flurry ran ahead, dancing and chattering as she helped prepare breakfast. They sat down together and ate. Afterward she began carrying the dishes to the sink.

“I want to wash them,” she cried. “I’ve seen you do it so often.”

She held up a slim, white hand and broke into a sort of silent dance.

“Beautiful!” she cried. “Aren’t fingers wonderful!”

She washed the dishes, continually stopping to regard her hands and cry, “Beautiful! Wonderful, beautiful fingers!”

Sam, studying his own gnarled hand, began to nod.

“Ah never thought on it,” he said, “but if ye come right down to it, Ah’ll warrant they are a handy sort of thing to have.”

He watched her standing on tiptoe, putting the dishes on the shelves. Her bare feet were fresh and flexible. Sam’s mind sank down into itself. Finally he roused himself and lit his pipe.

“Come here, my lass,” he said.

She came to him.

“Sit down,” he ordered.

She sank, cross-legged, on the hearth-rug, and looked up at Sam trustingly. Sam, studying her, thought he had never seen a bonnier child in all his life. Her hair was long and silky, a light gold-tan color. Her eyes were a deep liquid brown, and her skin was white as a collie’s ruff.

The sight of a pretty child, so full of a bright happiness, and with a sort of complete fullness of calm, cheerful spirit, did strange things to Sam. There was a clutch at the lonesomeness in his heart, and suddenly he felt old and worthless and petty.

He hid his face in his hands.

“Eigh, what Ah’ve done now!” he moaned. “What Ah’ve done now.”

“Nay, Sam,” the childish voice said. “It’s me that’s done it. Don’t blame thyself. Ah turned myself into a human, because I thought it would solve everything. Tha mustn’t worry over it. If tha does, well, Ah’ll change back to a dog again.”

“Nay, that’s it,” Sam said. “Ah can’t have that. Tha sees, Ah’ve got a lot of it figured out. It’s easy to understand why tha’s a lass o’ thirteen or so. Collies ordinarily nobbut live to ten years or so. And a collie just over a year old is much about the same age as a lass of twelve or thirteen. But that brings up summat else.

“Tha sees, if tha turns to being a collie again, tha’s got nobbut nine more year to live at best. While if tha stays human, tha’s got more nor fifty year ahead o’ thee. So Ah can’t ax thee to change back—it’d be like a sort o’ murder in a way, wouldn’t it?”

“Ah’ll do anything tha wishes, Sam—as long as tha doesn’t sell me. Oh, first time Ah saw thee on t’ moor, tha were so handsome, Sam, wi’ thy nice white hair, and tha spoke so gentle to me. And that gypsy were so cruel. . . .”

The child shuddered, and Sam patted her.

“Now, now. It’s all right, lass. It’s when Mully comes back—there’s t’ trouble. But till then, we’re all safe. Of course, if other folk drop in the cottage here—well, tha could change back for a few minutes. Tha says tha can change back?”

“Of course.”

So they discussed plans, and it was all laid out neatly and properly. Flurry could be a collie when they went out walking, or if anyone called. For the rest of the time, she could be human.

“Now that’s decided, first thing we must do is get thee some reight-sized clothes,” Sam said. “So Ah’ll get ma greatcoat, and thee change to a collie.”

And in five minutes, off they went across the moor toward Wuxley, and never a man on earth would have dared to say that there was the slightest thing unusual about the stumpy little Yorkshireman with the fine little collie at his heels who went so amiably along the path.

“Aye, and Ah think we’ll take yon frock there,” said Sam. For he saw Flurry nosing it as an indication of her choice—as she had done with all the other articles Sam had bought.

Miss Yeoby, the younger of the two Miss Yeobys who ran the linen-drapery, or perhaps it would be better to say the one who wasn’t the older Miss Yeoby, sniffed as she took it down and placed it on the pile.

“And anything more, Mr. Small?” she said, in her acid voice.

“That’ll be all. Lap ’em up, lass,” Sam said, taking out his purse.

Miss Yeoby wrapped up the large bundle slowly. She seemed quite loath to get finished. At last she could contain herself no longer.

“And who, if Ah may be so bold as to ax, Mr. Small, are these things for?”

Sam, as usual, was right back with an answer.

“For a member o’ ma fambley,” he said.

“Your fambley, Mr. Small?”

“Aye,” said Sam, embroidering on his theme. “It’s—it’s ma granddaughter. Tha’s heard that our Vinnie is off to . . .”

“But these are very big clothes, Mr. Small.”

“So they are, now tha mentions it, Miss Yeoby. So they are. But that brings up a point.”

“What point, Mr. Small?”

“Well, Ah’ll tell thee, Miss Yeoby. Tha sees that ma Vinnie’s living i’ Calyifornia over i’ Yankeeland.”

“That we know.”

“Ah’ll warrant ye do. But what few people here know, Miss Yeoby, is that there’s a climate there, a very wonderful climate. And it makes things grow fast.

“Why, bairns grow faster i’ Calyifornia than in any other part o’ t’world, as does everything else. That’s why I get these clothes big—because over there in that climate they grow up to be thirteen years old or so in a couple o’ years, as tha might say.”

“It doesn’t seem possible, Mr. Small.”

“Not possible? Why, Miss Yeoby, the climate there’s so amazing, that many children is ten years old when they’re born—and Ah wouldn’t be surprised if our Vinnie’s baby didn’t beat that by a full year or two.”

“Eigh, Mr. Small! Ah’m fair capped,” Miss Yeoby breathed.

And she was indeed.

Sam swung out of the place with Flurry at his heels—and it almost seemed as if she had a mischievous grin on her face.

“All t’same,” Sam said as they crossed the moor, “they’ll start no end o’ gossip, and we’ve got to be careful.”

It was all very well for Sam to admonish himself about carefulness, but it was inevitable that there should be some slips.

There was the evening Ian Cawper came walking into the cottage in his bluff way. True to her promise, Flurry changed herself back to a collie quick as a flash, but that only made matters worse. For what Ian Cawper saw was Sam Small’s fine little collie, sitting on the hearth-rug, dressed up in little girl’s clothes. For of course the clothes couldn’t disappear.

Ian Cawper scratched his head, gurgled twice, and then backed away.

“Er—it’s just a notion-like o’ mine, Ian,” Sam explained.

But Ian backed out without a word, forgetting to tell Sam that the men at The Spread Eagle were wondering why he didn’t come round with his collie in the evenings any more.

Truth to tell, Sam didn’t want a little girl hanging round in a pub—for Flurry was a little girl even when she was a collie, and he couldn’t get the two separated in his mind. And then there was so much for her to learn in the evenings. He tried his best to give her in one gulp, as best he could, her missing years of schooling in arithmetic, writing, reading, geography, and history.

Then, of course, Miss Yeoby did talk. And in addition, old Mrs. Wambley, who had a faculty for overhearing conversations in houses (which came from the habit of always finding that her shoelace needed tying whenever she was directly outside the shutters of a neighbor’s window) reported that she had heard Sam in long conversations—and that the answering voice was feminine.

Truly the village was aware that there was something going on at Sam Small’s. And the village wanted to know what it was. Nor was Sam ignorant of this, for in a tiny village one is able to read almost psychically the turns of public feeling.

“What Ah’d better do,” he said to Flurry, “is drop in alone at the pub o’ evenings for a little while. That’ll upset their suspicions.”

“Can’t Ah go, too, Sam?”

“No. Tha’ll stay home like a good lass should. A lass thy age should be i’ bed by eight every night. Now Ah’ll go alone.”

And then Mully came home suddenly. Sam hadn’t been expecting it. In fact, he had been on his way down to get a drink.

The gas lamps round the Green were glowing brightly as he plodded down toward The Spread Eagle. He was congratulating himself that since he had started dropping in at the pub again of evenings all suspicion had been allayed. Therefore he was looking for no surprises. Certainly he wasn’t looking for the surprise he got beside the Green that night.

For there, coming toward him under the next light, was a round, familiar figure with gaily nodding bonnet.

It was Mully!

Sam bounded toward her, opening wide his arms.

“Mully! Why didn’t tha tell me tha were coming!”

Then he got his next surprise. For Mully put up her hand in a motion that told him to stop.

“Tha’s a snake in the bush, Sam Small,” she began. “Don’t come near me.”

“What have Ah done?” Sam fenced.

“Huh,” snorted Mully. “If Ah told thee, tha’d nobbut deny it.”

Having thus disarmed Sam of all defense, she sailed in to the attack.

“The minute ma back’s turned! And at thy age, Sam Small! Carrying on wi’ Jezebels. . . .”

“Why, Ah swear Ah’ve done nowt wrong, Mully. Ah’ve only . . .”

“There! Tha sees! Didn’t Ah say tha’d deny it!”

And as if that had proven everything, she thrust her suitcase into Sam’s hand.

“Ah’ve lugged this maself all t’road fro’ Wuxley. . . .”

“If tha’d warned me tha wouldn’t have had to.”

“Aye—warned thee. Well, Ah didn’t, and Ah’m off to see for maself.”

Sam stood stock-still. Through his mind raced pictures of what Mully would find. He jumped before her.

“Now Mully—please. Let me go home first—gi’ me ten minutes. Ah’ll explain everything when tha’s not excited. . . .”

“Ha! So tha admits thy guilt,” Mully cried, brandishing her umbrella. “Out o’ ma way unless tha means to sink to lower depths, Sam Small, and use force on me!”

When a woman speaks like that to her husband he knows he is in a battle where he is ambushed, enfiladed, and decimated before he starts. All men know that, but they go wearily into the fray in the hope that they might win for just once.

So did Sam expostulate as he followed Mully, trying to get her to listen to reason. But she sailed on ahead with determination. The heavy suitcase cut down Sam’s speed. It kept bumping his legs, until in utter desperation he thumped it to the ground and sat on it.

“Go then! Go!” he shouted. “If tha won’t listen to a word o’ honest reason. But don’t blame me afterwards.”

Soon he was alone in the dark. He became aware that it was sultry and that a thunderstorm was sweeping in. He became aware, too, that he had left Flurry to face a bad situation all unaided. Up he got and off he went home with the bumping suitcase.

When he got there, he found a much changed Mully. No longer defiant, she was sitting in her rocking chair with her bonnet nodding damply, and crying, “Oh, Sam. Sam! And Ah didn’t really believe it were true.”

“There, there, Mully lass,” Sam soothed, patting her. “Now let’s get this straight. What didn’t tha believe were true?”

Still weeping, Mully passed over a letter bearing a Polkingthorpe postmark, addressed to Mully in America. Opening it Sam read, “Mrs. Millicent Small: If you want to find out what scandalous goings-on there are at your house, come right home. Take this warning from—

—A Friend.”

“Fine bloody friend,” Sam snorted.

But Mully was too overcome to rage at Sam any more. She just sobbed.

“And here Ah were saying inside masen that it weren’t true,” she moaned, “and then Ah come home and find it is after all. Ah come in and light t’lamp . . .”

“Did’ta see her? Where is she?” Sam interrupted.

Mully only sobbed the louder.

“There, tha admits it. Ah knew it were true when Ah saw yon!”

She pointed to a feminine tam-o-shanter and light topcoat hung behind the door, and then at a pair of indubitably feminine stockings hanging to dry over the oven door.

“What *did* tha do wi’ her?” Sam raged, at the top of his voice.

Mully raised herself back to the battle.

“Do wi’ her? Ah did what any decent woman would do. Ah heard her upstairs, and Ah grabbed t’besom broom and started up after her. And Ah’d ha’ given her cumuppance and what for if she hadn’t got away. She maun ha’ jumped out o’ t’open bedroom window and got down t’shed roof. Or Ah’d ha’ shown you both what Ah’d do wi’ her.”

And off she went into a fit of sobbing again.

Sam looked at her, and stretched the shirt collar about his neck. Then he went and lifted Mully’s face and spoke sternly.

“Millicent Small,” he said. “Am Ah t’measter i’ this house?”

“Ah don’t know,” sobbed Mully. “That’s for t’divorce courts to say.”

“Divorce courts be bugged,” Sam said. “Now Ah say Ah’m t’measter here till such times as t’law says Ah’m not. And Ah say Ah’m off to tell thee summat and for five minutes tha’s not off to interrupt. Now tha’s still ma wedded wife—and allus will be, Ah hope—so tha’ll hear me when Ah speak.”

Then, rapidly and concisely, Sam told her the whole story about Flurry, how he found her, how she had started to talk, how she had found the further gift of metamorphosis.

“And that,” he concluded vehemently, “is the truth, the honest truth, and nowt but the truth, s’welp me bob!”

Mully stared at him.

“Sam Small,” she said. “Tha’s done some varry extraordinary things i’ thy life. And Ah’m not one to say that wonderful things can’t happen to simple folk like us. But this is—well—tha must admit it does seem a trifle peculiar.”

“Here,” said Sam, picking up the lamp. “Come up here.”

He led the way into what had once been Lavinia's bedroom. There on the floor, scattered untidily, were articles of clothing.

"Them's a little lass's, ain't they?" Sam asked.

"That is true, Sam!"

"Well, then!"

Mully stared at them.

"Well, come on, Sam," she said hurriedly.

"Where?"

"Where?" she echoed. "Listen!"

As they stood in the tiny room, with its arabesques of shadows from the lamp, they heard a muttering peal of thunder.

"We're off to have a storm," Mully said. "And here we've drove this tiny, helpless little bairn out into t'neight wi' God knows how little clothes on. Sam Small, how couldta!"

"How could *Ah?* Me?" Sam raged. "Well here it were thee that cuts up and now it's *me* that . . ."

"Eigh, don't argue at a time like this," Mully said. "Tha's mixed things up so tha's forced a helpless bairn out i' teeming rain to dee o' pneumonia and . . ."

As she spoke she was going with all the speed her plump body could accomplish down the stairs. She grabbed a shawl from behind the door and wrapped it round her head. The first slash of the Yorkshire rain drove in as she unlatched the door and it swung in toward her from the force of the wind.

Sam had a flash of momentary wisdom.

"Forgie me, Mully," he said.

She smiled at him.

"My gum," she said, "if there should ever come a day when Ah didn't have to—well, Ah wouldn't know how to live. Off we go—thee work down toward t'cut. . . . Ah work over toward t'moor."

Off they both went into the night. Sam went through the blackness down toward the canal, finding his way through the sticky mush of the towpath. He called and called into the night, calling for Flurry.

But the gale tore at his cries and made them tiny. Still he went on, hour after hour, and only toward dawn did his hope grow fainter.

He did not know then that Mully had found her. Mully, going with the wind whipping at her sodden shawl, had worked up into the tumbled rocks that lay in a peculiar outcropping on the moor at a terrible place called Wada's Keep. She was afraid, but she went on.

Sam did not know until he came home, weary and hopeless in the near-dawn, his stubby legs almost giving way through exhaustion.

Then his heart was glad, for as he came in he saw Mully before the glowing hearth, and she turned and put her fingers to her lips.

Sam tiptoed over and looked at the form before the fire, covered with a warm blanket. The head just showed. It was the head of a delicate, pretty little collie.

“Why, she must ha’ changed back to a dog,” he said.

Mully nodded.

“Ah’ll care for her,” she said.

Then her eye caught Sam’s drooping shoulders.

“Here—off tha goes upstairs this minute, and get them wet things off. Lord knows a sick dog’s bad enow wi’out having a sick human on ma hands.”

“But—happen she’ll be human i’ t’ morning, too.”

“Aye,” Mully agreed. “But she’s a tyke now. And that’s good enow for me.”

And a tyke she was—and a tyke she was too in the morning. And a dog she remained from that time on. Ever after that she remained a dog.

Sometimes, when Sam was alone with her, he’d talk to her and she’d turn up her eyes in a puzzled, questioning sort of way as intelligent dogs will. But she never again turned back into a girl, and never again did she speak a word.

Sam would scratch his head and try to puzzle it all out, but, as he would say to himself, “Happen it’s best to let well alone.”

That’s all there is to this story. Even Sam himself wonders sometimes if it can be true. Mully—well she never says a word one way or the other to Sam about it. Happen it is best to let well alone.

ADVENTURE VI

NEVER COME MONDAY

*Oh it's very, very nice,
Yes it's very, verrrry nice,
To get yer breakfast in yer bed
On Sunday mo-o-o-orning.*

THE first one to notice it was old Capper Wambley. And Capper was a very important man. He was the knocker-up in the village of Polkingthorpe Brig—that is to say, he got up early every morning and went round with his pole, tapping on the bedroom windows and waking up the people in time for them to get to work. And this particular morning old Capper knew there was something wrong.

He felt it first as he stepped outside his cottage and coughed in the dark to clear his lungs, and looked up at the sky to see what kind of weather it was. He felt that there was something wrong with the day, and then he decided what it was. It was still Sunday.

For a moment or two he felt fair flabbergasted at this, for he remembered that the day before had been Sunday, too.

“Ba gum,” Capper said to himself. “This is a champion do, it is an’ all. No doubt summat should be done.”

Now old Capper Wambley was very old, so he sat down on the edge of the curb, and after a while he came to the conclusion that what ought to be done was to think about it. So he began thinking about the very strange event.

“Now,” he said to himself, “it don’t seem reasonable and proper that we should hev two Sundays in a row. Let us see if we can get it sorted out. Now the thing for a chap to do to prove it, is to decide what is the difference between a Sunday morning and a weekday morning.”

Old Capper thought and thought, and he saw that the only difference between the two was that on a weekday morning he wakened the people up, and on a Sunday morning he didn’t.

“So, if Ah doan’t wakken the village up this morning, it is a Sunday morning,” he said to himself.

Of course, it took old Capper a long time to figure this out, because you can see it was no light matter. Here was one man, as you might say, who was holding the calendar in his hands. It was a very important decision. But once Capper had decided, he knew he must be right, for he was a Yorkshireman.

“Because Ah’m net wakkening onybody, it maun be a Sunday morning. And because it’s a Sunday morning, Ah maun’t wakken onybody up. So no matter which

way a lad looks at it, the answer cooms out that it's Sunday."

But now he had decided it was Sunday, Capper saw that not wakening people up might not be sufficient. "Some of them may wake up of their own accord," he thought, "and not knowing this is the second Sunday in a row, will go walking down to the mill. And God knows they have to get up early often enough, and it would be a tarrible shame not to let them have this extra piece of rest that is so miraculously sent."

So old Capper got up slowly from the curb, and went stomping down the street, and stopped at his first call, which was the home of John Willie Braithwaite, who was the fireman at the mill. Old Capper got his long pole with the trident of wire at the end and lifting it so that the wire rested against the upstairs window pane, began twirling and twisting the pole in the palms of his hands so that the wire clacked and chattered fit to wake the soundest sleeper.

Soon the window went up, and John Willie Braithwaite's head popped out of the window.

"Ah'm wakkened," John Willie said. "Whet time is't?"

Now old Capper could see that John Willie wasn't awake, but was just moving in his sleep the way men did from their tiredness and weariness of getting up before dawn. But he knew it didn't matter this morning.

"Ah just wakkened ye to tell ye it's another Sunday morning," old Capper said. "Soa tha c'n goa on back to bed an' sleep i' peace."

At this John Willie Braithwaite closed the window and went back to bed and got in beside his wife without ever having really wakened up. Meanwhile old Capper was on his rounds, busily going up and down the village in the not-yet-dawn, rapping and tapping on all his customers' windows, and telling them they needn't get up because it was still Sunday.

Naturally, the news caused quite a little bit of a fuss. Some people gladly went back to sleep, but others woke up and got dressed, remembering that the day before had been Sunday. They packed their breakfasts and put on their clogs and their smocks and their shawls and went clacking up the streets until they got by the Green, and there they saw old Capper Wambley.

"Now lad," they said, "whet's t'idea o' telling us this is another Sunday?"

"Well, it is," Capper said.

"How does'ta know it is?" Gollicker Pearson asked him.

"Ah can't explain it, but Ah'm full sure summat varry wonderful has happened, and it is," old Capper told them.

Some people were inclined to believe Capper, and some were not.

"Now lewk here, Capper," Gollicker said, "Ah doan't but admit that it does seem Sundayish, like, but how are we off to be sure?"

Old Capper thought a while. Then he saw the answer.

"Well, here's the way us can tell," he said. "Now if this be a weekday, the mill whistle'll blaw the fifteen minutes, wean't it?"

"Aye," they agreed.

“But if it be a Sunday, like Ah say, the mill whistle wean’t blaw the fifteen minutes, will it?”

They all agreed that was true. So they stood round old Capper, who had one of the few watches in the village, and they waited. They all looked at his watch and saw it said twenty to six, then nineteen to six, then eighteen and seventeen and sixteen. And the second hand went round and finally it said quarter to six. But no whistle blew—largely because John Willie Braithwaite who was supposed to be there at 5:30 and get up steam and pull the whistle cord, was still home and sleeping warmly beside his wife.

“Well,” old Capper says, “that shows it maun be a Sunday again, and now ye can all away hoam and get another hour’s sleep.”

So they all went home, glad to get another hour’s sleep, and full of praises for old Capper because he had had the sense to perceive that it was another Sunday instead of a Monday morning.

Old Capper went off home himself, and was just making himself a little bit of breakfast, when Rowlie Helliker came in.

“Capper,” Rowlie said, “Ah hear that tha discovered this is another Sunday.”

“Aye, that’s soa,” Capper replied.

“Well,” Rowlie went on, “isn’t heving two Sundays in a row just a varry little bit irregular, as tha maught say?”

“It is that, lad,” Capper told him. “But tha maun remember us is living in varry unusual times.”

“We are that,” Rowlie agreed. “And Ah’m glad tha discovered it in time. For if tha hedn’t, Ah would ha’ gone and rung the school bell like a gert lummo, thinking it were a Monday. But now Ah know it’s a Sunday, Ah maun goa and ring the church bell.”

“Ah should say that all sounds right and proper to me,” old Capper agreed.

“Me too,” Rowlie said. “And Ah thank thee for saving me from a gert mistake.”

“Eigh, it’s nowt, lad,” old Capper said modestly.

So away went Rowlie, and Capper settled down to his breakfast, but he was soon interrupted again. Some of the villagers, all dressed in their Sunday clothes, came up and told him that people from other villages who worked at the Brig mill were at the mill gates insisting it was Monday. So Capper picked up a bit of bloater to eat on the way and went down there and told the people it was Sunday.

“But if it’s Sunday in Polkingthorpe Brig, what day is it i’ Wuxley Green?” someone asked.

“Aye, and i’ Rombeck an’ Holdersly an’ Tannerley?” someone else added.

“Well, happen it’s Sunday theer, too,” Capper told them. “Only you didn’t notice it. When two Sundays come in a row ye could hardly blame a chap for mistaking the second one for Monday. Soa Ah advise ye to goa back and enjoy Sunday.”

“Well,” said Tich Mothersole, “Ah’m reight glad to hev another day o’ rest; but Ah wish Ah’d known it afore Ah started, because ma Mary Alice allus brings me ma breakfast to bed o’ Sunday morning.”

“Nay, if tha hurries tha’s still time enow to gate hoam and pop back into bed,” the Capper pointed out. “Then the minute thy wife sees thee theer she’ll knaw it’s a Sunday and she’ll up and hev a bit o’ bacon o’ t’fire i’ noa time.”

They were just ready to move away when Mr. Bloggs arrived. Mr. Bloggs was late, but then that didn’t matter, because he lived in another town, and Mr. Bloggs owned the mill.

“’Ere, ’ere, ’ere, my good men,” he said. “What’s all this, ’ey? What’s the idea you aren’t all in the mill?”

So they explained to him that a second Sunday had arrived.

“Why, what nonsense,” he said. “When I left ’ome it was a Monday. ’Ow can it be Sunday ’ere when it was a Monday in Puttersleigh?”

“Ah doan’t knaw,” old Capper said. “Unless,” he added slowly, “it happens to be Sunday in Puttersleigh, too, and tha didn’t realize it.”

“It’s Monday, I tell you. Come on in to work,” Mr. Bloggs shouted. “How can it be two Sundays in a row?”

“It’s Sunday,” they said.

“It’s not. It’s Monday. And any man ’oo ain’t in this mill in five minutes, is discharged.”

“It’s Sunday,” they said.

“How can it be Sunday?” he shouted. “It’s impossible.”

He stared at them, and just then they heard the boom—boom—boom of the church bell ringing for Matins.

“That proves,” they said, “it’s a Sunday, and it’d be a sin to work on Sunday.”

So they all turned round and went back to their homes, leaving Mr. Bloggs alone by his mill gates. He stood there, shaking his head, and finally he clumped upstairs and opened the office himself and sat down all alone at his desk to think the whole matter out.

Meanwhile in the homes of the village the people knew that since it was a Sunday, they would have to do all the things that one does on a Sunday. The men rested at home in comfortable chairs, and the women started mixing Yorkshire puddings for the big noontime dinner. The children were dressed in their nicest clothes and instead of going to school, they went up to the church for Sunday School. Ethel Newligate, who taught the Sunday School, went with them. Mr. Sims, the schoolteacher, hearing the church bell, knew it must be Sunday and off he went to play the organ. Rowlie Helliker was already there to pump the bellows. The church folk went up and stood in the pews. So the old Reverend Mr. Stoninghorn put on his cassock and surplice. He was a little puzzled as to whether it should be now the Fifth Sunday before Epiphany or the Fourth, but he compromised by giving the same service as he had done the day before, and preaching the same sermon. And many of the church folk said the sermon sounded a right lot nicer the second time than the first, because you could see just where it was going, in a manner of speaking.

All this time, of course, the mill was closed, but Mr. Bloggs wasn’t idle. He picked up his telephone, which was the only one in the village, and asked the operator to get

him the Greenwich Observatory. Mr. Bloggs always liked to be exact. When he got them he asked them what day it was, and they told him that it was Monday.

Armed with this fact, Mr. Bloggs went out and met the people just as they were coming out of church.

“Now see here,” he said. “It’s no use pretending. This is a Monday.”

But they pointed out that they were just coming out of church, so how could it be Monday?

At this Mr. Bloggs got so angry that he shouted at them, and the noise brought the Rev. Mr. Stoninghorn to the church steps.

“You must not profane the Sabbath,” he said, looking very handsome in his white surplice, and with his long white hair like a dandelion gone to seed.

Mr. Bloggs began to see he could get nowhere against Yorkshiremen by blustering, so he took another tack. He pointed out to the minister that while this might be Sunday, one would have to admit that it was a little bit unusual to have two Sundays in a row. Mr. Stoninghorn admitted this, and he agreed that a meeting ought to be called to look into the matter.

So it was announced through the village that a meeting was to be called at the school for four o’clock that afternoon. The Rev. Mr. Stoninghorn was asked to preside, but inasmuch as he was unsure whether or not it was the Sabbath, he declined. So Mr. Polkiby, the schoolmaster, agreed to take over the gavel and run a meeting in which everyone should have a chance to state his views on whether it was or wasn’t Sunday.

At meeting time there wasn’t a seat to be had, and after Mr. Polkiby rapped with the gavel, Mr. Bloggs got up and stated that it was Monday, and he could prove it because he had called up the Greenwich Observatory.

Then Taylor Huckle, the publican, got up and said it was Monday, because yesterday had been Sunday and the day after Sunday had always been Monday, for years and years, man and boy, as far back as he could remember.

After this there was a wait, because nobody liked to get up in front of so many people and put in their hap’orth; though a lot of people were dying to, because they knew Huckle was in favor of Monday for if it were Sunday he’d have to go on early closing hours.

So there was a long wait until somebody said: “Where’s Sam Small?”

“Here Ah am,” said a voice at the back of the hall, and they all spoke up and said: “Come on, Sam, let’s hev thy opinion.”

Now Sam was a man whose word was worth listening to at any time, and on any subject, not only as the inventor of the Sam Small Self-Doffing Spindle but because he was much traveled, having been not only to London and other parts but to foreign lands as well as on a cruise. So they waited politely as Sam walked down the aisle and clambered up on the stage.

“Well lads,” he said, “it’s this way. A day’s a day, but then again, it ain’t, in a manner of speaking. The time Ah went round t’world, one day it were Tuesday, and the next morning the captain said it were Thursday—and so it were, because Ah’ve niver yet found that lost day. And on t’other hand, a lad on the ship told me if we’d gone

round the world t'other way, we should of hed two Tuesdays. Now if we can have two Tuesdays when we're going round the world, Ah maintain we maught just as easy hev two Sundays when the world is going round us, which ivvery scientist knaws it is doing."

"Piffle," said Mr. Bloggs.

"Oh, aye?" asked Sam, his dander getting up. "Can tha tell me what day it is now i' Japan?"

"It's Monday," Mr. Bloggs said.

"Oh, pardon me, Mr. Bloggs," the schoolmaster said. "Just as a matter of academic accuracy . . ." and here he studied his watch carefully . . . "but in Japan now it is Tuesday."

"Tuesday?" roared Mr. Bloggs.

"There, tha sees," Sam said. "There don't seem to me to be noa sense to this day stuff. If it's Monday, as tha says, down i' Greenwich; and if it's Tuesday, as t'schoolmeaster says, i' Japan; then Ah say it's just as liable to be Sunday up here."

"Nonsense," yelled Mr. Bloggs. "I know what the matter is. You're all lazy and you wanted another day off. So you call it Sunday."

"Nay lad," Sam replied. "There's six weekdays to one Sunday, so it seems to me like it were six to one i' thy favor that we'd hev an extra workday i' stead of an extra restday. Simply because tha lost, tha maun't be a bad sport about it."

At this the people applauded Sam, and seeing he was at a good place to stop, he got down off the platform.

"Fiddlesticks," Mr. Bloggs said, now thoroughly angry. "If this is Sunday, then what's tomorrow? Is it Monday or Tuesday? Or do we lose a day?"

"Happen Ah'm the man to clear that up," the Capper said, rising to his feet. "Us doesn't skip noa day at all. T'thing is that t'days o' t'week have gate tired o' turning, soa now they're stuck, like, and wean't goa no further, they wean't."

"How ridiculous," Mr. Bloggs snorted. "If that were so we'd get no further and tomorrow would be Sunday, too, wouldn't it?"

The Capper scratched his head and thought a moment. Then he looked up quickly.

"Ba gum, lad," he said. "Tha's hit t'nail o' t'yead. Tomorrow *is* off to be Sunday."

At this the meeting broke up, and everyone started for home. They crowded round old Capper and asked him about the next day.

"Ah'm reight sure it'll be Sunday, lads," old Capper said. "But when Ah coom round to wakken ye up, Ah'll tell ye."

"Nay, Ah gate a better idea," John Willie Braithwaite said. "If it's a Sunday, it'd be a fair shame to disturb a little bit o' good extra sleep. That'd mak' it as bad as a weekday 'most. So supposing, if it's another Sunday, just thee doan't bother to coom round—and when tha doesn't coom we'll knaw for sure that way it's Sunday."

"Aye, that's fine," old Capper said, "but Ah'll lose all me collections that way."

They all saw that was so, but they agreed that even if it kept on being Sunday, they would pay old Capper just the same as if it had become the rotation of weekdays and

he'd made his rounds.

"Nay, Ah couldn't tak' it," Capper protested.

"Nay, we'd like thee to," they protested.

"Well, if ye say," Capper agreed. "But how about lads i' t'other villages? It's hard on them thinking it's a weekday and walking all the way here to find it's a Sunday."

"Well," John Willie said, "we'll form a committee, like, right now, and the members will each tak' a village and goa reight ovver theer and tell ivveryone that it's staying Sunday these days—that the days o' t'week is stuck."

Everyone thought it a good and orderly idea, and so it was done.

The next morning people in the village woke up, and they lay abed and listened. But they heard no trident of wire chattering in the grayness of the morning, nor old Capper's voice wheezing: "'Awf pest fower, ista oop?" They waited but they heard no clogs clattering on the cobbles, and no whistle at the mill saying that if they didn't get there in fifteen minutes they'd be locked out.

So they knew it must be Sunday again, and they went back to sleep, and the next thing they knew was the church bell ringing once more. So that made it Sunday and they were sure of it.

And in the other towns roundabout, the people didn't go to work, and so they knew it was Sunday, too. They put on their best clothes, and did a bit of gardening and the men mended things about the house and the children didn't go to school, and everyone had a fine rest so that their work-tired bodies began to grow glad and proud again.

The next day the news that the days of the week were stuck at Sunday had spread all over Yorkshire, and was percolating up to the Tyneside where the ship-workers were, and over into Lancashire where the youngsters worked before cotton mills and looms, and down into the black country where the men hauled at steel and went down into the mines, and down into Staffordshire where they toiled at the potteries and the car factories.

The newspapers sent men around to find out what had happened to the lost week days, and one of them came to the village and looked up old Capper. At first he laughed, until Ian Cawper came along. Ian just asked the newspaper lad for a penny, and then he bent the penny in two, and the newspaper lad stopped laughing.

"Nah, lad," Ian said. "Happen tha'd better tellyphone thy paper that this is Sunday."

"Indeed I will," the young man said, very appreciatively.

Now although the wonderful thing that it was still Sunday found great gratification in the hearts of all the men who worked long hours handling steel and wood and cotton and iron and glass and fabric and paper and silk, at furnaces and forges and foundries and looms and jennies and sides and presses and drills and lathes and assembly belts, there were some men who were quite upset by the miraculous happening. And in spite of the fact that everyone else in the country now saw that a beautiful series of Sundays had happened, these men kept on trying to persuade everyone that they were just ordinary days of the week that people merely *thought* were Sundays.

These men soon saw that if it kept on being Sunday they'd never be able to make any more battleships and gas bombs and motor cars and airplanes and radios and

badminton rackets and all the rest of the things that are civilizing influences upon the world. And, to go further, if they didn't make those things, they wouldn't be able to go on making more money than they had already.

This was quite an abhorrent state of affairs. So they went to the Prime Minister about it.

"I yield my reverence for religion, especially the Church of England, to no one," one of them said. "In fact, I am thoroughly in accord with religion—one day a week."

"Hear, hear," the others said.

"But, Mr. Prime Minister, think of my stockholders! Many are orphans. Many are widows. If my factory doesn't make money, these poor people will be destitute—because always having drawn dividends, they've never had to learn how to work. We cannot let them suffer."

"Gentlemen," said the Prime Minister, "you may rest assured that His Majesty's Government will do all within its power to safeguard that industry and commerce which is the backbone of our nation—indeed, of our Empire."

Then the Prime Minister went away and thought. Being a Prime Minister he didn't think as you or I would. You or I, in the same case, might have said to ourselves: "Come, come now. What we've got to decide is whether this *is* Sunday or *isn't*." Which is probably why you and I will never be Prime Ministers.

This Prime Minister thought of a lot of things all at once. Suddenly, he called his secretary and said:

"Carrington-Smaithe. It is a Sunday today, I hear, and it will be a Sunday again tomorrow. Pack my things. We're going away for the week end."

"But sir," said the secretary, "what about the International Crisis? We have two ultimatums which must be answered immediately."

"Dear me," said the Prime Minister. "That is a nuisance; but all the world knows the British week end is inviolate, and if this *is* Sunday, as it seems to me it must be, then I won't be able to answer till the week end is over."

"But when will it stop being Sunday, sir?"

"Well, Carrington-Smaithe, how long will it take our fastest cruiser squadron to get round to that troublesome part of the world?"

"Oh, about thirty-six more hours, sir."

"Hmmmph! Then I think it will stop being Sunday in about thirty-six more hours."

And with this the Prime Minister caught the five-fifteen train and went off to the country. And when the newspapers heard of it they printed it, and all the people in England—in fact, in all the world—knew that it was officially Sunday.

And back in Polkingthorpe Brig all the people were that proud of old Capper Wambley. For hadn't he been the first man in all the land to notice that the days of the week were stuck and every day kept turning up a Sunday?

And all over the land toil-weary people sighed with happiness at their escape from industrial chains. They rested their tired bodies. Some went to church every day. The men went walking with their dogs, or did odd jobs round the house, tinkering and gardening and cobbling and putting up shelves. In the cities people took buses out into

the country and had picnics. The grownups lay in the sun and the children played in the fields, and the young men and women walked in the lanes and made love. There was only one flaw. The pubs had to go on Sunday closing hours, which allows no man to buy a pint of beer unless he is a legal traveler who has come so many miles. But this did good in a way, because many men walked the legal number of miles, and that way they saw parts of their own country they never would have seen otherwise, and they saw what other towns and villages looked like.

And all the time that went on, the Prime Minister sat in his garden and read detective novels, or snoozed in the sun with a couple of his favorite spaniels at his feet, until there came a wireless message.

“Sign here,” said the boy.

So the Prime Minister signed, and then he got a code book and decoded the message. Immediately he had done so, he called his secretary and said:

“Carrington-Smaith! What day is today?”

“Sunday, sir,” the secretary said.

“Nonsense,” said the Prime Minister. “I am tired of this blundering-through policy with its shilly-shallying. If this goes on, we shall have a Constitutional Crisis!”

“A Constitutional Crisis, sir?”

“Yes, Carrington-Smaith. So you’d better pack and we’ll get back to the City. We must act immediately. I shall issue a statement that His Majesty’s Government hereby declares officially that today is Friday, and tomorrow shall be officially Saturday, and the days of the week must now go on officially in their regular and accustomed order.”

“But isn’t this really Sunday, sir? Hasn’t a miraculous thing happened that has stopped the days of the week from arriving?”

“I don’t know, my boy. But I do know this. Even if it is Sunday, and we all, everywhere, decide to call it Monday or Tuesday, then it becomes Monday or Tuesday because we all believe it is Monday or Tuesday.”

“Yes, I see, sir.”

And so the secretary packed, and the Prime Minister went back to London where he now could answer his ultimatums quite forcefully, and all the newspapers of the land carried the news that today was Friday and tomorrow would be Saturday—officially.

It wasn’t until the next morning that this news reached Polkingthorpe Brig where it had all started. Mr. Bloggs got the news first, of course, and so he ordered the siren blown at the mill. So everybody hurried off to the mill because if you weren’t there fifteen minutes after the siren went you were locked out and lost half a day’s pay.

But as they trooped into the yard, old Capper stopped them.

“Hold on a minute, mates,” he said. “Just what day is it?”

“Now come on in to work,” Mr. Bloggs called. “It’s Saturday.”

“Nay,” Capper said. “Yesterday were Sunday, so today maun be Monday, onless us’s started slipping and now we’re off to hev t’days backwards.”

This remark of Capper’s got everyone mixed up again and some said it was Saturday and some Monday while some still stuck to Sunday.

The upshot was that they decided to call Sam Small again to get his opinion. Sam arrived in about a half-hour, and heard all sides. Then he looked round, and spoke in the voice of one who is used to handling such matters.

“There’s nobbut one thing to dew, lads,” he said. “And Ah’m the chap that’s off to dew it.”

With that he walked into the office, and picking up the telephone, he said:

“Connect me with His Majesty, the King.”

Before you could wink the connection was made.

“Is this His Majesty, the King?” Sam asked.

“Why Sammywell Small, lad!” said the King, recognizing the voice. “If it doan’t dew ma heart and sowl good to hear thy voice again. How’s’ta been, Sam lad?”

“Reight nicely, Your Majesty,” Sam said.

“And how’s that reight bonnie wife o’ thine, Mully?” asked the King, who, as you will have noticed, spoke the dialects fluently. It is things like that, that make a good king. Little things like passing laws can be left to lads who have nothing but brains.

“Mully’s reight well,” Sam said. “And how’s thy missus and bairns, if tha doan’t mind the question?”

“Nay, Sam lad, Ah’m that glad tha axed ma,” the king said. “My littlest ’un was a bit poorly last week. It’s teethin’ tha knaws. But she’s feeling champion now.”

“Well, Ah’m glad to hear that,” Sam answered.

“Thanks,” the King said. “Well, Sam, Ah doan’t suppose tha called me oop just for idle barneying. Whet c’n Ah dew for thee, lad?”

“Well, it’s this way, Your Majesty,” Sam said. “Ah hoap tha’ll net think ma gormless for axing, but could’ta tell me just whet day o’ t’week it is for thee?”

“Eigh Sam,” the King said, “Ah doan’t monkey wi’ things like that. Ah leave all that to ma ministers and such. But Ah’ve just gate official information from ’em that today’s Sat’day.”

“Your Majesty,” said Sam, “if Sat’day’s good enow for thee, then there’s noa moar argyment. Thank you varry much.”

“Net at all, Sam,” the king said. “And by the way, Sam Small, it is our royal wish that tha doesn’t wait soa long afore tha calls ma oop again. There’s been sivveral things lately Ah would ha liked thy opinion on. When’s’ta off to coom to Lunnon?”

“Nay, Your Majesty, Ah give oop traveling,” Sam replied.

“Too bad, Sam. Too bad. Well, give me a ring soom time soon, will’ta?”

“That Ah will, lad.”

“Well, so long,” said the King.

“So long, Your Majesty,” said Sam.

All during this conversation, of course, the people of the village had been crowding breathlessly round the door of the office, listening to Sam. And right in the forefront was Mr. Bloggs.

“Well, what did he say?” Mr. Bloggs breathed as Sam hung up.

“He said,” said Sam, “that today is Sat’day.”

“There, didn’t I tell you,” Mr. Bloggs shouted. “Now, doesn’t that make it Saturday?”

Everyone thought it did, but they weren’t quite sure. They thought the matter over quite a while, and then John Willie Braithwaite said:

“T’only trouble is, it doan’t *feel* like Sat’day to me.”

“But I tell you it is officially Saturday,” Mr. Bloggs cried.

“Wait a minute, lads,” Sam Small put in. “Now Ah doan’t wark here, soa Ah play no favorites. But Ah c’n tell ye for sure how ye’ll all know it’s a Sat’day?”

“How can we tell?” they asked.

“Why, it’s that simple,” Sam replied. “Ye’ all know that ivvery Sat’day morning at a quarter to twelve ye get paid a week’s wages. Now if soa be this is Sat’day, Mr. Bloggs will begin paying each man a week’s money exactly ten minutes from now. And, on t’other hand, then if he doan’t start paying a week’s brass i’ ten minutes—it can’t be Sat’day—and the chances are it’s off to keep on being Sunday for a long time.”

“Outrageous,” Mr. Bloggs cried.

He argued and shouted, but they just stood and shook their heads and said that if it were a Saturday they’d draw a week’s pay at exactly a quarter to twelve, as they always did on Saturday. And finally Mr. Bloggs, seeing no other way of getting the days of the week started properly again, gave in and paid off each man and woman and girl and boy.

By the time they were paid it was Saturday noon, and so they all trooped as usual down the stairs of the mill and into the yard to go home. And there old Capper stopped them.

“But if it’s a Saturday today, lads and lasses, what day is it tomorrow?”

“It’ll be Sunday,” they all roared.

“Now ain’t that champion,” old Capper beamed. “If it’s Sunday we’ll all be able to lie abed late and get a bit o’ extra sleep for a change.”

“He may have been born in Yorkshire, but ye’d never know it,” said Gaffer Sitherthwick. “And he may have made a fortune in America, but he won’t have it long the road he’s going. Nay, a fool’s soon parted from his brass—and a man soon parted from his brass is a fool.”

“I notice tha’s quite willing to get in on a dart game when he’s playing, though,” Sam Small commented sagely.

The Gaffer finished lighting his pipe, and then cleared his throat. “Waste is sinful,” he said. “And it’s just as sinful to waste a good opportunity as owt else.”

And that was the opinion of the entire village. It was sad to think that a lad from good stock like the Ashcrofts should have been turned by a foreign land into a fool, and him alone in the world, as you might say, without a relative to give him any good advice. Of the whole village, perhaps the only lad who didn’t believe the verdict was Sam Small.

But when even Sam heard about the wildest action of Walter, he strode angrily to the pub. His face red, from anger and the exertion of fast walking, he strode in and walked smack up to Walter.

“Young Walter Ashcroft,” Sam said, in a clear voice. “I’m a chap o’ few words. I knew thy father, and he were a good lad. So I’ve felt I should keep a forbearing eye on thee. But now tha’s capped the climax.”

“Why, Mr. Small, what have I done?” asked the young man, cool as you please.

“What’s tha done?” Sam echoed. “Eigh, lad, lad! ’Tis said tha’s lent the loan of a shilling to Gommy Doakes, the Cockle Man!”

At this, everybody looked at Walter in horror, waiting for him to deny it. But Walter didn’t.

“Oh,” he said with a careless air, looking down into his pint. “I lent the poor old devil a bob. What’s wrong with that?”

“Wrong?” choked old Gaffer Sitherthwick, getting in the discussion. “Wrong? Why, doesn’ta know that the old miser has never ever paid nobody back owt that he borrowed i’ all his life? That’s why noan on us has ever lent him owt.”

“If you never lent him anything, how could he pay you back?” Walter asked.

They all thought about this for a while.

“Come, come, now, ma lad,” Gaffer Sitherthwick said, finally, “that’s merely Yankee flim-flam. Gommy’s that mishonest, tha can tell by looking at him that he’d never pay back.”

“Oh, perhaps my trust in him will make him a reformed character, and he’ll live up to his obligations.”

“Obligations be jiggered,” the Gaffer said scornfully. “Kiss thy bob good-by, because it’s sixpence to a brass farthing tha’ll never see it no more.”

“You wouldn’t like to make that bet an even half-sovereign, would you?” the lad asked evenly.

At this there was many a gasp and whisper, with most men siding with Sam Small and counseling the Gaffer that it wouldn’t be right to take advantage of the lad’s innocence.

“Have done,” the Gaffer shouted finally. “Now, the kindest thing a man can do in this hard life is to help young folk learn their lessons. So I’m not doing this to win his ten shillings, but more to teach him this is a cruel world he must live in. So I’ll take that bet, my lad.”

“Done,” said Walter.

“And if tha wants to throw good brass after bad, I’d like a half-crown on the same thing,” Capper Wambley put in.

“And I’ll take a shilling,” Rowlie Helliker added.

Seeming fair crazed with recklessness, the young man took all bets, and before he could have had a chance to reckon up the score, he stood ready to be roundly beaten to the staggering tune of one pound, three shillings, and sixpence. Everyone there had bet against him but Sam Small. Sam, battling with himself, started from the inn. But he got only as far as the door. He struggled, and then came back.

“Lad,” he said to Walter, “it’s a crying shame to take advantage of thy weakness, but—well—put me down for two shillings on the same thing.”

Now, of course, the whole village was all of an itch and a scratch, as you might say, over the famous bet that had been laid, and housewives and bairns were all peeping from behind curtains or over fences to report any latest move that might be made in the tremendous battle of wits that was sure to ensue. But did they have anything to report?

Not a bit of a thing, they did. For all Walter Ashcroft seemed to do was lead the veritable life of the grasshopper in the fable. Evenings he would sit in the pub and lose a round of drinks at darts, never seeming to get any better at the game. Especially did he seem a godsend to John Willie Braithwaite, who for years had been low man at the dart board. Daytimes he would moon around up the Green, and you can be sure all the neighbors wasted no time in reporting that the likely-looking lad was spending his time looking balmy at Gaffer Sitherthwick’s lass, Barbara Alice.

Now it must be said that that, at least, was one sign of sense in Walter Ashcroft. For Barbara Alice was a right lass. Skin she had like May blossoms, and hair like burnished oak leaves, and her eyes were like nothing else if they weren’t the very spit of the bluebells that come in April up in the Duke of Rudling’s woods, where no one is supposed to go because of the temptation that a fat rabbit might put before them.

There she was, all cream and gold, and now growing up to be twenty-three and never a man had spoken for her because of her ways.

And she had ways. For instance, she was uppish. It’s hard to tell just how she was uppish, but it might be explained this way: Other women in the village always wore their weekday shawls over their heads with a bit of a twist back over one shoulder. Barbara Alice Sitherthwick always wore her shawl just over her shoulders with her head bare—even on a rainy day you would see her going along that way, setting off for town over the moor with her head bare and her fine feet stepping down firmly. That’s the kind of lass she was.

And there was Walter Ashcroft, passing away the precious hours talking to her at her front gate, instead of attending to his business of catching up with Gommy Doakes, the Cockle Man.

Now a right lad would have put himself on the trail of Gommy and with bulldog pertinacity would have made the Cockle Man's days a living misery over that shilling. But Walter seemed to do nothing at all. And there was no doubt about it that Gommy was playing a very proper game with Walter. Let Walter come down Green Lane, and Gommy would go ducking over the street and fade away down the Ginnel. Let Walter turn down the Ginnel, and Gommy would pop over the Widow Braithwaite's wall and slide like an eel down the Snicket and out by the alley. Walter didn't even seem to notice it, but everybody else did.

When word of Walter's attentions to Barbara Alice began to punctuate the nightly discussions at the pub, Gaffer Sitherthwick went home and faced his wife.

"I'll have ma say like any true Yorkshireman should," he orated to her, "and then I'll have done.

"Firstly, it's not that I wouldn't wish to see ma lass wed and having a houseful of bairns, as anyone knows is rightful and proper. Secondly, if yon lad is sparking our Barbara Alice, he's swinging on the wrong gate. For thirdly, I'd sooner have her on ma hands all the rest of her days than see her wed to a chap that squanders brass and that hasn't gumption enough to go out and collect what's properly and justly due him. Because thirdly, in ma opinion, such a chap would make a varry, varry poor sort of husband, and his ways would lead to nowt but indecent living. Now, has tha owt to say to that?"

"That's two thirdlys tha had, and take thy feet off ma fender—I just polished it," Mrs. Sitherthwick said. "And besides, there's nowt to it. They haven't said a courting word to each other."

Of course the Gaffer's words got back to Walter—as they will in any village. But Walter only laughed at such talk. And anyhow, as Mrs. Sitherthwick had mentioned, nobody could say for certain if he really was sparking Barbara Alice.

The women in the neighboring cottages said—and it must be admitted it's terribly hard not to overhear what's being said under your front window, especially if the window is open a crack and you happen to be sitting near it—they said that Walter and Barbara Alice had the funniest sort of conversations you could ever wish to hear, with nothing but talk about the weather and such.

Actually, the weather didn't entirely monopolize the conversation. Sometimes they'd talk of childhood and sometimes about America. To Barbara Alice, Walter felt he could explain about himself.

"It don't smell right out there, not like a home ought to," Walter would say.

"Smell right?"

"Aye, tha knows—the smell of bubbly soap and steam on washdays, and smell of bottom loaf cooling on bake days, and smell of a bit of a roast on Sundays, with gravy, like. You don't get them there."

"Who does thy cooking?" Barbara Alice asked.

"Well, I eat mostly in the restaurant—it's handy to the business."

"Eigh, that's no sort of food for a man to be eating. No wonder tha looks poorly. I'll guarantee they couldn't make a Yorkshire pudding that wouldn't be sad as a bit of shoe

leather.”

“Yorkshire pudding! Why, lass, I haven’t had a mouthful since I went away.”

“Not in ten year!” she breathed. Barbara Alice stood aghast at the horror of it. “I should think a man would get heartsick.”

“Nay, it’s none so bad.”

“But it is! I should think ye’d get heartsick.”

So the women were right when they said Walter and Barbara Alice never spoke a courting word to each other. But there was one important feature they didn’t report—Walter Ashcroft was beginning to talk Yorkshire again. The women of Polkingthorpe Brig knew that a man’s born speech is needed for deep moments, for moments of intimacy, and they heard Walter Ashcroft use the dialect in talking to Barbara Alice Sitherthwick. But they didn’t say anything about this to the men, for sometimes all women seem in league against the males of the world.

So there was Walter, draped over the Sitherthwick white picket fence, his voice becoming more and more Yorkshire as he talked to her of the weather and the garden; and all the time there was Gommy Doakes, sneaking around the village and making a high mock of the reputation that Walter should have had as a proper Yorkshireman.

Suddenly there were only three more days left for Walter’s visit, and then it seemed as if he did wake up a bit—although most of the village, after proper discussion, decided that the encounter was accidental. Walter had seen Gommy Doakes shuffling down Green Lane. Gommy crossed the street quick as a snake. Walter crossed. Gommy slid into the Ginnel. Walter headed after him. With mad haste Gommy skimmed over the wall onto the Widow Braithwaite’s midden tip, scurried through her yard, and shot back to Green Lane down the Snicket. And there he ran smack into the arms of Walter Ashcroft, who hadn’t gone up the Ginnel at all.

“Hello, Gommy,” Walter said.

“Glory be if it ain’t Mr. Ashcroft. Nice mornin’, ain’t it,” said Gommy, his feet going like mad.

But whereas his legs were going through the motions of running, Gommy wasn’t getting anywhere, because Walter was holding him up by the back of his coat collar, free from the ground.

“And ye’re the varry man I wished to see,” added Gommy, seeing he was getting nowhere and swiftly changing his tactics. “I’ve been looking for thee to tell thee about that there bob.”

“Yes?”

“Aye. Ah, sad is the day, Mr. Ashcroft. A wife and nine starving bairns I have hoam, and not a soul in the house to addle a penny but me. Tha wouldn’t rob a poor man——”

“Come, now, Gommy. You manage to make both ends meet and more.”

“That’s it, Mr. Ashcroft. When I make both ends meet, it leaves such a tarrible gap in th’middle, as tha might say.”

And there was Gommy, wriggling and whining and weaseling to get out of paying his debt, with everyone in the village peeping through the shop windows, but keeping

themselves politely hidden, and Walter looking at the watch on his wrist and saying,

“Talk fast, Gommy, for I have an appointment in the city today.”

It was exciting news, for fair, and there was nothing else talked about that evening at The Spread Eagle. No one saw Walter the rest of that day. And no one saw him get off the bus from the city—which was why he happened to walk into the inn right while they were talking about him. There was a silence, and then Sam Small saw it was no good hiding the topic.

“Us was just discussing, Walter lad,” he said. “Us heard tha catched up wi’ Gommy Doakes. Did he pay thee?”

“Well,” Walter said slowly, “as you might say, he didn’t; but in a manner of speaking, he will.”

“What dosta mean: ‘as tha might say,’ and ‘in a manner o’ speaking’?” thundered the Gaffer.

“It’s this way,” Walter explained. “He admitted he has nine shillings. But there’s a sack of cockles waiting at the railroad, and he must pay ten shillings for ’em, or they’ll go bad. Now if he could get those cockles, he’d make a few shillings’ profit.”

“So?” roared Gaffer Sitherthwick.

“So,” Walter finished lamely, “I lent him the other shilling.”

The stunned silence that followed was more eloquent than words. Those horrified Yorkshiremen trooped from the inn. The whole village soon had the unbelievable word that far from paying back the shilling, Gommy Doakes had weaseled another bob from that Walter Ashcroft.

The next day was the last full one of Walter Ashcroft’s visit. But it was a memorable one. For in mid-morning a rumor came to the village that Gommy Doakes had started over the moor at dawn going as if headed for Scotland; but that Walter Ashcroft had gone strolling after him not three minutes behind.

But the people shook their heads. For there was no one for walking like Gommy Doakes when he was headed away from a debt. The way Gommy knew the moor, and the twisting, turning tricks he had in coming through near-by villages, would shake off many a man who knew the country better than Walter. But in mid-afternoon, amazing word came to the inn. Gommy was streaking for home, but Walter Ashcroft was swinging heel and toe not fifty yards behind, unconcerned as you please.

They all rushed out just in time to see Gommy, panting wearily, come up by the Green. And right by the inn, with a dramatic gasp, he gave up and dropped to the curb. Walter came up to the sitting figure, cool as you please, and looked surprised—just as if he’d noticed Gommy for the first time that day.

“Good afternoon to you, Gommy Doakes,” he said.

Gommy held his chest and panted. Anyone could see now that clearly it was a case for skill, not endurance any longer.

“Why, bless ma heart and sowl,” Gommy came back, short on breath but long on trickery. “If it ain’t young Mr. Ashcroft! And, for one in this village, I say long may he have a chair by his chimney, and coal for his grate when he’s old and poor and without

a true-hearted friend to aid him through stress and strife, trial and tribulation, poverty and want.”

“Thankee, Gommy Doakes. But, to put it in a nutshell, isn’t it nigh time you were off to get your cockles to be selling this night?”

“Oh, sad’s the day, Mr. Ashcroft! And if I’d nobbut seen thee earlier this day, I would have explained to thee.”

“Why, what’s up, Gommy?”

“Ma barrow, Mr. Ashcroft. Eigh, broke it is, and so bad that not a foot could ye push it, up hill nor down—and no other one in this sad village but that of Robbie Cobble the coal man. But it’s the cruel price of sixpence he’ll be asking for the lend of it. And here’s poor me, who’s been walking all this day in solitude, as tha might say, just to try and think out this problem. For if I spend ma ten shillings for cockles, then I’ve no sixpence left to rent a barrow to put ’em in; while if I pay sixpence for a barrow, then I’ve no ten shillings left for to get cockles to put in it. What can I do?”

“Eigh, it’s a tale t’old miser is telling,” Sam Small’s voice put in from the crowd.

“Nay, it’s truth, and may I have ma throat cut if it’s not,” Gommy protested. “Eigh, if I nobbut had another sixpence!”

Walter looked up, and you might almost have said that there was a bit of a nod passed between him and Barbara Alice, who was standing sedately away from the crowd.

“Oh, don’t fret, Gommy Doakes. Here, lad. I’ll lend you another sixpence. What’s more, I’ll even go with you and get the barrow and help you push it up the station to get your cockles.”

In dumbfounded amazement everyone stood aside and watched Gommy and Walter head up the street. Finally the crowd woke, and there rose a sort of muffled moan of anguish from those Yorkshiremen. Then they began to scatter, not speaking as they went. Only their faces left no doubt as to what they felt. Walter Ashcroft’s Yankee wealth had surely driven him mad.

Walter Ashcroft, sitting in his room after dinner, heard the age-old sequence of sounds that meant the village was ending another day. The familiar routine filled him with the same feelings that had made him come so many miles. This was home.

The sounds claimed Walter and chained him to his Yorkshire youth. But there was an American side to him now. And it was the American side that made him rise when he heard the hum of voices beneath him as the men gathered in the public room. He straightened his tie. He had a job to do that was more than winning bets. He wanted to win the respect of the village in its own terms—and he felt American enough to do it.

“Good evening, all,” said Walter as he went into the pub.

They did not answer.

“How about a game of darts for a round of ale?” Walter offered.

Sorely tempted as they were, they still made no answer. Only Sam Small spoke.

“Eigh, hasn’t tha learned yet that it’s always thee that pays?” he said, not unkindly.

“Well, seeing I go away tomorrow, I thought we might have a real farewell game,” Walter explained. “Perhaps even for a half-crown a man—winner take all.”

Now indeed they were sorely tried, and they made noises in their throats and shuffled their feet. Finally Gaffer Sitherthwick rose.

“Ba gum!” he exploded. “The lamb that hangs around the wolf’s door deserves all he gets. Come on, lads.”

So up they jumped, and each put up his money—nine half-crowns including Walter’s—on the window sill. Winking to each other, they stood back while Walter took the three darts in his hand and toed the line.

There is no need to recount that game. If you want the details, you can drop in at The Spread Eagle Inn in Polkingthorpe Brig any day, and there’ll be chaps there who can tell you point by point how Walter Ashcroft threw a perfect score, throwing with the unerring certainty of a master.

And as he picked up the half-crowns from the window sill, the admiring voice of Sam Small broke the dead silence:

“Lads! I begin to suspect we’ve been had.”

“Tha can play darts,” Gaffer Sitherthwick said accusingly.

“Just laying back for sucker bets,” said Walter calmly.

“Eigh, there’s summat varry funny going on,” old Capper said slowly.

“Nay—just a Yankee trick,” Walter explained. “What did you all think I’ve been buying drinks for, this last couple of weeks, except to learn the game?”

“Well, I’ll be jiggered,” old Sitherthwick said. “I feel it’s downright cheating, almost, as tha might say. And——”

What Sitherthwick wanted to add was never heard, for Walter Ashcroft suddenly hissed, and stood silent, listening.

And then, faintly, they heard floating in from the night the doleful wail of Gommy Doakes, chanting his cockles. They could hear him coming along Green Lane, singing his call:

“Cockles eelive, buy ’em eelive-oh.
Sixpence a quartern, thrupence half a quartern.
Any cockles eelive, buy ’em eelive?
Fine big cockles!
Great big cockles!
Buy ’em eelive, all eelive-oh.”

Walter slipped the jingling silver coins into his pocket.

“You must pardon me,” he said. “I’ve got another little matter.”

With everyone at his heels, out he strode and planked himself right in the middle of the street before Gommy Doakes’ cockle barrow, lit up with its lantern.

“Good evening to you, Gommy Doakes,” cried Walter.

“Glory alive, if it ain’t Mr. Ashcroft,” said Gommy, dropping the shafts, now Walter barred his way. “Oh, sad is life. Here I were just saying to mysen that not a penny do I

have and that good Mr. Ashcroft will be sailing away tomor't morn, and I'll never see him again so's I could pay him as I wish. Oh, ill is the luck."

"What, haven't you made any money yet, Gommy Doakes?"

"Not a penny—pushing ma weary way uphill and down with ma feet nigh walked to the ankles, and a chap can cry his lungs from his varry chest and not a cockle have I sold."

The waiting men stirred, for anyone could see that half the load of cockles was gone from Gommy's barrow.

"Well, happen business'll pick up, Gommy," Walter said. "And I mustn't keep thee from thy work."

"Aye, I must be on ma weary road," Gommy said, delighted to have weaseled out of it. "So long."

"Nay, I'll go along with thee, Gommy."

"Tha'll what?"

"I'll go along with thee. A poor, comfortless chap like thee needs a trusting friend to walk a way with him on his weary rounds. Up with thy barrow, lad."

And before Gommy could say a word, Walter up with the shafts and off he went toward the Green with the Cockle Man trotting alongside and all the men following like a procession.

"Come on, Gommy Doakes," exhorted Walter. "Cry thy cockles, man!"

"But I been round t'Green once," Gommy protested, grabbing back the barrow shafts.

"Happen second time is better luck. Cry out, man!"

"Cockles eelive," Gommy chanted weakly, pushing as fast as he could in the hope of leaving Walter behind. But Walter stayed right by his side.

"There, tha sees how it is and all," Gommy said. "Not a soul to spend a meg on a poor old Cockle Man."

"Perhaps you don't cry loud enough, Gommy," Walter suggested.

"Glory be to the Black Prince," Gommy moaned. "Here's ma voice cried to a mere shadow of itself, as tha might say, and then the lad would have me cry louder."

Walter said nothing until they reached the corner of the Green. Then, suddenly, he roared in a voice that would have wakened old Wada, the Giant:

"Fine big cockles! Great big cockles!"

He made Gommy rest the barrow while he looked up and down the Green. Then a door opened, and out came none other than Barbara Alice Sitherthwick. And she was carrying a pail. Up she came, right to Walter.

"Oh, what champion cockles, Young Mr. Cockle Man," she said. "I think I'll have a pailful."

"A pailful," groaned Gommy suspiciously.

"Fill it up, man. A customer," cheered Walter. "Here, I'll do it."

And he toppled and tumbled in the cockles.

“How much?” asked Barbara Alice when he was done.

“Six quarterns,” Walter reckoned. “That should be three shillings—but as it’s almost wholesale business, as you might say, we’ll call it a half-crown even.”

Sweetly she passed over a shining half-crown to Walter. And Walter passed it to Gommy.

“Thank you, miss,” Walter said. “Now Gommy Doakes, it just so chances you owe me a half-crown. Would you like to pay me now?”

Gommy shoved the coin in his slop pocket and put a protective hand over it. He looked at the circle of waiting faces. Then he looked at Walter’s set jaw.

“Mr. Ashcroft,” he moaned. “Tha wouldn’t be taking the bread and butter right out of the varry mouths of my wife and bairns?”

“Gommy Doakes, you mean old skinflint of a miser,” Walter said. “I wouldn’t be wanting to take thee by the heels and hold thee upside down so that all the shillings tha’s made this night would come tumbling out to shame you. I wouldn’t want to do that, because I’d rather have everyone in this village see thou art an honest man who is paying his debts of his own free will.”

With a final cry of despair, Gommy passed over the money. “Well,” he exploded. “Well! Ah never was so cheated in all ma born life!”

“Away wi’ ye, ye weaselng, mawngy old miser,” called the men.

And away Gommy Doakes the Cockle Man went; muttering and bumbling nasty names on the entire family of Ashcroft, past, present, and future.

“Now gentlemen,” Walter said to the men, “I have collected from Gommy Doakes.”

“And we’ve been beat,” Sam Small cried. “But if there’s one thing a Yorkshireman admits gladly, it’s when he’s fairly bested. So I’ll pay up wi’ a good heart. Let’s see, it were a shilling I bet thee, weren’t it?”

“It was not, Mr. Small,” Walter said. “It were two shilling.”

“Ba gum, he had thee there, Sam,” Rowlie Helliker said. “So we’ll pay up fairly.”

And pay up they did—all until it came to the Gaffer, who was standing by his front gate. And he suddenly roared:

“Hold on a bit! I’m being right roundly done here somehow. He collected ’cause ma lass bought a pail o’ cockles—I’m sure I don’t want no pail o’ cockles.”

“Aye, we do, Feyther,” Barbara Alice said. “For the party. Won’t ye all step in and have a little summat?”

“Hold on,” roared the Gaffer. “Us is not having no party.”

“Oh, aye, us is,” said Mrs. Sitherthwick, appearing at the door.

“May a man in his own house and home be allowed to ax just why he should be giving a party?” the Gaffer demanded.

Barbara Alice looked up quickly, and her eyes caught those of Walter Ashcroft, but she didn’t say a word.

Mrs. Sitherthwick clicked her tongue as if to say she despaired of ever making some people see the light.

“Don’t thee dit-dit-dit at me! I wean’t have it!” the Gaffer thundered, poking his chin at her.

“I want to talk to thee, Harry Percival Sitherthwick,” said his wife. “Come in! Barbara Alice, go in and fix them cockles! Widow Braithwaite—if tha wouldn’t mind giving a hand wi’ some sandwiches? The rest o’ ye—if ye’ll just wait a few minutes. Now, Harry Percival. Come!”

And in she stalked, with Gaffer Sitherthwick following her tiny figure obediently. Through the kitchen she went, and into the bedroom.

“Sit down, Harry Percival,” she said. “And not on ma new counterpane—over on that chair.”

The Gaffer sat.

“Harry Percival Sitherthwick. Here us has a lass that’s so funny and uppy, not a lad in the county comes courting, and her rising twenty-three——”

“Twenty-two,” said Barbara Alice’s voice.

“Go away from that door and stop listening, Barbara Alice, or I’ll skelp thee, big as tha is,” Mrs. Sitherthwick said, without drawing a breath. “She’s rising twenty-three, Harry. And now here comes a likely lad, and I have a chance at last to get her off ma hands, and tha has to put thy big foot in it.”

“Walter Ashcroft?” yelled the Gaffer, turning purple. “Ba gum, nay. I wean’t have it!”

“What in the name o’ goodness is thy objection?”

“It’s his ways, lass! Flinging brass about. He’s not—not practical! A lad who wastes his shillings like yon does, well—he’d make a varry, varry poor sort of a husband for a daughter o’ mine.”

“Is that thy only objection?”

The Gaffer nodded.

“Indeed!” exploded Mrs. Sitherthwick. Then up she jumped and got paper and pencil from the chest of drawers. “I heard about that dart game tonight,” she said, looking sideways.

“What’s that got to do wi’ marriage?”

She did not answer. Instead she wrote busily for several minutes. Then she handed her husband a piece of paper.

“When tha’s read that, come out and join the party,” she said.

Slowly the Gaffer took out his spectacles and read. The paper said:

To one bad debt collected Gommy Doakes.....	0.2.6
To bets collected over Gommy's paying.....	1.3.6
To dart game, which you ninnies let him trick you into.....	1.0.0
	<hr/>
Answer.....	£2.6.0

Which just about pays his bill at the Inn. P.S. Now who's flinging whose brass about?

For a long time the Gaffer studied this, and then he rose. For the Gaffer was a Yorkshireman, which means that he was a fair sportsman at heart. Firmly he stalked through the kitchen where the cockles were steaming and the women were busy as hens, buttering bread and setting the table. He flung open the door and addressed the waiting people.

"Come in to ma house and hearth, all on ye," he roared.

And no one needed any second bidding.

"Now, Walter Ashcroft," boomed the Gaffer. "I hear tha wants to wed ma lass."

Barbara Alice blushed prettily and hid her face in a cloud of cocklesteam, while Walter opened his mouth.

"Drat ma buttons, don't interrupt," hollered the Gaffer. "Tak' her and bless ye; but on one condition. I don't believe in long courtships; so when can ye be wed?"

"Well," Walter began hesitatingly, "you see, in America we move fast, and I've learned a lot of Yankee ways myself——"

"I'll say tha has," Sam Small shouted. "Thy Yorkshire blood and thy Yankee training has combined to best every one on us in th'village. Hasn't it, lads?"

The men roared approval, but the Gaffer was a singleminded man.

"Never mind that," he boomed. "When's tha off to tak' this lass off ma hands?"

"I was coming to that. You see, there's so much to do these days what with passports and tickets and such, that it all couldn't be done at the last minute."

"So!" shouted the Gaffer.

"So," Walter said, "Barbara Alice and I got wed in the city yesterday."

For a moment the Gaffer looked like a turkey cock about to burst. Then he looked at his wife and cleared his throat.

"In such a case, there's only one thing to do," he said.

"And what would that be?" Mrs. Sitherthwick asked, sticking out her chin.

"Sit down and eat these here cockles," said the Gaffer.

ADVENTURE VIII

MARY ANN AND THE DUKE

*A fitch should be well hung, you see.
And as for a Yorkshireman—so should he.*

THERE'S hardly a lad in all Polkingthorpe Brig that hasn't run a rabbit or two in the Duke of Rudling's woods. This is done mostly at night—preferably a moonlight night. But Ian Cawper has the right to do so, and never a soul to halt him to trespass.

This right of Ian's came about in a most peculiar way. The story starts, where most things start at Polkingthorpe, down at The Spread Eagle. The lads were at the inn one night, giving the international situation a bit of a going over. Sam Small was there, to explain the more knotty problems as they nursed their mugs of ale. Old Capper Wambley was by the fire, reading the paper.

"Eigh, Ah'll be jiggered," the Capper said, suddenly. "That Ah will, indeed, and that's the trewth."

They considered his remark a while, and then asked him what was up.

"Why lads," breathed the Capper, "it says here i' black and white that t'owd Duke o' Rudling's gate t'drewit de segner."

"Tha doan't mean it!" Rowlie Helliker said. "Eigh, now, if Ah'm not reight sorry to hear that."

"Ba gum, and him gating along i' years," John Willie Braithwaite added, consolingly.

"Indeed he maun be gating along," Gaffer Sitherthwick agreed. "T'last time as Ah seed him—big gert strapping chap he were—but gating along even then. Eigh, it does seem a right mawngy shame him cooming down like that."

They clicked their tongues and made sympathetic noises.

"Just what is this here—what tha said?" John Willie asked suddenly, after a decent pause.

"T'drewit de segner?" Capper said, looking again at the paper. He scratched his head. "Tha knaws, if that ain't what's been bothering me, too. Sammywell, lad, what would t'drewit de segner be?"

"The drewit de segner?" Sam Small cleared his throat. "Well, lads. Ah'll explain it to ye. It's—er—let's see that their paper, Capper."

The old man passed the paper over. Sam adjusted his glasses and read:

Among the many curious and ancient rights held by the Dukes of Rudling is that of the droit de seigneur throughout the six parishes of the Duchy.

“Oh, now Ah see,” Sam said. “Ye mixed me oop by mispronouncing it, Capper. It’s the drawit de saynoor. That’s what it is.”

“Eigh, is that what it is?” the Capper breathed.

“Aye, that’s it.”

“Well, if it ain’t fair amazing,” old Sitherthwick put in, wagging his head.

“Aye, Sam, but what is it?” John Willie Braithwaite insisted. The others nodded their heads.

“Well, Ah were just off to tell thee, John Willie,” Sam said. “It’s Latin—that’s what it is.”

They wagged their heads and clicked their tongues again.

“But what does it mean, Sam?” John Willie persisted, stubbornly.

“Well, happen Ah can best explain it this way,” Sam said. “Latin, as ye all may have heeard tell, is a varry foony language.”

“Aye, that it is,” they agreed.

“Now,” Sam went on, “one o’ t’fooniest things abaht it is that one time it’ll mean one thing, in a manner o’ speaking; and then another time, it’ll mean summat else, as ye maught say. Aye, it’s a fair mawngy thing, Latin is.”

“Aye, it maun be mawngy, and all,” John Willie said. “But now what would the Latin be meaning in this particular case, for example?”

“Well, it’s like Ah were telling ye, John Willie. It means summat, and then again, as Ah explained, it don’t—to all intents and purposes. In this particular case, it would tak’ an extra lot o’ varry, varry deep study to say whet it really does mean.”

“How much stody?” John Willie persisted.

“Well,” said Sam, feeling he was cornered, “wi’ ma references, and all, happen it’d tak’ me nigh on twenty-four hours if it were a case. Here, let me hev’ t’paper, and Ah’ll let ye knaw tomorrer.”

So of course, it was up to Sam to find out what it meant. Early the next morning before school, he called on the schoolmaster, who explained to Sam what it meant. That evening Sam waited, triumphantly, in The Spread Eagle for someone to ask him about it. But no one brought the subject up. Finally Sam couldn’t hold it any longer.

“Oh, by the way, chaps,” he said. “About that theer drawit de saynoor. Ah went into that varry thoroughly today, and i’ this case, it’s a varry owd law that means, of all things, that ivvery lass that gates married i’ any o’ t’six parishes o’ Rudling duchy, hes to sleep wi’ t’Duke on t’fust neight of her wedding.”

“Sleep wi’ t’Duke?” John Willie breathed.

“Aye, sleep wi’ t’Duke,” Sam affirmed.

“Well, bless ma back and buttons,” old Capper said. “Ah’ve heeard tell o’ such things on t’quiet, like; but Ah nivver knew before they hed a law compelling it.”

“Ah nivver heeard tell on it, nawther,” Gaffer Sitherthwick mumbled.

“Well, happen that’s because we’re i’ Powkithorpe Brig,” Sam said. “That’s not one o’ t’Rudling parishes. So our lasses can sleep wi’ their husbands if they want,” he continued.

“They hev to sleep wi’ t’Duke,” John Willie Braithwaite breathed. “Well, mates, all Ah can say is, soom people seem to hev all the fun i’ life.”

And they laughed and banged down their mugs of ale.

But there was one lad who did no laughing. He was Ian Cawper, the biggest and strongest lad in all Yorkshire. The only trouble with Ian was, he was so big that it took a long time for ideas to get up into his head. By the time they did, generally everyone was busy talking about something else. And it was so in this case. By the time Ian was ready to ask a question, they were all talking about dogs, so all Ian said was:

“Good neight!”

“Good neight, Ian,” they said, and Ian lumbered away.

“What wrang wi’ yon, now?” John Willie Braithwaite said.

“Nowt wrang wi’ him,” Sam said. “That’s just Ian’s way.”

But Sam was wrong. There was something wrong with Ian. The thing was that even a huge man’s frame can be punctured by an arrow, and Ian was in love. More than that, the girl Ian loved lived in Holdersby. And most of all, Holdersby was one of the six parishes of Rudling.

That night as Sam went home from the inn he saw Ian looming up in the dark.

“Ah’ve summat to ax thee, Sam Small,” Ian rumbled.

Ian started across the moor and Sam, knowing how long it took for Ian to get started talking, followed him. They were a couple of miles out and could see the glow of the steel furnaces in Bradfield before Ian stopped.

“Sam Small, is there onybody stronger nor me i’ Yorksha that tha knaws?” he asked.

“Nay, Ian lad. Tha’s t’strongest lad Ah ivver seed i’ all ma travels about t’world.”

“And if Ah wanted, Sam Small, Ah could break thee i’ two with ma bare hands here, couldn’t Ah?”

“Aye, that tha could, Ian.”

“So Ah could. Well, then, tha weren’t coddin’ toneight about t’Duke o’ Rudling and—tha knaws.”

“Ah, t’drawit de saynoor, tha means? Nay, Ian, it’s true as Ah’m standing here flaid o’ thee. Ah confeered on it like, wi’ t’schoilmeaster to mak’ sure there’d be noa mistakes.”

Ian stood silent. Sam began to think of the lateness of the hour and how Mully might be sitting up ready to give him Halifax.

“Er—owt else Ah can do for thee, Ian?”

“Nay,” Ian said a minute later, and they started home.

The next evening Ian walked the seven miles to Holdersby to the little dairy farm where Mary Ann Battersby and her mother lived. He didn’t know how to approach the matter, but finally he got Mary Ann out for a walk and blurted it out. Then he stood in the deepening evening as she sat on a stile, looking up at her. And Mary Ann was quite worth looking at; pert and pretty as a Guernsey calf, she was.

“Ian, ma love,” she said finally, “Ah’ve gate an idea.”

“Whet sort on an idea?”

“This sort,” she said. “Us could gate round it all, happen.”

“Gate round it?”

“Aye! Now lewk, suppose us aways to Bradfield and pretty as pretty us gates wed, quietlike. Then his lordship wadn’t hear on it until thee and me hed—well—until it were too late.”

Ian considered a while. “Mary Ann,” he said finally, “Ah’m fair capped at thee, Ah am. Ah’m net sure that’d be honest. Nay, if us did that, happen ivver after us’d feel like us was living under false pretenses.”

“Nay, if anybody raised a fuss, us could say us didn’t know.”

“But us *does* know,” Ian pointed out.

And she couldn’t budge him from this point, so she made the best of it.

“All reight,” she said finally. “After all it may be best, hard on us as it maught seem.”

“Eigh, now, it relieves me to hear thee tak’ it honest like that,” Ian told her. “Soa it’s all settled, then. All us maun do now is see his lordship and find out whet evenings he’s not busy like. We’ll ax him to pick a neight he’s free, and us’ll be married that day.”

“Well,” Mary Ann agreed, thinking over the whole proposition, “hard on us as it maught be, the law is the law, as tha says. It does seem funny, though, Ah hev’n’t heard on it afore this.”

“Well, Ah doan’t expect a maid would hear tell on such things,” Ian said. “It were only by lucky chance Ah heard on it. Ba gum, if Ah hedn’t us maught have made a tarrible mistake.”

Ian walked back home, and that Saturday he got all dressed up in his Sunday best and called for Mary Ann. Together they set off for the duke’s castle. They had no trouble getting in, for the gate was open and lots of ladies in summer clothes were driving in.

Ian went up the gravel paths, through the park, till he came to the big front door of the castle and banged and banged. Finally a great big old chap with fierce eyebrows and a crabbed face opened the door. He was almost as big as Ian himself.

“Is tha t’Duke o’ Rudling?” Ian rumbled.

“That Ah am,” roared the duke. “Whet can Ah dew for thee?”

“Ah’ve coom to see thee on a personal matter,” Ian shouted. “This is Mary Ann Battersby o’ Holdersby, and Ah’m Ian Cawper o’ Powkithorpe Brig.”

“Net the strongest lad i’ all Yorksha?” the duke cried.

“Aye, that’s me,” Ian admitted.

“Well, coom in, lad,” the duke roared. “Ah’ve heard tell on thee. Coom in. Doan’t stand o’ t’doorstep.”

Ian and Mary Ann followed the duke through a hall full of paintings and suits of armor. They went up a noble staircase till they came to a room full of nothing but books and big chairs.

“Sit ye down, the two on ye,” the duke said. “Now, Ian lad, whet can Ah dew for thee?”

At this point the words got stuck in Ian’s throat.

“Come, come, come,” the duke roared. “Out wi’ it!”

Mary Ann came to the rescue.

“Well, him and me’s off to be wed.”

“Eigh, now that’s champion,” the duke cried. “Just the thing we need. A lot o’ little lads i’ t’ parish wi’ some o’ thy heft, Ian. And ye’ll be heving a hawf dozen bairns or so, wi’ out doubt.”

Mary Ann blushed prettily.

“Now in a manner o’ speaking, your lorship,” she said, “that’s almost the varry thing us coom to see ye about.”

“See me? Why, damme, eh? What, that is to say—damme!”

“Ian’ll explain,” she said. “Go on, Ian. Tell t’ duke about t’ drawit de saynoor.”

So Ian explained how he would have called before, but he’d just heard of the arrangement. The duke was very attentive and interested, and so Ian told him how he came to hear about it.

“And since Mary Ann was born and raised i’ thy duchy,” Ian said, “us decided to coom to thee. Us thowt it would be nobbut the polite thing, like, to ax thee how tha were fixed for appointments. Now how abaht today week.”

The duke got up and walked about the room for several minutes.

“Ian,” he said, “t’ truth is, lad, today week it just happens Ah maun hev a conference wi’ t’ House o’ Lords.”

“Eigh, too bad,” Ian said. “Then how about a fortnet from today. Us would like to be wed of a Sat’ day.”

“Ba gum, Ian. Tha hes me theer, too,” the duke said. “It’s t’ oppening o’ t’ grouse season, and Ah maun off to Scotland.”

“Nay, t’ grouse season don’t oppen i’ summer,” Ian said.

“Now hark at me. That were a slip. Ah meant, it’s t’ oppening o’ ma racing season.”

“Eigh dear,” Ian sighed. “Well, happen it maught be best to wark fro’ thy end. Now whet evenings, like, hes tha free fro’ engagements?”

The duke scratched his head.

“Ian, lad. Ah’m reight flaid Ah’m booked up solid for sivveral months.”

“Sivveral months. Well then, if we maun wait, we maun. Suppose tha noatifies us the first free date convenient.”

“Look here, Ian my lad, it does seem a bit of a shame for thee to be held up.”

“But there’s no two ways wi’ t’ law,” Ian pointed out. “Us must wait.”

The duke pulled his long mustache a while, then he looked at Mary Ann.

“Coom here, ma lass,” he said.

Mary Ann went over shyly, and the duke took hold of her hand and patted it. Then he sighed, a long, long sigh, and let go of it.

“Look here, Ian Cawper,” he said, “Ah’ll tell thee whet Ah’m off to dew. For a wedding present, Ah’ll let thee off my drawit de saynoor. Tha can hev Mary Ann all to thysen the first neight.”

“Why, your lordship, tha’s that kind,” Ian said. “But Ah couldn’t hear tell on it.”

“Why not?”

“Why, there’s the law. The law’s the law, tha knows.”

“Aye, but suppose us just forgates it this time.”

“The law’s the law,” Ian said. “And hard on us as it maight be, we maun observe it.”

They went at it for quite a while with Ian steadfast at the point that the law was the law. So the duke took another tack and proved to Ian that laws were meant to be broken, because if no one broke them there’d be no need for them. The duke put this so cleverly that he floored Ian in the argument, and Ian seemed satisfied. In fact, he had Mary Ann by the hand and was just leaving when he halted his bulk in the doorway. He stood fast while a suspicion seeped from his head down into his body and then permeated him.

“Nay,” he said suddenly. “Ah wean’t goa. Soa, that’s it!”

“That’s what?” the duke asked.

“Ah know thee!” Ian shouted. “Tha’s gate it in thy yead that my Mary Ann isn’t good enough for t’drawit de saynoor! Soa that’s it!”

“Why, Ian,” the duke protested. “Such a thing as that never passed my mind. She’s as bonny and bucksome a lass as I ever saw!”

“Nay, tha needn’t try to softsoap us,” Ian thundered. “Ah’ve decided that us’ll goa threw wi’ this thing in a reight and proper way—and Ah’m net off to hev ma mind changed.”

The duke tried to argue, but Ian would have none of it.

“Nay, ma Mary Ann’s as good as ony other lass i’ this duchy,” Ian said stubbornly, “and as her future husband Ah’m off to see she gates her reights. Now that’s ma final say, soa tha’d better tell me what neight tha’s free, and ba gum, if Ah hev to, Ah’ll coom wi’ her mysen and see it’s done reight and proper.”

The duke got up and strode round the room, coughing and blowing his nose and looking at Ian and scratching his head.

“Ian lad,” he said finally, “tha’s reight. It’s ma duty. Howivver, there’s a few things that Ah maun talk ovver wi’ thee—that it’s better only men talk about—soa us’ll ax Mary Ann to excuse us a minute.”

After she was gone the duke sat at his desk and coughed.

“First, Ian Cawper,” he said, “Ah want to say tha’s been a varry fine and honest lad to stand oop to me and tell me ma duty, the way tha hes. There’s been few men i’ ma life ivver stood oop to me the way tha did—and Ah maun say Ah’ve nowt but admiration for thee for it.”

“Thank your lordship kindly,” Ian said.

“In other words, lad, tha’s a man after ma own heart. And because tha’s a man after ma own heart Ah’m off to let thee into a secret Ah wouldn’t let another soul know.”

The duke looked up to see how Ian was taking this. Then he stood up, peered around cautiously, went to a window and pulled the curtain aside. Ian, looking over his shoulder, saw the lawn below where many women walked or sat at tables sipping tea.

“Tha sees them, Ian,” the duke whispered.

“Aye, Ah dew,” Ian said, puzzled. “Who’re they?”

“Ian lad, Ah wean’t lie to thee,” the duke said, cunningly. “They’re all waiting for the drawit de saynoor.”

“Waiting? Ain’t noan of ’em wed?”

“Aye, soom on ’em’s wed; but they’re waiting.”

“Tha means,” Ian said, “tha’s way behind on—on thy hoamwark.”

“That’s it exactly—way, way behind on my homework, Ian.”

“Now by gum,” Ian breathed. “There maun be near a hundred on ’em.”

“There’s ovver a hundred, Ian, ovver a hundred,” the duke said, sadly.

“Well now, ba gum, to get caught oop again Ah should say tha hes quite a giant feat afore thee.”

“Ian, tha’s takken the varry words reight out o’ ma mouth. A giant feat it is. Noa other words could describe it. And, moorovver, Ian, tha maun consider Ah’m not the man Ah used to be. Ah—if this were nobbut ma younger days, Ian—ah, then Ah could ha’ got cleaned oop o’ this bunch in no time, as tha maught say. If Ah were like thee—why, for thee it would be nowt—happen three month or soa.”

“Aye, happen Ah could addle it i’ three month,” Ian agreed, “but eigh, man—that’d be quite a job even for a chap like me.”

“That’s reight, Ian,” the duke said, delighted. “Ah’m that happy tha shows thysen soa properly understanding.”

The duke dropped the curtain quickly, and went back to his desk. He sat there in a posture of utter dejection.

“In t’owd days, Ah could keep oop, Ian. But now—at last Ah maun confess—it’s gating too much for me.”

“Now, now, your lordship,” Ian said. “Doan’t tak’ on, now. There, there. Doan’t tak’ on.”

He patted the duke consolingly on his bent shoulders.

“Ian, Ah can’t help it, Ah can’t. Why, strange as it may seem to an ordinary chap, it’s gate to t’point wheer Ah contemplate wi’ horror the thowt o’ going to bed wi’ a lass—even when she’s as pert and bonnie a buxom handful as thy Mary Ann.”

And the duke bowed his head in his hands.

“Ba gum,” Ian said. “Ah niver thowt on it that way. Moast men would lewk wi’ joy on the prospect of a drawit de saynoor. But Ah onderstand how it could be wearisome. There’s limits to all things, no doubt.”

“Ian, tha’s hit it,” the duke said, looking up. “There’s limits to all things, as all men know but few women realize. That’s why Ah sent thy Mary Ann out—so’s us could

talk man to man.”

“Well, this does put us in a pretty pickle,” Ian said. “Ah want dearly to dew whet’s reight and proper, but Ah mislike sadly to add to thy already heavy burden.”

“Tarribly heavy burden, Ian.”

Ian walked up and down a moment, as he found it aided him thinking. Then he stopped.

“Your lordship,” he said finally, “Ah’ve coom to a conclusion. Ma conclusion is, that while there may be laws o’ man; ba gum there’s laws o’ nature, too . . .”

“There are! There are, Ian!”

“. . . And a man may flout the furst, but he cannot the last.”

“He cannot, Ian! He cannot!”

“Theerfoar, Ah’ve decided ’at me and Mary Ann, us is off to let thee off the drawit de saynoor.”

“Ian Cawper! Ian Cawper! Ah thank thee from the bottom o’ ma heart. And to show thee Ah fully appreciate it, and to mak’ oop for allowing me to observe a lapse in ma bounden duty, Ah’ll grant thee onything else tha wishes. Now lad, what dosta wish for?”

That was quite a poser for Ian, so he scratched his head vigorously for several moments.

“Coom, coom, lad. Doan’t be flaid. Out wi’ it. Onything in ma power to grant thee.”

“Nay,” said Ian. “Coom to think on it, their’s nowt Ah could wish for—happen barring one thing.”

“What is it? Speak and it shall be thine.”

“Well, t’only thing Ah ivver envied thee was running a rabbit or a hare oop i’ thy woods.”

“What?” roared the duke. “So you’re the damned poacher who’s been invading my property! I’ll . . .”

And then his face changed.

“Ian Cawper, a bargain for a bargain, and nivver let nub’dy ivver say a Yorkshaman ivver retreated from a foe or a promise. So the wish shall be thine. Now away wi’ ye, and God mak’ thy marriage fruitful.”

So away went Ian, and the duke sat there, sadly shaking his head and sighing deeply. He sat there until a servant came in and said:

“Your lordship! The Ladies’ Committee for the Society for the Preservation of Ethical Culture are on the lawn. Her ladyship requests that you make an appearance, if only briefly.”

The duke sighed again.

“All right,” he roared. “Damme, away wi’ ye.”

And when he finally appeared on the lawn, the ladies agreed that seldom had they seen him in a viler temper. For the Duke of Rudling was deemed to be an incorrigibly bad-tempered old man at all times.

But those same ladies would have been surprised at the duke's temper two weeks later at Ian Cawper's wedding. For he did attend the wedding. And he danced a Roger de Coverley with Mary Ann, and chucked her under the chin, and pinched her where she was plumpest, and sighed and swore and drank three pints of ale.

A right wonderful time they had at the wedding, for the old people recalled that the duke hadn't been down to one of their weddings in twelve years and more. And there he was, shouting and winking, and everyone tumbling over themselves to get out of his way. For he was remembered as a terrible man when he was crossed, and they were afraid of him.

All but Ian Cawper. Ian Cawper was afraid of no man who ever walked. So he looked the duke in the eye, as one big man should look another. And the duke shook hands with him in front of all the people and said:

"Ian Cawper. Tha were willing to do summat for me, and tha's cheered ma aging days. Soa Ah now dew summat for thee."

Then he gave Ian a leather purse with fifty golden sovereigns in it; and he gave him a roll of paper with red ribbon on it, and inside the paper it said that Ian Cawper should have the right to run hare and rabbit in the Duke of Rudling's woods, and the right should descend to his son, and to that son's son, and on forever as long as there should be a Cawper to walk, and a woods to walk in.

So it all turned out very well, in spite of the fact that the duke didn't live up to his ancient right and duty.

At first Mary Ann, being a woman, felt a little upset about it way down in her mind. But as the years went on, even she felt that perhaps it had all been for the best.

She would often sigh and look at Ian.

"Ba gum," she would say. "It maught ha' been a reight interesting experience and all, in a manner o' speaking. But on the whole, Ah gate noa complaints to mak'—if tha knows whet Ah mean."

And she hadn't, either—if you know what she meant.

ADVENTURE IX

CONSTABLE SAM AND THE UGLY TYKE

*Taking one thing with another,
A policeman's life . . .*

“HERE we are at war,” Sam said, “and here Ah am, trying to do ma bit, and what happens?”

“T’Germans tremble and ask for peace,” Mully suggested.

“Sarcasm,” Sam sniffed. “Let me tell thee, if it weren’t for us Auxiliary Policemen, ye’d be murdered in your bed by spies, Ah don’t doubt.”

“Once Ah read a book about thutty-nine steps,” Mully said, going on knitting the khaki sweater. “A reight champion story it were. And t’lad in that one—eigh, how he could cop spies.”

“Books,” Sam snorted. “Heh, there’s no fiction to marching fifteen mile a neight over t’moor. Ah don’t see why Ah can’t hev t’Spread Eagle beat and then . . .”

“Then they’d know reight wheer to find thee. They want thee to patrol a beat—no drink it dry. Ah tell thee, yon young bobby’s a bright lad. T’schoolmaster’s t’only teetotaler in t’village, and he puts him on t’pub beat.”

“It’s a waste of opportunity,” Sam said, pulling on his arm badge. “At least, they might let me hev headquarters duty. Ah can write reports as well as John Willie Braithwaite can.”

“What’s wrong wi’ walking a beat like a man?” Mully asked.

“Oh, it’s—er—it’s lonesome—and besides, Ah got bunions and they hurt that cruel!”

“Bunions!” Mully snorted. “Tha’s nivver had no bunions. Off wi’ thee—tha’ll be late.”

“How can Ah goa? Wheer’s ma tin hat?”

“Tha’s a policeman, soa do a bit o’ detective work and hunt for it,” Mully suggested.

“No respect nor comfort a chap gets for serving his King and Country,” Sam grumbled, taking the helmet down from behind the door where Mully put it neatly every morning when she tidied up.

He gave a bit of a polish to the helmet with his sleeve, put it on his head at what he hoped was a dare-devil angle, heaved a big sigh, and went out into the evening for his night’s patrol.

Mully looked at the door over the top of her spectacles.

“Now what,” she mused, “is bothering yon?”

It wasn't really The Spread Eagle beat that worried Sam. Nor was it any such things as bunions. Sam would have liked the headquarters trick, true—but merely because he wanted to be boss of any job he tackled and he felt his dignity was affronted. But his feet—why Sam was a tough old Yorkshireman who could walk fifteen miles before breakfast and never turn a hair.

What worried Sam, the keen-eyed old dog fancier of Polkingthorpe Brig, was nothing more or less than—a dog! And what a dog it was!

Undoubtedly all of you have seen such a dog in your lives. You know the kind. Someone buys it as a puppy because it's furry and cuddly and lovable—and six months later its ancestral past catches up with its present to ruin everyone's future. It generally looks something like an over-size polo pony wearing someone's caracul coat. Usually it has the brains of an idiot, the soul of a springbok, and the dexterity of a rhinoceros.

That's what this dog was like. At first Sam hadn't minded it. He knew the dog and forgave its existence. For it was owned by the old Widow Cathingham. She was Yorkshire only by marriage and so couldn't be expected to have that inborn omniscience on matters canine that true Tykes have. She always left it outside at nights in the fond belief that it was guarding her door. Instead, the great ugly tyke went lolloping foolishly round the whole Riding. And of late it had taken to following Sam on his night patrol.

Sam had shrugged the matter off at first. Although such a misshapen brute could inculcate no affection in the heart of a dog fancier, in his lonesomeness he had accepted it.

"It'll be a bit o' company, like, as Ah stroll along, happen," he said to himself.

But the dog had got on his nerves. Its horrible slip-sloppy way of walking, its ebullient over-friendliness, its refusal to leave him in peace—those things had all been enough. But finally Sam had become obsessed with one more feature. The dog destroyed his dignity.

How, I ask you, could a man walk along his beat with that tremendous dignity so necessary to service as a British constable—even an auxiliary one—with a great ape of an ugly dog pacing behind him, imitating him, mocking his every effort to go with stern, law-defending tread.

For it is hard enough for a little, aging man, not much more than five feet, to achieve the dignity compatible with the role of bobby. Sam had worked hard at it. Every once in a while he would pull in his tummy, turn his mustache up, set his jaw in a way that brooked no good for evildoers, and say: "Remember, Sam! Tha's a constable now."

That was hard enough to do. But what on earth chance had a man when, in addition, there was a great, fool, lumbering dog slolloping along after him, keeping step with him, stopping when he stopped, going when he went, mocking his every movement?

Sam had become right put out about that dog.

Sam Small shut his eyes and shuddered. Through the darkness he could hear the dog coming. It was always at this time, and this place. He steeled himself, helplessly. In

the murky light of a half-moon he waited, his eyes closed. Then the thing hit him. Sam had given up even defending himself.

The beast rose, planted its paws on his chest, sent him bowling over, and slobbered in hobbledehoy joy over his face.

Sam fought himself free, struggled to his feet, and aimed a kick at the thing. It retreated beyond range, sat down, and looked at him adoringly, with its huge tongue lolling out.

“One prick ear,” Sam said, “and one over the starboard bow! A coat like a coconut doormat! A face like a lion! A gait like a kangaroo! One hand higher and tha’s a hunter! Ten pounds heavier and they’d have thee hitched to a plow! Yer misgotten, ugly, nasty insult to all dogs—go home!”

The dog jumped up and there, in the moonlight, danced an eerie conga.

“Ooooh, ma gum,” Sam moaned. “And it wants to play!”

He put his hand before his eyes to shut out the sight, and staggered away on the Wuxley patrol. But if he could shut it from sight, he could not from hearing. Behind him, on the hard path, he could hear the ghastly slip-slopping of those shapeless paws. He plugged his fingers in his ears and ran. The dog ran after him.

Sam turned round and charged at the dog. The dog retreated hurriedly. Sam stopped. The dog stopped. Sam took up his patrol. The dog stalked behind him.

With hate in his eye Sam went on. At last he came to where the moor path joined the hard-topped Wuxley road. A gleam came in his eye. Stealthily he hunted along the edge of the road. The dog sat down, watching him. At last Sam found what he wanted—a fine, big rock. A sturdy rock. About the size of a cricket ball and the weight of a sledge hammer.

The dog moved politely away.

“Nice doggie, coom here,” Sam said, advancing.

With a happy laugh in his eye, the dog moved just as far away.

“All reight, then. A long shot,” Sam said.

He spat on the rock, twirled his arm and then . . .

From the shadow under a roadside oak tree came a voice.

“Mr. Small!”

Sam halted, his arm bent. A quick beam of light shot out. From under the tree came a uniformed figure, pushing a bicycle. It was Constable Hurst—a real constable—the young chap sent down from West Riding headquarters to supervise, train, encourage, and abet the wartime volunteers.

“Mr. Small. Auxiliary Constable Small,” the young chap said, patiently, sadly. For he had experienced many things in his recent duty that gave him cause for weary bewilderment.

“Ah were jooost—just off to chuck this here rock,” Sam said, as if this would free him from the charge of canicide he had contemplated.

“So I see,” said Constable Hurst, sadly. He clicked his tongue. “Throwing stones for a dog to chase! Playing games while on patrol. Mr. Small, a constable—even an

auxiliary constable—doesn't play games with a dog while he's on duty. Because when he's on duty, Mr. Small—he's ON DUTY!"

This last was given in a military shout—in a manner that told Sam Small that Constable Hurst was standing for no monkey business.

"Aye," said Sam.

Without another word he strode off on his beat.

And still, from behind him, came the flip-flopping of the paws of that horrible tyke.

It was the duty of the man on the Wuxley patrol to inspect the old Wuxley quarry. Why, no one was quite sure. You just sort of—well, inspected it.

So Sam was strictly in the line of duty when he crouched in the lee of a tumble-down hut deep in the quarry. But what he was doing—that wasn't exactly duty.

"Nice doggie," he was saying—and nearer and nearer came the horrible, but affectionate, dog. Sam patted its head, deceitfully, lovingly. He scratched behind its ears until it almost crooned in ecstasy. He whispered loving words to it as he tickled its back. And then, over its head he slipped a noose of old, one-inch rope. And the other end of the rope was fastened to a steel rod. The steel rod was set in a concrete base for some departed and forgotten piece of quarry machinery.

Sam jumped up, contemplating the scene with happiness.

"Now, ye ugly, joogling, bluggy blooger," he said. "Tow that after thee. Ta-ta!"

And with a heart carefree for the first time in many nights, Sam went on his way. Steadily, majestically, he swung along with his feet going in the stately rhythm which for ages has told the good British burghers that all was well and the watchful police were afoot in the night.

He chuckled to himself happily, and set his mind to the duties that lay before him.

"Now," he said. "Swing round the Wuxley football field, trying all doors o' t'clubhouse to see they're locked. Then heading home along the Allerby road, trying the gate at Colonel Polliwell's villa. Thence . . ."

And there he stopped. A shudder ran through him. It could not be true. And yet it was! Behind him was the sound of paws. They were falling in rhythm to his own feet. It was the dog. It was behind him. It was parading in mocking imitation of him!

Sam, without losing pace, looked slowly behind him. There was the dog, going in beautiful burlesque of his own imitation of a policeman's stride. Its huge maw was lolling open in what was undoubtedly a derisive grin. Behind it it was towing two yards of stout hemp rope.

"Oooh," Sam moaned in agony. "Why do all these things have to happen to me? Ah give up! Lord knows Ah've tried and tried!"

Miserable, resigned to his fate, he bowed his head and started down the dark road to the Wuxley football field.

At the gate to Colonel Polliwell's villa Sam halted, alert.

Something, his senses told him, was wrong. As he phrased it in his own mind—summat foony was up!

He looked again at the padlocked chain on the colonel's iron gate. Surely it was fastened. And all else was well. The doors of the football clubhouse had all been locked. He hadn't forgotten anything.

Sam started on his way again. But his mind wouldn't be quieted. There was something. . . .

"T'ugly tyke!" he said, suddenly.

That was it. The dog was no longer following him. From behind came no slip-slopping of paws. He was free, alone, at peace.

He almost capered for joy, but then he halted again. And his mind refused to soar, untrammled. For Sam Small, above all else, was a dog man. He knew dogs. He had raised them, trained them, coped them. He knew dogs from the inside out, and this knowledge was gnawing away at his content.

"Eigh, now," he counseled himself. "It's left thee, so be happy for unexpected blessings and go on thy way."

But he shook his head.

"That isn't good enough," another voice seemed to say in the back of his head. "You couldn't get rid of that dog for love nor money. But now it's gone. Why? Why isn't it following you any more?"

"That's it!" Sam said aloud. "Why?"

"Don't worry why. Just be thankful," another part of him advised.

"It ain't good enough," Sam answered himself aloud. "Why has that dog left thee? It wouldn't leave thee for nowt—there must be summat interesting. . . ."

But he had passed no one. No one was abroad at that night hour. There had been no sounds of anyone moving in the night. And yet. . . .

"Steady, Sam lad," Sam advised himself. "Now what tha has to do is just go back over thy trail until tha comes to where t'dog is. And, since this is police wark, tha might as well go quietlike."

Silently, he stole back along his own tracks. As he came to the football field, instead of going in the main gate he tiptoed to a gap in the fence, and then went quietly over the turf toward the rear of the clubhouse. And then, his heart leaped. For there, sitting in the murk, looking up at the back door, his tail sweeping over an already well-swept arc, was the ugly tyke.

"So, there's somebody in there, and he wants 'em to come out and play," he thought. "Get ready, Sam!"

He pulled his chinstrap all the way under his chin, and then pulled from under his clothing a ten-inch length of lead pipe. Sam had never let anyone know about that lead pipe—not even Mully. It was a secret all his own, a secret between him and his dream that some night there might come a glorious moment when he, Sam Small, did battle with some burly evildoer—and won.

He spat on his right hand and gripped the pipe. He tiptoed forward. With his left hand he reached down and tickled the ugly tyke between the ears. The animal gave a

fatuous sound of contentment. Sam looked around for another hand to try the door. He solved it by putting the pipe between his teeth. With his right hand he tried the door. It was quite firm.

Sam pondered on this problem. Then he nodded his head. He had no knowledge of the ways of criminals beyond that gained in occasional and somewhat despairing lectures given to the handful of village men by Constable Hurst. And from one of these drifted back words he had not thought he remembered at the time:

“The ordinary burglar effects entrance by a rear door, then sets wedges under that door, and makes his exit later by another route—usually the front door, leaving casually as if he were an ordinary resident in the place.”

“All right. The front door, then,” Sam said. “He’ll not have that one wedged. So we’ll crash in, rush him, and take him by surprise. Aye—that’s the ticket!”

Quietly he tiptoed around to the front of the clubhouse.

He went up the steps, hunched his shoulders, drew a breath, and charged. Sam got his first surprise. Even while in the air, he half saw the doorknob turn, half glimpsed a man opening the door. Then he caromed off the loose door, went through space and landed in a heap on the floor. His tin hat went bumping away in the darkness. He sat up, with his teeth aching so badly that he could taste a brassy sort of taste in his mouth. But he was not deterred.

“So there is a burglar,” he told himself. “And he was just trying to leave by the front. Probably he heard thee at the back. So up and after him.”

He could still hear, like a memory of a thing gone by, the scurry of feet down the hall.

“Come, come, Sam lad,” he said.

He got up and started down the hall in pursuit—or that was what he meant to do. Unfortunately, he happened to tread on his own tin hat, and so went into his second one-point landing.

“Nasty, slippery things, tin ’ats,” Sam said.

He was sitting up, fingering a great, dull area on the point of his chin. He could feel it swelling like a balloon, even in the short space of time that had passed since he landed on it.

“Aye, Sam,” he said, sadly, “tha doesn’t seem to be going about this the right way. Now don’t be so bloomin’ impetuous, ma lad.”

He groped around for his helmet—but it was gone again. He got up.

“Now, go easy and don’t tread on it no more. Tha’s certainly spoiled any chance o’ taking him by surprise. So tha’ll have to use tactics—aye, that’s it. Tactics. He’s down the hall somewhere, and probably playing bobbies and thieves wi’ thee. So go get him. But tha’d better go quietlike.”

Sam sat down and unlaced his boots. He set them side by side, neatly, in the middle of the floor. He stole, silently, in his stockinged feet, down the corridor. Halfway down he stopped. The office door at the right, his groping hands told him, was locked. The one at the left swung ajar.

That was it. He'd heard no door slam after the feet scurried away. The man was hiding in this office!

He listened. There came the faintest, minute sounds—and there was a curious, faint, warm smell in the air. The man was in there!

And at that point, for the first time, Sam Small felt the very human emotion of fear. There was a man in there—a criminal—one who might kill him if cornered. And here was he, aging Sam Small, with not even the activity and strength of middle age left to him, to pit against it.

“Ooooh, I wish I'd turned down this job before I started it,” he moaned to himself.

But even as this passed through his mind, and the perspiration of panic rolled down his forehead, his brain began reciting words—words that one could almost hear again—spoken in the crisp, young voice of the bobby chap:

“Remember, that when a British constable has nothing else left, he always has the important weapon of authority. That is why we carry no firearms. For this weapon of authority, if used with promptness, confidence, and boldness, will overcome superior numbers and often cow the most dangerous criminal type.”

Sam steeled himself.

“Ba gum,” he said, silently. “I hope tha's right, lad. Because there's liable to be an awful bloomin' splash if tha's been kidding us. But here goes!”

And, trembling and afraid in every fiber of his body, Sam gripped his lead pipe, reached around the door, found the electric switch, snapped it on, and stepped into the room.

“All right. I've got yer,” he said.

Then he stood in surprise. For there wasn't one man. There were two. One was seated, quietly, behind a desk. The other stood, his shoulders hunched, in the corner, staring toward the door.

“Ooooh, ma gum,” Sam groaned mentally. “Two of 'em.”

But he took another step into the room, planted his feet apart as though barring any escape, put his thumbs in his belt and smiled on them, pityingly.

“Now,” he said, sternly. “Will ye come quietly—or shall I come and take yer? And—remember. Anything ye say may be used in evidence against yer.”

The last part he had read in detective stories, and it sounded very policemanlike, he thought.

Then, as he waited, with the men unmoving, Sam began to perspire, and he forgot about the weapon of authority. For, somehow, he saw himself as the two men must see him—a little fattening man, past middle age, standing there in his stocking feet, his blue serge suit crumpled and covered with dust, his helmet gone, his chin bleeding and swollen from his tumble.

He wished he knew what to do next.

“Oooh, ba gum,” he thought. “Mully was right. I shouldn't have gone sticking myself forward to help out the bobbies. I wonder if I can just walk out and pretend I

never saw them. They'll run away—sort of a mutual armistice, in a manner o' speaking."

But, as he thought this, and the bigger man in the corner bent forward and took a step forward, Sam, much to even his own surprise, spread his arms to barricade the door and clenched the lead pipe.

"Ah, no, ye don't," he snarled. "No, ye don't."

At that moment the man behind the desk waved his companion back, and spoke, pleasantly. "Why, good evening," he said, in a pleasant voice. "What can we do for you?"

"For me?" Sam said. "Well—I'm an auxiliary constable. Look!"

Almost indignantly he held up his arm for the man to see the brassard.

"Why, so you are," the man said. His voice was calm and with what Sam would have called a very swanky accent.

"But just what, exactly, can we do for you, my good man?"

"Well, look here," Sam said. "I thought ye were burglars."

The man smiled, forgivingly. "Now, constable," he said, "do we look like burglars?"

Sam examined them. They certainly did not look like burglars. Both were dressed in expensive tweeds. They wore colored ties—what the toffs called regimental ties. The big chap by the corner had a smart Tattersall waistcoat. Sam had never seen two more British-gentlemen-looking chaps. The week end, country type.

"No, sir," he said, respectfully. "Ye don't. But what are ye doing here?"

The man smiled. "We're friends of Mr. Black," he said. "You know Mr. Black, don't you—the vice-president of the club?"

"Oh, aye," Sam said. "Of course." He didn't know any Mr. Black, but then he didn't want to appear too ignorant, either.

"Well, he gave us permission to sit here—we're doing a little business—going over records and so on."

Sam scratched his head. "That's all right then, sir. But still and all, I don't know exactly what I ought to do. I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to come along with me and explain to the bloody bo—to headquarters."

"Why, we'd be delighted," the man said.

He rose, brushing his short, guardee mustache. Sam saw a quick glance he gave toward his companion. And then his heart sank.

These two gentlemen—suppose, now, they were up to any nasty business—get him outside in the dark, cosh him on the blooming head, and get away.

He looked around wildly, as if seeking help. Then his eye lit on a neat suitcase on the table beside the wall. It was standing, open-hinged. But it wasn't a suitcase. Inside there was a panel, and dials. That was what he had smelled—the warm, curious odor. A wireless set!

He stepped back and gripped the lead pipe. "Hold on," he said. "A wireless. What yer doing with that there?"

The man leaned back against the desk and laughed. He turned to his companion. "You see, Derek, old chap," he said, "there's no eluding the eye of our ever alert volunteer constables."

He turned back to Sam: "Good for you, my man. I suppose I'll have to tell you the truth. Do you ever play the football pools?"

"Ah, who doesn't?" Sam said, guardedly.

"And I suppose you know that they're swindles—cleverly rigged-up schemes to sweat the hard-earned money from the working classes—oh, a few small prizes once in a while—but do you think those people really exist that they say win immense fortunes?"

"Well," Sam agreed, nervously, "I often did think there might be some fishy business in it——"

"It's crooked, I tell you. Now me and my partner, Mr. Derek Forsythe, here, have a plan. We're putting in a wireless at every soccer field in the land. We'll send secret information of the games to a central headquarters in time to post entries. We'll break the crooked ring of corrupt financial interests that are grinding you."

Now Sam Small was little, he was grubby, he was insignificant. He was slow-thinking. He was even, if you wish, an ignorant little rural Englishman. But he was marked also by the saving quality of all his kind—he had a superabundance of native common sense. And he knew the man was lying.

First, he knew that all football-pool entries had to be postmarked long before any game started. Depend upon it, Sam had dwelt long enough on some private system of beating the football pools not to have stubbed his mental toe on this elementary fact. That made the man a plain liar.

Second, the man had spoken as if this were a soccer field. While the rest of the world might think of all Britain as being an immense green field where men played and watched soccer, in Sam's bleak section a round ball was considered something for little lassies and Englishmen to play with. The football played in that part of the country—played and watched and bet on and cheered about by thousands—was of the type known as Northern Union. It was played with an oval ball which a man dribbled, carried, punted, drop-kicked or passed—a jolly sort of mass mayhem in which if a man was "laid out," as they called it, no substitution could be made—leading to the simple conclusion that if you could kick the other team right off its feet you had the field all to yourselves and could then proceed to score at will. And mistaking the place for a soccer field meant that the man was a very poorly informed stranger to Yorkshire.

These things Sam had stored away. But when he heard the last speech, the light broke on him. He had heard too many loudmouthed arguers in pubs and on the election platforms and read his paper too well, and listened too long on the wireless not to have developed a critical faculty where such speeches were concerned. And as he heard it, he said, mentally, "Sounds like a speech by that bloody Hitler!"

And then he knew it. The wireless!

"Why," he said, in childish awe, "ye're Gairman spies!"

As he breathed it he knew it sounded too fantastic. The men looked so—so British.

“Of course they do, gormless,” he counseled himself. “D’ye expect they’d sneak in with a Gairman sossidge in one hand and a dachshund in t’other?”

The man before the desk was smiling. “So?” he said.

“Aye—so,” Sam said back.

“And if we were German spies, what would you do, constable?”

“I’d—I’d have to arrest ye,” Sam said.

The man stroked his chin. Then his voice came swift and hard: “And if I were to offer you five thousand pounds—now! What then?”

“Five thousand pounds,” breathed Sam. “Nay—I’d have to arrest ye.”

The man stood erect. He lifted his hand in signal to the man in the corner. Sam looked over. The man was holding a metal thing—by gum! It was a pistol! Sam started back in horror. All he could see was that small blue circle of steel, and the hole in the middle of it.

Sam felt his whole body break out in a perspiration. “Here, here, now,” he said. “Don’t point that bloody thing at me!”

“Ah, that changes your mind,” the man by the desk said, smiling.

Sam looked from the gun to the man at the desk and then back again. He felt a burning in his throat. “No,” he said, firmly. “I’ve got to arrest ye! Don’t ye see? I’ve got to arrest ye!”

He reached around for his handcuffs, in a futile gesture. He held them out and took a step forward. “Come on, now,” he said. “Come quietly—or—I’ll have to come and take you!”

The slim man made a sound of impatience. Then he motioned to the other with his hand.

The man with the gun nodded and began walking forward. Sam leaped back to the door and stood with arms outstretched across it.

The man with the gun spoke for the first time. “If you move,” he said, “I’ll shoot.”

Step by step he came forward. Sam waited. And then all three froze into silence, and stood listening.

“There, ye see,” Sam cried, with soul-felt hope. “Our chaps has the house surrounded.” He had got that from detective novels, too.

“Quiet,” the man with the gun said.

Quickly he jabbed Sam in the side with the gun, pushing him away from the door. He stood, watching Sam, but listening to the darkened corridor. Sam’s heart leaped with joy as he heard sounds. And then, as rapidly, it sank.

For the sound he heard was the gangling, slipperty-slop of the ugly tyke.

“Oh, ma gum,” groaned Sam, inwardly. “As though I haven’t enough on ma hands now.”

As he thought it he saw the ungainly, awful shape come through the door. With a sort of moan of slobbery affection the lop-eared hound leaped at the man with the gun. Under the rush of such enthusiasm, he went over backward, firing the gun as he did so.

Now Sam had been in many a Yorkshire rough-and-tumble in his younger days, and what he did then was due to no process of thought. It was more a matter of instinct. He dove at the man, and smacked him across the knuckles with the lead pipe. He managed to skin his own knuckles doing so. Quickly he snapped one end of the handcuffs over the wrist.

Then he pushed away the great, wriggling dog, which was trying to slobber over both their faces in a sort of adolescent delight. He rapped the man on the skull with his homemade blackjack. He wondered where the gun had gone. He wondered where the other man was. He looked up. He saw the other man in the corner. At that moment, the dog saw him, too. It opened its huge mouth in a grin of delight at the prospect of even more playmates. It drew back, putting its forelegs and head close to the floor, as in a puppyish position preliminary to a frolicking leap. Sam heard the man shouting:

“Hold your dog! Hold your dog!”

For the first time the truth flashed through Sam’s mind. They were afraid of the dog. That was it. The man on the floor had rolled over and was covering his neck with his interlaced hands. The man in the corner was pressed back in terror. They thought this great, shambling dog was dangerous. But if they ever found out it merely wanted to play . . .

Sam dove forward and just managed to grab the terrible tyke by the tail. It let out an outraged wail. He clawed himself, in a sort of hand-over-hand fashion, up the dog’s back until he had its mane.

“Now then,” he said. “Come over here—holding out yer arm—for I can’t hold him much longer.” And, to give Sam credit, he was speaking the truth when he said that. The hound was as strong as a bull rhinoceros.

His eyes staring at the dog’s great, dripping jaws, the slim man edged forward. Sam pulled his wrist down to the floor, and snapped the other end of the handcuffs tight. Then he blew out a breath of relief.

“There,” he said. “I told ye I’d have to arrest ye. Get up and march.”

The only difficulty that Sam had after that was due to the fact that he’d snapped the handcuffs on the right wrist of each prisoner, which left them facing in opposite directions.

“Well, I can’t help that now,” he thought. “Ye can’t do everything right the first time ye try it—especially when ye’re sort of hurried. And, besides, I don’t have the key with me.”

It was solved by having the prisoners march closely one behind the other.

“It’s quite an invention,” Sam thought proudly. “Certainly stops ’em from running away—happen I’ve invented summat in police procedure.”

With his prisoners going before him in clumsy chain-gang march, Sam started back, grimly gripping his piece of lead pipe.

The gentleman from London sat back in the great leather chair in constabulary headquarters in the smoky northern city, and shook his head.

“I still can’t believe it, Colonel,” he said. “The first really important spy arrest—made by an unarmed auxiliary constable. Two men, armed—taken by one unarmed man in his fifties—I mean—glad as I am, of course, and no offense—it almost sounds fishy.”

Colonel Hartingale, head of the South Riding Constabulary, coughed proudly. “It sounded so to me,” he said, “but Constable Hurst, here . . .”

The gentleman from London looked at Constable Hurst, who stood at attention, his eyes straight ahead. The colonel made a sign.

“After taking care of detention of the prisoners,” he recited, “I investigated the story of Auxiliary Constable Small, sir. Although I could elicit next to nothing from him, most obviously he had been forced to put up a tremendous struggle.”

“What makes you think that, Constable?”

“Well, sir, his clothes were—were considerably disarranged and soiled. The knuckles of his right hand were badly skinned. There was a contusion on his jaw that was—er—quite noticeable. His steel helmet, found in the clubhouse, was dented by what must have been a tremendous blow of some sort. The gun he had spoken of was found under the desk in the clubhouse office. I had doubted that myself—but it was there.”

“But how in the devil—your men are unarmed—and a man with a gun. He’s lying somewhere. How can an unarmed man . . .”

The colonel coughed.

“Well, as a matter of fact, the—er—the men insist—privately, of course—in carrying an—er—er . . .”

“A conker, sir,” Constable Hurst prompted.

“Exactly. A conker.”

“A what?” the gentleman said.

“A—a conker,” the colonel explained. “A sort of—er—a little lead pipe, y’know, and a little wrapping of adhesive tape, and a little of this and that. Sort of a—a cosh-stick, you might say.”

“Oh, a cosh-stick! Exactly,” the man from London said.

“Yes, sir. Of course, quite illegal and we warn them . . .”

“Of course. Quite. Quite,” the gentleman from London said.

“And then, too, they—er—they wear quite heavy boots, y’know. Kicking is considered quite a—a fair weapon of offense and defense here, y’know. Not as in London . . .”

The gentleman from London laughed and shook his head.

“Some day, when this war’s over, we ought to send a mission up here to Yorkshire to get to know you better. However, I don’t need to say that—ah—the government is quite cognizant and pleased by the way you have taken over this important work of training auxiliary protective forces.”

The colonel beamed, happily.

“Thank you,” he said. “This particular unit has been under the supervision of Constable Hurst, here.”

“Ah, Constable Hurst. Quite.”

“I am quite pleased with him,” the colonel said.

The gentleman from London looked pleased. Colonel Hartingale looked pleased. Constable Hurst stared straight ahead, but he was pleased, too. The room was full of pleasure.

“Well,” the gentleman from London said. “Let’s take a look at this raw-meat eater. He’s here?”

“Oh, yes. Constable Hurst drove him down. I’ll buzz for him.”

Thus Sam Small came into the presence of the mighty. He felt no pleasure in it. His eye lit gladly on Constable Hurst. At least “the bloody bobby” was a familiar face.

“Now, lad,” he greeted cheerfully, and then was a bit hurt, for Constable Hurst stared straight ahead. Sam waited. The toff in the chair was speaking, in a clipped sort of English that was quite hard for Sam to understand. But he understood he was being asked if he was the man who made the arrest.

“Aye,” he said, with a flat intonation.

The toff was shaking his head, sadly, and then asking if he knew he’d done quite a brave thing.

“Aye,” Sam said, with a falling intonation. And he supposed he knew that there’d be a mark of recognition?

“Aye?” he said, with a rising inflection.

Was there anything particular that Mr. Small wished?

Sam didn’t hesitate. “Aye,” he said, with finality. “Transfer me to the Spread Eagle beat.”

The gentleman looked at the colonel, smiling. The colonel looked at Constable Hurst, smiling. The constable shook his head without smiling.

“Well, all right,” Sam said. “Happen ye’re right. Then give me the headquarters do. There’s John Willie Braithwaite, he sits there reading the newspapers all night, and I have bunions that hurt me something horrid. Give him my beat, and let me sit down for a change.”

The gentleman behind the desk nodded his head, and waved his hand. The colonel signaled to Constable Hurst. Constable Hurst said, “I’ll make the change in duty immediately, sir.”

“Nay, hold on,” Sam said. “Don’t rush me. Make it beginning tomorrow night. I’ve got summat special on ma beat tonight.”

That night, as Sam Small made his farewell tour over the long beat, he carried a package. When the great dog came bounding through the darkness, he unwrapped the package, and took out chunks of liver. He flung them down the gaping, slobbering jaws. Then he looked at the dog and shook his head.

“Heavens knows, I like dogs,” he said. “Heavens knows tha saved ma life. Heavens knows tha’s made a hero o’ me. But Heavens knows—I *still* don’t like thee.”

And he went away in the darkness.

ADVENTURE X

THE TRUTH ABOUT RUDOLF HESS or Sam Small Flies Again

*He might have been a Rooshan
Or a French or Turk or Prooshan
Or perhaps Eye-tal-i-an.
But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations
He remains an Englishman.*

THE real title of this chapter in Sam Small's life ought to be one of those long, old-fashioned ones. It could be called:

The Yorkshireman Flies Again
or
The Truth About Rudolf Hess And How
Sam Small Saved The British
Isles From Invasion.

Because this story has got to cover a lot of ground—and incidentally, it will clear up a lot of things about this war that might have puzzled you. For instance, we'll start with the Rudolf Hess mystery. It's all as simple as pie.

Rudolf Hess was none other than Sam Small!

Doesn't that make it all clear? You've got to agree that if any man in this whole wide world were to wake up one morning and find out he were Rudolf Hess, that man would be, of all persons, none other than that right, good, loyal, Yorkshire hero, Sam Small.

It all happened in a perfectly normal way—that is, normal for Sam Small. Sam just woke up one morning, and there he was in a strange room. And when he got up and happened to see himself in the mirror over the dressing table, there he was somebody else.

Who else he was he didn't know at first. The face he saw wasn't his; that much he knew. Because it didn't have any long, gray handle-bar mustaches. But it looked faintly familiar.

Just then a lad came in, a servant chap, and said: "Heil Hitler. Did you sleep well, sir?"

"Heil Hitler. I don't know," said Sam, who, although puzzled as you might expect, was keeping his wits about him.

Then this servant chap helped him get dressed—and a fancy business it was, what with being shaved and powdered and getting on a very posh sort of uniform. After that breakfast was served, which was at least a phase of the situation that Sam, or any other Yorkshireman, could cope with.

While he ate Sam gave the situation a bit of a going over.

“Now Sam,” he said to himself as he chomped away with right Yorkshire aplomb and sang-froid, “tha’s been i’ plenty o’ peculiar situations afore and coom out all reight. So coorage—and watch thy step, and happen this’ll turn out reight, too. Since they’re heiling Hitler tha’s i’ Germany. So tha’d better go right on pretending tha’s this other chap—whoivver he is. But who is this chap tha’s turned into?”

That’s what worried Sam—and it would no doubt have worried you under the same circumstances. Who was he?

It wasn’t until the private secretary chap came in that Sam found out. After breakfast this lad came in and said heil Hitler and good morning. Sam heiled Hitler and good-morning right back, and the chap opened a portfolio and put a lot of letters before Sam to sign.

And that’s how Sam found out who he was—for at the bottom of each letter, typed in below the space where he was to sign, was the name: RUDOLF HESS.

“Oooh, ma gum,” Sam breathed to himself. “So that’s who Ah’ve turned into. That’s undoubtedly why Ah looked familiar i’ t’mirror. Ah’m the chap that’s sort of captain o’ t’scond team i’ Germany.”

He looked up, and the secretary chap was waiting. Sam picked up the pen. He was just going to sign, when his forehead broke into a rash of perspiration. No doubt this chap would know the real Hess’s signature, and would spot a forgery right off the bat.

Sam was in a pickle, but at last an inspiration came to him. He had always heard these German leaders chaps were temperamental. So he waved his arms suddenly and said:

“Tak’ ’em away. The stars say it ent a good day for signing owt.”

The secretary lad didn’t show the slightest morsel of surprise at this, so Sam drew a breath and raced on to the next fence.

“Now, lad,” he said, “What’s next on ma schedule?”

“Oh, just inspecting a few troops and reviewing a parade or two—the usual routine stuff,” the lad said.

“Let’s get on with it, then,” Sam said.

So off he went and kept himself quite busy and no one seemed to suspect him at all.

But around teatime the telephone rang.

“Hello,” said Sam.

“Heil Hitler, is that you, Rudolf?” said the voice.

“Aye, Heil Hitler, it’s me,” Sam said. “Who’s this?”

“Heil Hitler, it’s me.”

“Who?”

“Hitler!”

“Oh, heil you,” said Sam. “How are you?”

“Heil me,” said Hitler. “I’m lonesome, Rudy. Hop in your plane and come down to Berchtesgaden to see me.”

“Righto,” said Sam. “I’ll be right there. Good-by.”

“Wait, Rudy. You forgot something.”

“I catch on,” Sam said. “Heil you. Good-by.”

“Heil me. Good-by, Rudy.”

So Sam got in his plane, and flew down to Berchtesgaden, and in he went to see Hitler.

“Now, Adolf,” Sam said, “what’s all the tizzy about?”

“Oh, Rudy,” Hitler said. “It’s them. It’s everyone. They all want something.”

“What did they want?” Sam asked, politely.

“Oh, secret police. Goebbels was in and he found out somehow that I’d let Goering have a few more secret police on his private staff, and he says Goering is using them to spy on him. So I had to let Goebbels have some more secret police to spy back on Goering.

“And then the army staff found out, and they wanted more secret police to spy on the other secret police. But I fooled them all. I called Himmler in and let him have a whole lot more secret police to spy on all the others.”

“Brilliant,” said Sam.

“Oh, Rudy. Do you think so?”

“That I do.”

“Ah, Rudy. You’re the only one I can trust—really trust, I mean. You don’t want any secret police, do you.”

“Not me,” said Sam. “I don’t like police.”

“There. That’s what I mean,” Hitler said. “I can really trust you.”

“Then you’re all cheered up?”

“No,” said Hitler. “I don’t feel good.”

“What’s wrong now, lad?”

“It’s this British business. I don’t see why they don’t have sense enough to give in. They haven’t a chance. We’ve bombed them enough to make any sensible people surrender.”

“That won’t make ’em surrender,” Sam said.

“Well, how could we beat them?”

“T’only road tha’ll ever beat t’British is by going ovver there and really beating ’em,” Sam said, proudly.

“You mean—invasion?” Hitler said.

“Nowt else, lad.”

“Rudy,” Hitler said with a sudden spring to his feet, “you’re wonderful. You’re the only one who agrees with me. And all the silly generals and admirals keep saying we can’t do it. I still think we can. Here—hand me that atlas.”

And that's how Sam Small became the chap that planned the invasion of England. When they got the atlas they put it on the floor, and Sam got that interested in the whole affair it didn't seem as if he were planning the ruination of his own country. It was just he forgot, like, and did the job as a Yorkshireman does any job—the best he knows how.

And you've got to admit, it's a very interesting occupation—planning current history, as you might say.

Well, they talked about what kind of barges they had, and how many men were available, and got all that sort of stuff settled.

“Now, where shall we land? How about Dover?” asked Hitler.

“No,” said Sam.

“No?” asked Hitler. “Did you say no to me?”

“Aye, Ah said no,” said Sam. “Tha can't mak' it theer—too many high cliffs.”

“What a wonderful knowledge of the tactical situation you have, Rudy. Well, how about Portsmouth?”

Sam shook his head, slowly.

“Ah wouldn't touch that,” he said. “Pompey—that's a varry, varry, tough nut to crack. Tha sees, it's a navy town, and as many as five pubs in a row on some streets. T'British wouldn't retreat fro' that wi'out a fearful battle.”

“Where, then, Rudy?”

“Reight at Pevensey—where William the Conqueror landed.”

“Good—and he made it, didn't he, Rudy?”

“That he did.”

“It's an omen, Rudy. It'll be Pevensey. Now we can be ready in a week. How about, say, a week from tonight, and we'll invade?”

“Now hold on a minute—hold on,” Sam said. “Don't be i' such a hurry. Let's figure dates. That'd be a Thursday night—no good. Here! Ah got it. A wick fro' Sat'day. That's the last o' t'month.”

“Is that a lucky date, Rudy?”

“Lucky?” said Sam. “Why, figure it out—that's a week end, and moreover, it's t'last o' t'month—and that makes it a pay day. Just think, all t'single N.C.O.s'll be down the wet canteen getting splashed; and t'married sergeants, they'll be in tow o' their wives who'll be getting t'pay away fro' 'em; and t'officers, they'll be on their way for a week end in the country; and t'enlisted men, they'll be all so busy in t'huts playing crown and anchor. And as for t'navy—well, tha knows what sailors are like on pay night. They'll be sloppo—stinko—blotto. It's t'only time tha has a chance.”

“Rudy, you're wonderful,” Hitler said.

And he sounded so delighted Sam suddenly felt sorry Hitler couldn't know he was really Sam Small, and then he could have the credit for himself. It was no use doing a good job when another man got all the credit.

But while he was thinking that, Hitler called in his staff and ordered them to invade England. And then—and only then—did Sam see what he'd done. He'd planned a

foolproof invasion of his own land. And it was too late to do anything about it. Because Hitler was explaining to the generals, and the generals were giving orders to aides-de-camp, and the aides-de-camp were phoning orders to other officers who would give them to noncommissioned officers who would give them to the soldiers who had to get their feet wet, and there it all was.

You may be sure that Sam was in a pretty pickle. He had to sit there all night and watch his own plans for the invasion of his own country being ordered. And every once in a while Hitler would come over and say:

“Er—Rudy. You’re sure William the Conqueror made it?”

“Aye, William made it all right, all right,” Sam would say, ruefully.

“All right,” Hitler would say, as if relieved.

Around dawn everyone got a bit sleepy, so Hitler suggested that Sam stay over for the night—it being very late, so to speak. And that Sam did.

But he didn’t go to sleep. He lay there racking his brains. It seemed perfectly plain that he couldn’t stop the invasion now. The only thing left to do was to tip the British off it was coming. But how could he do that?

“Ooooh,” moaned Sam to himself. “Ah’ve mucked things up for fair now. Ten more days and they’ll be invading England, and Ah can’t find no way to stop it. What hev’ Ah done! Eigh, Ah wish to goodness Ah hed Mully here to advise me. That Ah dew!”

And worried and harassed, poor Sam fell asleep just as dawn came over the big white-crested mountain tops.

The next morning Sam woke up and he was still Rudolf Hess. And it was then the big idea occurred to him.

“If Ah can’t stop t’ invasion, what Ah’ve got to do is get back hoam and tip ’em off,” he said to himself. “That’s the ticket.”

So he set his mind on some way of getting home. And that wasn’t simple. You couldn’t just go right up and say:

“I want to book a ticket for London, please.”

He decided he’d have to get away by subterfuge.

But every time he tried that during the day, he was foiled.

They had a big staff meeting on the invasion that day. It just went on and on. Finally Sam said, sort of careleslike:

“Well, everything seems to be going nicely, so Ah think Ah’ll pop along.”

“Why, where are you going, Rudy?” Hitler said.

“Oh, Ah thowt Ah’d just pop back to Berlin,” Sam said, disengagingly.

“Oh, no,” Hitler said. “You must stay here, Rudy. Besides,” and here he dropped his voice to a pathetic whisper, “you’re the only one I can trust—really trust.”

So Sam had to stay.

Later he sort of sidled away, and was just sneaking round the balcony when Hitler spied him.

“Now, Rudy,” Hitler reproved. “You know there’s a lot to do. It isn’t fair to go sneaking out on all the work.”

But Sam was determined, and watched and watched until he got a chance to get clean away down the elevator. But they brought him back again, and they really got into quite a tiff.

“Where were you going this time?” Hitler said.

“It’s a bit stuffy here,” Sam said. “Ah were just going out to get a bit o’ fresh air. Ah think it’s the altitude gets me.”

“Oh, and why were you heading for your plane?” Hitler asked.

“Oh, just to sort of take a cruise—to clear ma head,” Sam lied quickly.

“If the altitude bothers you, why do you want to go up in a plane?” Hitler asked.

That fair stumped Sam, so he put on a real hurt sort of look.

“Why, Adolf,” he said, “I thought you said you trusted me?”

“I do,” Hitler said. “But I don’t trust anyone that much. Now, you stay here. And just in case—I’ve given orders you aren’t to fly your plane any more.”

“Eigh, what a trusting chap,” Sam said. But he said it to himself.

After that all he could do was sit there and watch the reports of the generals come in—something like election reports coming into headquarters.

Everything was going with thorough German efficiency, the reports showed. A hundred divisions of troops were already rolling in trains to the invasion ports, moving only at night; engineers with terrible German efficiency had blasted under the French cliffs enough room to house 50,000 concrete barges in which the troops would cross the channel; guns, ammunition, supplies were moving in a stream; amphibian tanks were rolling to low beaches from which they’d swim across the channel; Goering’s air force was being equipped with special exhaust fixtures so that 60,000 planes could lay down an artificial fog over the channel and the coast. There wasn’t a thing they didn’t think of—and it was all taking place right before Sam’s very eyes!

And poor Sam couldn’t get away. He couldn’t even send a wireless message. He even wished he had a few of Gommy Doakes’ racing pigeons so’s he could send a message to Gommy to warn the officials back home. But wishing achieved nothing. He still had no pigeons. He was stuck!

And he stayed stuck—all that day, and all the next, and the day after that. And all the time the horrible date was drawing nearer when—as Sam could tell by all the terrible German efficiency—England was to be *ausgestruckensunkenstunkenstrafenschamacked*. Which means it was to be napoo, fini, conked!

Eigh, Sam was that bothered. Why, anyone less than our hero would have given up hope.

There were only three days left before the invasion when it happened. Fate knocked at history’s door, as you might say. Sam didn’t know it was Fate. All he saw was that Heinrich Himmler had come into the conference room and was whispering to Hitler.

And very uneasy Sam got about it, too, because he could see them both looking sideways at him as Himmler talked. He got very uneasy.

Finally Hitler nodded, and beckoned to Sam, and he and Himmler and Sam left the big room where the generals were planning the ceremony for the final capitulation of the British army, which was to take place in the Tower of London. The three went to a conference room, and Hitler motioned Sam to sit down.

“Rudy,” Hitler said, smiling, “what do you say ought to be done to any man impersonating one of our honored leaders?”

Sam began to sweat all over.

“Oooh, ma gum, so the juggers have found me out,” he said to himself. “Now how did they do that!”

So he swallowed a couple of times, and looked at Hitler, smiling blandly, and at Himmler smiling not so blandly. Oh, Sam didn’t like the way that Himmler smiled.

And while he looked at them he said to himself:

“Well, tha’s fair copped out, Sam, and tha’s hed an exciting life, so best tha can dew is go down like a trew Yorkshireman. But t’road yon Himmler’s smiling it could be a nasty death—so let’s hev a nice, clean, quick ’un.”

So he got up and, almost to his own surprise, flung out his right arm in salute and said:

“Any man daring to impersonate you, my leader, should be instantly shot.”

“Good, Rudy,” Hitler said. “You see, Himmler, I told you.”

Then he turned to Sam.

“But it isn’t me who’s being impersonated, Rudy. It’s Rudolf Hess.”

“So, the jig’s up,” Sam said to himself. “Well, here goes. . . .”

He got up and took the automatic from Himmler’s holster, and held it ready in his hand.

“He should be shot, even if it is me,” he said.

And then he turned the gun toward his own chest.

Hitler jumped up happily.

“Ah, what loyalty, what trust, what faithfulness, Rudy! You truly are the only one I can trust! Where is he, Himmler?”

“Right downstairs,” Himmler said. “My agents found him walking around in his pajamas in Rudolf’s Berlin apartment—and knowing Rudolf was here—in fact that you’d forbidden him to leave here—we brought him down in Rudolf’s fighting plane. He’s still in the plane at the secret airdrome down below.”

“Good,” said Hitler. “Let’s take a look at him.”

“Righto,” said Sam, sticking the gun in his pocket.

“Hey! How about that there gun?” Himmler said to Sam.

“Why, of all the suspicious—Tha doesn’t think Ah were trying to pinch it, does tha?”

“No, but I’ve lost more than one thing that way,” Himmler said.

“Heh, Ah’ll bet that’s the way tha got it,” Sam came back.

“Boys, boys,” said Hitler. “Will you stop this squabbling? Now let him have the gun, Heinrich, because as a special treat to Rudy—and to show my trust in him—I’m going to let him have the pleasure of personally—er—purging this intruder.”

“Me or Streicher could do better,” Himmler grumbled.

“All reight—let him or Streicher do it,” Sam said.

“No,” Hitler said, getting angry. “Am I Fuehrer round here or not?”

All this time they had been traveling—down elevators and across courtyards and through tunnels and through an underground airdrome and out to where a plane stood with a bunch of black-helmeted soldiers in a row around it. And there, standing before the plane, with an officer holding him, was Sam’s double—that is, he didn’t look like Sam. He looked exactly like what Sam looked like now. Like Rudolf Hess. In fact, as Sam knew and you may have guessed, it was the real Rudolf Hess.

And there was poor Sam, condemned to shoot this man in cold blood.

“What a good disguise,” Hitler said. “See how cunning and ruthless our enemies are, Rudolf. I wonder if we shouldn’t examine him some more as Himmler suggests, to make him confess he’s a British agent?”

But Sam had been doing some fast thinking all this time. And an inspiration came. He took out the gun and pointed it at the real Hess.

“No,” Sam said. “Let me do a bit of examining first.”

“This’ll be good,” Hitler said, appreciatively.

“Now, you pig-dog,” Sam said menacingly, putting the gun in Hess’ stomach. “How dare you impersonate me?”

And he gave Hess a punch in the nose.

“Why, Rudolf’s improving,” Himmler said.

Sam punched Hess again, and when Hess made to rush at Sam, the big officer pinned his hands behind his back.

“That’s all right,” Sam said. “Let him go and stand clear.”

The man stood clear, and Sam, with the gun right on the middle button of Hess’ silk pajama coat, uncorked a left hook that knocked Hess clean back into the door of the plane. With a cry of rage Sam rushed after him, and gave him a hefty kick that lifted him still farther. And, as Himmler applauded with happiness, Sam kicked the prostrate body clean through the door of the plane, rushed in after it, slammed the door, started the engine, and before the entire amazed assembly, took off with a snarl of powerful engines. There was a bit of popping, and he heard a few bullets go through the tail of the machine, but that was all.

And there was Sam, free at last.

At first Sam could hardly contain his delight. He felt like singing and dancing. He roared with laughter as he imagined what Hitler and Himmler must be thinking.

Then he heard a movement behind him, and saw Hess sitting up.

“Now lad,” Sam said cheerfully. “Sorry I had to belt thee so realistically, but it were t’only road to fool ’em.”

“Here, turn round and land,” Hess said.

He got up quickly, but Sam pointed the pistol at him.

“Now show a bit o’ sense, lad,” he said. “We’re both of us Rudolf Hess, and if we landed, which one of us’d they believe?”

“I am the real Rudolf Hess!”

“Aye, and I can say t’same thing as long and as loud as thee. It don’t matter which one of us is t’real Rudolf Hess. Thing is they’d nivver believe nor trust either one o’ two of us after this—after me flying away. Think—they’d put us both i’ jail, or under observation, or worse. Now, settle down and use thy yead, lad.”

The man was quiet a while.

“But where can we go?” he asked.

“That’s easy,” Sam said, happily. “We’re sailing for England.”

And he began to sing the popular song.

Hess looked at him with admiration and awe.

“You mean, to solve the situation, we’re going to fly singlehanded against the foe and go down fighting for our country?”

“Summat like that,” Sam said. “Here, and to mak’ it simpler, happen tha’d better fly this ship for a while, and Ah’ll keep watch ovver thee wi’ this gun so’s tha’ll not change thy mind. Hop along, lad!”

So Hess flew the ship while Sam kept the gun on him, and watched the compass to see he played no tricks.

“Put a bit more north in it,” Sam said. “We might as well come down in Yorkshire. It’s a good place to land, what wi’ plenty o’ flat moors.”

“How much north?” Hess asked.

“Oh, Ah don’t know,” Sam said. “Just stick a bit o’ northing in it. Yorkshire’s such a big county we can’t help hitting it.”

Now you may, no doubt, be able to hitch up some of the rest of this story in your own mind.

They got a bit too much northing in their east and so missed Yorkshire altogether and hit Scotland. Sam, in the dusk, did see some sort of a castle, and it looked a bit like the Duke o’ Rudling’s place.

“We’ll land near t’Duke o’ Rudling’s,” Sam shouted. “He’ll fix me up. Has power and all that.”

“You mean he’s a secret sympathizer with our great movement?” Hess asked.

“If tha puts it that way—in a sort of road—aye.”

“I’ll remember the name,” Hess said. “In case we get separated I’ll ask for him.”

“Separated,” Sam said. “Why should we get separated?”

“Because it sounds as if we’re out of gas,” Hess said. “And we can’t see well enough to land in this dark. We’ll have to jump.”

And just then the motor sputt-sputted, and Hess got up and put on the straps of the parachute and opened the door.

“Here I go,” he said.

“Good luck, lad,” Sam said.

“Good luck to you, too,” said Hess. “And you’ll need it. Because it seems to me there isn’t another parachute.”

And he jumped.

“Well,” Sam said, “Ah’ll be joogered!”

Now any student of history knows that there is a special Providence that watches over the British Empire.

Time after time in history, a grave crisis has approached, all has seemed hopeless, and then, always, the situation has produced the man.

I want you to see how this special Providence that God has provided for his Britons worked in this case. Here is a man—the only Briton alive who carried in his brain the most terribly important news of a crushing threat to the Empire. Here he is, in the pitch dark, in a plunging airplane thousands of feet above a wild terrain. He has no parachute. To stick to the ship will be death. Yet he must escape and live to carry his news to the nation’s leaders.

And what other man in the world could Fate have picked for such an important event in history than Sam Small? What other man could have done it? Here was the inescapable situation, and Providence places in that situation the one man in the entire world who could descend from that plane in safety—in other words, Sam Small, the Flying Yorkshireman. The one man alive who could fly under his own power!

But let us not stand too long in breathless astonishment at the inscrutable laws or whims of Providence and her kindly regard for Britons. Let us shake our heads, perhaps, and leave the whole matter there, where it belongs, amid the galaxy of things unsolved—time, space, the way of a man with a maid, the logic of women, and the Einstein theory. Let us rather return to something we can grasp and believe in. In other words, good old loyal Sam Small.

There he stood, as near certain death as ever Pearl White was in the last hundred feet of each weekly installment of *The Perils of Pauline*. And yet his mind worked calmly, smoothly, steadily, and ploddingly in his Yorkshire way.

“Well,” he said, “there’s nowt for it. Ah promised Mully Ah’d nivver, nivver fly again as long as Ah lived. But if Ah maun dew it, Ah maun, and happen she’ll forgive me, this being a varry important occasion in ma life, as Ah maught say.”

So, drawing a breath, he stood at the door.

“Ah hoap Ah hev’n’t forgot how to dew it,” he muttered. “For if Ah hev, Ah’m bahn to land wi’ a fearful bloody smack.”

And thus, in his Yorkshire way, without any passionate or patriotic exhortations regarding King and Country, Sam, without any parachute, jumped!

For a fearful moment he tumbled head over heels in the darkness. The racing wind tore at his arms as he attempted to stretch them out. The air ripped at his clothes and hurtled him over and over. He was just beginning to say rather sadly:

“Madison Square Garden all over again,” when he remembered a little man from years before who once sat on his bedside.

“But Ah can fly,” he said. “Ah could, Ah hev, and Ah will again.”

And, like the stilling of a stormy sea, the tempest of air ceased, the tugging and racking of his limbs ended, and instead of falling helplessly, he was gliding smoothly, beautifully, deliriously, on supporting cushions of air. The feeling was about as ecstatic as—as having someone scratch a tickle on your back where you can’t reach.

“Oooh,” said Sam. “Eigh, that’s good. Ah’m varry, varry proud o’ thee, Sam, that tha does it so nicely without ony practice for mony years. Tha’s dewing varry nicely.”

Just then there was a pop and flash far below, and Sam realized that the plane at last had crashed. So he glided down gently toward it and circled over a field where lanterns were beginning to bob.

He glided nearer and nearer, until he heard a voice saying clearly, and in a slightly accented English.

“I am Rudolf Hess!”

To which a voice replied:

“Hech, Moggie, rroose t’swoddies. Herre’s a Gairrmon come burrrlin’ fro’ t’skees!”

“What a bloody tarrible dialect they gabble i’ these parts,” Sam said. “It must be Scotland Ah’m in. And since Ah don’t want to be copped as a Gairman i’ this mess, Ah’d better sheer off. But wheer can Ah goa?”

Sam was in quite a fix, for he still, you must remember, looked like Rudolf Hess, and was still dressed in a German uniform. He was worse off than the real Hess who had been dressed, you recall, only in pajamas.

Then Sam had a bright idea.

“Fly hoam to Mully, lad,” he said. “Two yeads is better nor one, and she’ll help thee solve it. Besides, she’s sort o’ used to wonderful things happening to thee and won’t have to be explained to too much.”

So he flipped an arm and, gaining a little altitude, struck south toward Yorkshire. The false dawn was just beginning to show when Sam began to recognize the terrain.

“Ah must be over Molford,” he said. “For there’s t’Waggon and Hosses, and their’s t’Black Swan. Aye, and their’s t’Owd Green Man and t’Wellington Arms so Ah must be over Wuxley—and their’s good owd Spread Eagle and here’s t’Green. And their’s ma cottage. Whoops!”

And there Sam made a mistake. He hadn’t flown for a long time, you must remember, and in his joy at being home he streaked into a sort of power dive, figuring to bank up into a snappy sort of stand-up landing. Instead, he misjudged a bit, came up too late, hit under the lintel of his door so hard it drove his head six inches down into his shoulders, and there, stunned as even a Yorkshireman must be by such a wallop, he lay on his own doorstep, insensible to the world.

When Sam woke up, he heard a familiar sobbing. He sat up and there was Mully rocking in her chair before the fire, and he was on the sofa with a bandage round his

head.

“Mully,” he cried. “Ah, lass, lass! Tha doesn’t know how glad Ah am to be hoam!”

She got up and turned her tear-stained face on him.

“Lying out theer, deead drunk for t’world to see thee as it wakes. Makkin’ a shame o’ ma hoam and a mockery o’ our good name. Oh, Sam, Sam! How couldta visit this final shame on me? After all Ah’ve tried and tried and stood by thee and worked for thee and cooked for thee and tried and tried . . .”

“Here, here,” Sam said, moving painfully toward her.

“Doan’t come near me—you drunken, good-for-nothing, nasty owd . . .”

“Mully, listen,” Sam pleaded. “Listen because Ah’ve got to talk fast. Ah’ve been Rudolf Hess. Ah’ve planned t’invasion o’ Britain. It comes off i’ fohty-eight hours or so fro’ this evening.”

“Heh!” she said, scornfully. “That proves it. Tha’s still intoxicated. Go back and sleep it off.”

“Ah’m not drunk,” Sam said angrily.

“Well, wheer’s tha been this past week?”

“Ah tell thee, Ah been i’ Gairmany. Ah’ve been Rudolf Hess. We’ve got to tip ’em off about t’invasion.”

“If tha’s got any regard for our good name, tha’ll stay home and behave. T’neighbors hev been asking wheer tha was. And tha wasn’t at t’Spread Eagle for Ah’ve axed and axed and . . .”

“Now hev done!” Sam shouted. He stood up, swaying a bit from the bump on his head. “Now for once, tha’ll listen to me—or am Ah not measter i’ ma own hoam? Now listen.

“Ah left t’Spread Eagle one evening a week ago, coming hoam, and Ah were sober as a judge—or, Ah’ll tell t’real truth . . .”

“Tha’d better for a change!”

“. . . Ah hed nobbut happen one or two more nor t’limit. And Ah stumbled i’ t’dark by that nasty bit of a curb by Braithwaites’, and next thing Ah knew, Ah woke up, and Ah were Rudolf Hess—i’ Germany. So Ah got up . . .”

And off Sam went, telling her simply exactly what had happened.

When he was through, Mully stared at him a long time, and then shook her head.

“Sam Small,” she said, “God knows Ah’ve stood as much fro’ thee as ony woman ivver stood fro’ man. Ah’ve stood thee flying and mucking things oop i’ America; Ah’ve stood thee splitting thy personality; Ah’ve stood thee turning a little lass into a dog and vice versa—but this time Ah can’t swaller it.”

“Well, this is true,” Sam said, doggedly. “Tha must believe me.”

“Believe thee,” Mully said—in exactly that tone wives use the world over. “How can Ah believe thee? Tha says tha escaped in a plane?”

“Aye,” said Sam.

“How did tha know how to fly an airyoplane?”

“Ah don’t know,” Sam said, “but it’s quite logical. Aye, look, when Ah were there Ah spoke German, didn’t Ah?”

“Ah suppose tha’d have to.”

“Well, tha knows Ah don’t know any German. So if Ah could speak German when Ah don’t know any, it’s just as logical Ah could fly a plane when Ah don’t know how to, isn’t it?”

“That sounds right and proper to me, Sam,” Mully said slowly. “But tha’s still got to admit that . . .”

Mully halted, for at that moment there came a knock on the door—an excited thundering of a knock.

“Mrs. Small,” cried an old, trembling voice. “Mrs. Small—ista in?”

Mully motioned Sam to be quiet.

“Aye, Ah’m in, Mrs. Wambley.”

“Well, did’ta hear, Mrs. Small?”

“No, what?”

“Why, Capper read it off t’Leeds and Yorkshire *Mercury* down at t’pub first thing. It says a plane coom dahn i’ Scotland, and who dosta think were in it?”

Mully stood up, and at that moment she felt a strange, creeping vibration go over her.

“Ah know,” Mully said, quietly. “In it were Rudolf Hess!”

“Oh, somebody already told thee,” Mrs. Wambley’s voice said, and then they heard her aged feet pattering away to find better fields for spreading news.

For a full minute Mully stood, unmoving—and Sam had the sense that any really good husband has, of not taking a second’s triumph of the I-told-you-so variety. Then she turned to him.

“Sam,” she said, finally, “from this moment on, noa matter what happens to thee i’ this life, Ah’ll nivver, nivver, soa long as Ah live, ivver doubt thee nor . . .”

“Now, now,” Sam said. “We’ve work to do.”

“That we hev,” she agreed. “When’s t’ invasion?”

“Tomort neight,” Sam said.

“Well, wesh that blood off, and Ah’ll bandage thee and slip on ma best Paisley shawl, and we’d better be off and tell t’owd Duke o’ Rudling about it.”

“Aye, Ah thowt o’ him,” Sam said.

From that moment on, life began a blaze of activity for Sam and Mully. For, unfortunately, the duke wasn’t home, having gone to London to see about forming a new company of Home Guards.

So Sam and Mully took the train to London; but when they got there the duke had started back.

“Now lewk here, we can’t waste no more time,” Sam said. “It’s getting too near t’kickoff. Happen we’d better see some generals.”

So they went to Whitehall to see a general. Finally, after hunting along endless corridors, they got to him and began to explain about the invasion. When they'd explained it all, he shook his head.

"Interesting, what, what, what," he said. "Invasion, eh? That's under the heading enemy activity—probably G-2—Intelligence. Not my chicken at all. Better see General Boppingtop. Wouldn't want to trespass in his department."

So they went down more passages and finally got to see General Boppingtop, who was very interested, until Sam told him they lived in Yorkshire.

"Ah, sorry. Then that'd be Northern Command, what, what, what!" Boppingtop said.

"But could *tha* dew summat—if they invade . . ."

"You civilians can't understand," the general smiled, pulling at his long mustache. "In the army—place for everything—everything in its place. That's military way. Must follow channels. See Toppingbop—GSO-5, GTH-3, VII Corps, Northern Command. Good man, Toppingbop. Tell you exactly what to do."

By the time Sam and Mully got out on the pavement of great, roaring London, it was already dusk, and people were scurrying for home before the raids started.

"Well, routine's routine," Sam said. "And we maun respect law and order, so . . ."

"We'll dew nowt o' t'sort," Mully snapped. "If we go on this way we'll be all wearing swastikas afore we get our story told. Ah know what to do. We'll call a bobby."

"Now Ah don't want to hev owt to do wi' bobbies," Sam protested.

But, nevertheless, they went over to a policeman, who telephoned for a Black Maria which took them to the police station. When the sergeant there examined them he nodded his head and put down on the page before him:

"Two suspicious characters, by their accent undoubtedly Dutch or Rumanian. Booked under the D.O.R.A."

Then he had them put in cells.

The next morning they came up for trial, and the magistrate warned them not to let it ever happen again, and fined them costs, and dismissed the case as a first offense.

Sam and Mully both kept their mouths shut, but when they were on the pavement again, Sam started to laugh.

"Soa finally it's thee that lands us behind t'bars," he chuckled. "It were thy idea calling a bobby. Ah've allus told thee nivver to hev owt to dew wi' bobbies."

Mully tucked her shawl tighter about her chin.

"My gum," she said. "For two pins Ah'd goa back hoam and let 'em invade. These nasty people down i' London. Ah don't see why our good King and Queen ivver live down here and . . ."

"That's it," said Sam, suddenly. "Why didn't Ah think o' that afore?"

"That's what?" Mully said.

"We'll go tell t'King. Here—probably he's reight at hoam at Boockingham Palace now."

So they walked over to Buckingham Palace and Sam said to the sentry at the gate:

“Mr. and Mrs. Sam Small to see His Majesty, the King.”

The sentry turned in his box and rang the telephone.

“Mr. and Mrs. Sam Small to see Your Majesty,” he said.

“Well, send ’em reight oop,” said the King. “Doan’t leave ’em standing theer, lad.”

The sentry took Sam and Mully up to the palace, and the King said:

“Sit right down with me and the Queen and hev a coop o’ tea—it’s that chilly and raw out today.”

So the Queen poured Sam and Mully a cup o’ tea, using only one lump of sugar, which Mully recognized was because of wartime, and then the King said:

“Well, Sam, lad. Always glad to see thy face. Now what’s oop this time?”

“Well, there’s off to be an invasion tonight,” Sam said.

And then and there Sam explained the whole matter, telling about how he had been Rudolf Hess.

“By gum,” said the King, “what a peculiar metamorphosis. But Ah’m glad the managed to change back in the neck o’ time. Now about stopping that invasion. . . . Where’s ma head general?”

“Here, Your Majesty,” said the general, sort of springing up from nowhere and saluting. He wasn’t at all like General Boppingtop, being much younger.

“Good,” said the King. “And where’s the head of ma air force?”

“Present, sir,” said the air force general, saluting.

“And where’s ma head admiral?”

Being the silent service, the admiral didn’t say anything. He just popped up and saluted.

“Good, and now where’s Winnie?”

“I’ve been here all the time,” Churchill said, lighting another cigar as he came from behind a curtain.

“Fine,” said the King. “Now Sam Small tells me they’re off to pull an invasion tonight.”

“Eigh,” said the general, “what a nasty, nasty time to invade. Right on pay night—*and* a week end, too.”

“Aye, that’s why Ah planned it for tonight in t’first place,” Sam moaned. “Ah don’t want to say owt about British soldiers and sailors, especially i’ front o’ generals—and Your Majesty . . .”

“Oh, Ah know what ma brave soldiers and sailors are like,” the King said. “They’ll get a little rosy on pay neights.”

“Rosy?” said the generals.

“Stinko,” Sam suggested.

“Very, very awkward time to invade,” the generals said. “What can we do?”

“Ah hev it,” Sam said. “How about sending out an order that pay day is shifted until Monday morning?”

“Oh, can’t do it,” said the general. “The law. It specifically states in King’s Rules, Regulations and Orders, pay day has been pay day in the British army for four hundred years. It’s the law.”

And there they might have been stuck yet, despite Sam’s good idea, except for the King.

“Well, ma gum,” the King said. “Can’t Ah hev a law passed that the foregoing is all true except in case of invasion?”

“That you can,” said Churchill. “Leave that to me.”

And off he popped to have the law passed, and off went the generals and the admiral.

And everyone heaved a sigh of relief because they knew that the British army and navy would be cold sober for the invasion. More than that, they’d be so mad about missing their pints of beer—the birthright of every Briton—that they’d mop up any unfortunate German army that managed to get into England.

So off went the general to turn out the army, and off went the R.A.F. chap to warm up the planes, and off went the admiral who didn’t say anything, but was planning a very peculiar stunt about dropping barrels of gasoline on the ocean and thus setting the Channel on fire.

And that’s how the invasion of England was foiled. And this—and this only—is the true account of what really happened.

It is also the only true explanation of why Rudolf Hess landed in Scotland. You must admit it is the only story which is logical and in which all the pieces fit together. No man would be so crazy as to fly to an enemy country on his own hook. Sam Small made him do it.

And as for the invasion, there were so many secret things attached to foiling it, like the admiral’s stunt with the drums of oil, that the British deny it ever happened. They want to keep the enemy in the dark.

But after this war is over, you can go to Mr. Churchill and ask him if this isn’t really the only true account of what happened. I request any doubter to do so, and I wager anything you want he’ll agree with me.

As for Sam. The King was ready to reward Sam with medals or anything he wanted, but Sam was real Yorkshire where rewards went.

“Nay, we’ll just let it ride, and some day happen tha’ll dew me a favor in return. Ah’d lewk that silly wi’ medals on my owd jacket.”

“Well,” said the Queen, graciously, “there’s no reward greater than the knowledge that you’ve saved your country from a terrible fate.”

“Thank you kindly, ma’am,” said Mully, dropping a neat curtsy.

Then the King gave Sam his final compliment.

“Well,” he said, “what would Britain do without the common men and women of Yorkshire?”

“Ah don’t know,” Sam said. “But it’ll be a sad day if they ever try it.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Sam Small Flies Again* by Eric Knight]