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WHAT I THINK OF HITLER by MAHATMA GANDHI
BROADWAY QUIZ by WALTER WINCHELL

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Title: The Midnight Ride of Mr. Pope

Date of first publication: 1940

Author: Walter Rollin Brooks (1886-1958)

Date first posted: Dec. 22, 2021

Date last updated: Dec. 22, 2021

Faded Page eBook #20211251

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THE MIDNIGHT RIDE OF MR. POPE

BY
WALTER BROOKS

First published *Liberty*, August 3, 1940.

One good thing about having a horse that can talk is that there's always somebody to discuss your personal worries with. This Wilbur Pope I was telling you about used to talk over nearly everything with his horse Ed—even things he couldn't talk over with Mrs. Pope. He felt that a horse could be more objective about some things than a wife could. Of course Ed wasn't any too sympathetic sometimes. He was pretty hard-boiled. He never let the conventions inhibit his actions and he wasn't much of a hand for the nuances either. Hell Wilbur he'd say I admire your good manners all right but they're a terrible handicap. When a guy insults you you give him the soft answer. Me I kick him in the stomach. Thank heaven I wasn't brought up right.

So when Mr. Pope told Ed that Mrs. Pope's Aunt Edith was coming for another week's visit Ed just said Well tell her she can't come. But I can't do that Ed said Mr. Pope because you see—well I just can't. What's she got on you? said Ed. You don't understand said Mr. Pope. It isn't that she's got anything on me. But after all she's Carlotta's aunt. And Carlotta's fond of her. Besides she's trustee for the money Carlotta inherited from her other aunt. I thought it would boil down to money sooner or later said Ed. Well said Mr. Pope Carlotta gets a couple hundred a month from it and if Aunt Edith got sore she could cut it off. She has complete control. And it would mean Carlotta's doing without a lot of clothes and other extras. It does seem little enough to do—for me to be pleasant to Aunt Edith.

Sounds all right when you put it that way said Ed. Only I guess you forgot Wilbur that you told me about how this aunt woman threatened to cut the money all off last year unless your wife divorced you. No I didn't forget that said Mr. Pope. She's sort of down on men. When she was young she had a lot of money and the fortune hunters were after her and the worst one in the lot pretty near got her. She found out in time that he was suspected of having murdered his first wife. Too bad said Ed but there's always some busybody around. So you see went on Mr. Pope she'd try to break up any marriage that Carlotta made. And when she heard I'd said I had a horse that could talk—You did kind of stick your neck out on that put in Ed. I wouldn't have said Mr. Pope if you'd backed me up. But that's neither here nor there now. The trouble is I suppose she'll start the old divorce campaign again and if I could only think of some excuse to be away while she's here it would be a lot easier all around.

H'm said Ed. Don't you have to go out and see that National Utility account of yours in Peoria? But Mr. Pope said no—he couldn't stay there a week and anyway Mrs. Pope might find out. H'm said Ed again and then he looked at Mr. Pope and said You know Wilb I can't ever seem to think very good when I'm thirsty. O. K. said Mr. Pope and he went in the house and came back with half a bottle of Scotch. Ought to be enough here to give us an idea he said.

After the second drink Ed said You know Wilb I've made a discovery. I've discovered what makes the Scotchman talk that kind of dialect. It's from having a bottle in your mouth. Here take a swig and try saying Ha'e ye no' anither bottle? So Mr. Pope tried it. Why you're

right he said and then he started on Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon but only got to the second verse when Ed said Hey! My turn! So Mr. Pope handed over the bottle and Ed tried It's a braw bricht moonlicht nicht.

When the bottle was empty Mr. Pope said hopefully Well Ed have you thought of anything? Sure I have said Ed. Why don't you get your friend Dr. Kendall to send you to the hospital? By George said Mr. Pope I believe you've got it! You needn't act so shook up about it said Ed. Why don't we ride over and see him right away and we can stop at Barney's for some beer. I'm still thirsty.

So they rode over. When's your aunt coming? Dr. Kendall asked and when Mr. Pope told him next Friday he said Well we can throw you in for observation. We can't let you have anything serious because you don't want to worry Carlotta. I guess bursitis is the thing for you. We'll make it your shoulder. You'd better begin complaining about its being lame and Thursday it gets so sore you can't move it and you come over and I'll send you to this new hospital we've got out here. It's only a few minutes' drive from Mount Kisco so it'll be handy for Carlotta. Will she bring the aunt to see you? Not if I groan a lot said Mr. Pope. She hasn't much patience with sick people. Groaning's O. K. said Dr. Kendall. You'd be in some pain. And you ought to have a temperature. But we'll arrange that. Otherwise you'll have nothing to do but sit around your room and keep your shoulder quiet. Only one thing—when you go into the hospital try not to smell so strong of beer.

Well everything went fine and Thursday night Mrs. Pope drove Mr. Pope and a couple of dozen detective stories over to the hospital. She was so sympathetic that he felt pretty ashamed and would have backed out but of course it was too late. I'm sorry not to be on hand to welcome Aunt Edith he said. But you just go ahead with your plans with her and don't bother about me. I'll have to said Mrs. Pope but I'll get over every day.

Well the first two days were wonderful. His room was on the ground floor and there was nothing to do but sit in the window and read and wait for the next meal to be brought in. He had put his arm in a sling so he wouldn't forget and use it when anybody was in the room. He always had a hot water bottle handy and when it was about time for the nurse to come in and take his temperature he would put it on his shoulder and lean his cheek against it and this ran the thermometer up so he appeared suitably feverish. Dr. Kendall ran in and brought gossip and stories and nurses flitted in and out with different gossip but the same stories and it was all very much like the office only without the responsibility. Mr. Pope felt very happy and carefree.

But that did not last long. On the third day just after breakfast he went to get something out of his bag on the wardrobe shelf and he was standing there with both arms over his head when a nurse came in. My goodness Mr. Pope said the nurse can you get your arm up like that? Mr. Pope was pretty confused and he stammered and said well he guessed it was a lot better. The nurse said it certainly must be and then she told him that Dr. Kendall was ill and wouldn't be in to see him that morning but that Dr. Coleman who was taking his work would be in. And by and by Dr. Coleman came. He was a dark suspicious-looking young man and there was a false heartiness about him that worried Mr. Pope. I can't trust this guy he said to himself.

Dr. Coleman had Mr. Pope's chart in his hand and he looked from it to Mr. Pope and back again as if he was comparing a police handbill with a criminal in the line-up. Arm's a lot better this morning the nurse tells me he said. Seems to be said Mr. Pope. What's wrong with Bill? Acute appendicitis said Dr. Coleman. He was at a party in town last night and was taken

sick and shot right into St. Luke's and operated on. They got it in time fortunately. And without pausing for comment he whipped out a thermometer and jabbed it into Mr. Pope's mouth. Mr. Pope was resentful. Darned unfair! he thought. Unfair to organized deception.

Now let's have a look at that shoulder said Dr. Coleman and he snatched the thermometer and after glancing at it began manipulating Mr. Pope's arm. Mr. Pope tried wincing a few times but noticed that Dr. Coleman's eyebrows went up each time and gave it up. After all he had had no instructions on that point from Dr. Kendall.

Well doctor he said how soon can you get me out of here? O a few days I think said Dr. Coleman. You're perfectly contented? Getting a good rest eh? Mr. Pope said he was. So Dr. Coleman said he'd stop in tomorrow and nodded to the nurse and they went out. But the door didn't latch and as it swung ajar again Mr. Pope heard him say to the nurse Does Dr. Kendall ever send any psychiatric patients to this hospital? The nurse said something and Dr. Coleman said H'm. Then he said Isn't this the Mr. Pope who—But the door swung shut and Mr. Pope didn't hear any more.

Well Mr. Pope was kind of worried. Maybe I ought to have told the guy he said to himself. But he's so stuffy he'd think Bill had been unethical or something in sending me here. I can't let Bill down.

Pretty soon Mrs. Pope and Aunt Edith came. Aunt Edith was large and smooth and encrusted with diamonds. She said she was sorry he was ill. Mr. Pope shifted his position and groaned. Painful? said Aunt Edith hopefully. Mr. Pope smiled bravely. It's much better he said. Isn't it too bad about Bill? said Mrs. Pope. Yes said Mr. Pope but Coleman says he's going to be all right. Aunt Edith knows Dr. Coleman. Isn't that nice? said Mrs. Pope. He's the son of a very old friend said Aunt Edith. A brilliant young man and very well connected. And she told them about Dr. Coleman's connections.

Mr. Pope groaned some more and Aunt Edith got restless and said finally Well Carlotta we mustn't tire Wilbur. So they left.

Late that evening Mr. Pope was reading when somebody outside the window said Psst! Good Lord said Mr. Pope is that you Ed? and he jumped up and went to the window. Hi Wilb said Ed. Thought I'd slip my halter and trot over and see if I could find you. I stuck my nose in every window on this floor. Boy! There's a guy two doors down in blue pajamas—he'll never be the same. And Ed began to laugh. Sssh! said Mr. Pope. O. K. said Ed. Look Wilb—I thought maybe you'd like to sneak out for a ride. A midnight ride to get some beer like Longfellow says. There's a nurse out at the desk now—cute little trick. Whyn't you ring your bell and get her in here and we can take her along. I can carry you both. But hold on a minute he said. You can't get out—this window's barred. Well I'll be darned said Mr. Pope I hadn't noticed that. But anyway Ed I couldn't go. They'd miss me. How's everything at home?

Not so good said Ed. That's one reason I came over. I think you ought to come home Wilbur. Aunt Edith is certainly stirring up the mud. She got your wife to ask that guy Coleman to dinner tonight. He brought up that old business about your bragging how I could talk. I was just outside the window—I'm keeping an eye on your interests Wilb. Anyway he was kind of hinting around—in a sort of a nasty joking way you know—and then auntie jumps in with the whole story. Your wife tried to shush her but auntie says Now Carlotta it's as well to face the facts. I've had a little talk with Dr. Coleman. He says there's nothing wrong with Wilbur's arm. And of course as he can't talk to Dr. Kendall he thinks it's important to find out just why Dr. Kendall sent Wilbur to the hospital.

And then this Coleman squirts his poison. He says as far as he can see you are O. K. *physically*—and then he kind of pauses and says You see Mrs. Pope I am responsible now and if there are any little ways in which Mr. Pope has seemed to you—well—eccentric— Well there's one thing I'll say for your wife Wilb—she certainly sticks up for you when you're not around. Boy did she put that guy through the mangle! They came out on the porch about then so I had to duck and didn't hear any more.

Well said Mr. Pope to tell you the truth Ed I don't like this much. Neither do I said Ed. They've got you headed for the booby hatch if you ask me. Why don't you get out of here? I couldn't get by the desk tonight without a row said Mr. Pope. I'll wait till tomorrow and have it out with Coleman. Maybe that's best said Ed. Well I ought to start back. I want to have another peek at that fat guy in the blue pajamas. You'd have died if you could have seen him Wilb. I don't want him to see *you* Ed said Mr. Pope. You'll get us in trouble. I won't let him see me said Ed I just want to give him a giggle. Like this. And Ed giggled.

Well just as he did so although Mr. Pope didn't know it a nurse came into the room. She saw Mr. Pope's back as he stood at the window and she heard that shrill inhuman giggle and she put the two together and fled. Mr. Pope shushed Ed and got back into bed just as she came in again. There was an older nurse with her. Did you—we thought we heard you laughing said the nurse uncertainly. O yes said Mr. Pope I heard it too. Out in the grounds somewhere I think. They looked at him steadily and the older nurse said It's pretty late—oughtn't you to try to get some rest? Perhaps you're right said Mr. Pope. So they cranked his bed flat and put out the light. But when they went out they left the door open.

Well Dr. Coleman came in early next morning and Mr. Pope went right at him. Look here Coleman he said do you think I'm crazy or something? My dear fellow! said Dr. Coleman laughing. What an odd question! My shoulder's all right now said Mr. Pope. I suggest that you let me go home. As far as your shoulder goes that's a perfectly reasonable suggestion said Dr. Coleman. But you see I'd have to have Dr. Kendall's approval. I hope to talk to him tomorrow. Well Mr. Pope argued but Dr. Coleman was firm. Another day's rest won't hurt your shoulder a bit he said.

Yeah? said Mr. Pope when he had gone. Well I'm going anyway. But when he went to get his clothes they weren't there. Good Lord he said this is serious! To go wandering around Westchester in pajamas would be just handing his sanity to Aunt Edith on a silver platter so he started another detective story. The thing to do was wait and tell Mrs. Pope the truth when she came that afternoon. But she didn't come. Instead Aunt Edith showed up. Carlotta wasn't feeling well she said so she'd come over to see if there was anything he wanted.

I want to get out of here said Mr. Pope but this man Coleman's acting very strange about it. He's even had them hide my clothes. Well Wilbur said Aunt Edith I do hope you're not going to be difficult about it. I felt it was so sensible of you to come in here voluntarily. It is unfortunate that you have taken such a dislike to Dr. Coleman. He says that if you could only bring yourself to be as frank with him as you have been with Dr. Kendall it would be so much better for you.

I see said Mr. Pope—you all think that I told Bill I was cuckoo. Then he laughed. I must say he said you were rather courageous to come here. I suppose Coleman told you I wouldn't get violent. But frankly I don't think he understands my case very well. Sometimes you know it just comes over me all at once. Mr. Pope glared at her and got slowly to his feet. I remember

he said for how many years you've been trying to break up our marriage and then— He raised his hands slowly and Aunt Edith gave a low howl and bolted.

That was a silly thing to do said Mr. Pope to himself. Now what in blazes can I do? But the day dragged on and he didn't think of anything. So he read some more and had dinner and at last at nine o'clock he heard a Psst! and Ed was at the window.

Look Wilb said Ed you got to get home right away. That aunt woman and the doc have been working on your wife. He's there to dinner again. And she's been cryin' all afternoon. That doc's been telling about a lot of cases just like yours—people that thought spirits talked to 'em and so on. It's pretty convincing. Gosh I have my doubts about you now myself. But here—get busy on these window bars. I brought you this screwdriver.

Well it took half an hour but they weren't interrupted and as soon as the bottom screws were out they bent two bars apart and Mr. Pope was off and away. Ed went cross-country and nobody saw them. Boy! he said I'm glad to get you out of that place! We'll throw a scare into Aunt Edith that'll explode her pompadour. No funny business now Ed said Mr. Pope. Eh? said Ed. No no of course not. Just drop me off at the side door so I can sneak in and get some clothes on said Mr. Pope. O sure sure said Ed.

But Ed had his own ideas about how things should be done. Aunt Edith and Dr. Coleman were sitting on the porch talking in low tones when there came the thud of hoofs on turf and a shrill screaming neigh. They jumped up and then as Ed with his pajama-clad rider clattered up the steps toward them they yelled in unison and dived—Aunt Edith under the porch hammock and Dr. Coleman over the rail into the night.

Well Mrs. Pope had been up in her room and she rushed down just as Mr. Pope having sent Ed off to the stable was trying to coax Aunt Edith out from under the hammock. Wilbur! she exclaimed and threw herself into his arms. It's all right darling he said. That fool Coleman wouldn't let me out of there so I got someone to bring Ed over. Look—you don't think I'm cuckoo do you? O Wilbur said Mrs. Pope I don't know what to think! It's—it's so confusing and queer! I can straighten it all out said Mr. Pope but I must get dressed.

So he went upstairs. While he dressed he heard a good deal of talking and moving around in Aunt Edith's room which was on the ground floor under his bedroom and when he went down Mrs. Pope came out to him. I don't know what to say Wilbur she said. I wish you hadn't come back in quite this way. It looks—Sure said Mr. Pope it looks queer all right. But Bill can explain when he gets well. I got him to send me to the hospital so I wouldn't have to be here while Aunt Edith was staying with you. Only we can't tell them that. It wouldn't be fair to Bill. But what on earth *can* we tell them? said Mrs. Pope. We'll have to stick to it that I really did have a bum arm said Mr. Pope. You try to quiet Aunt Edith down while I go out and rub Ed down. We galloped all the way.

Ed wasn't in the stable but Mr. Pope found him finally behind some shrubbery peering into the open window of Aunt Edith's room. Come come Ed he whispered you ought to have more dignity than to be going in for this Peeping Tom stuff. Gosh you certainly messed things up! I'm afraid I did Wilb murmured Ed. But do a little peeping yourself. Listen!

Aunt Edith was standing in the room and as Mr. Pope crept closer he saw the door open and Dr. Coleman come in. I got Dr. Bancroft on the phone said Dr. Coleman and I'll drive over to the hospital now and pick him up. But said Aunt Edith you can't leave us alone in the house with that madman! I'm sure he's quite harmless said Dr. Coleman. You just stay in your

room. But he must be put under restraint immediately! said Aunt Edith. Of course said Dr. Coleman but Bancroft will have to see him first with me. You just leave it to me.

Ed nudged Mr. Pope and they walked over to the stable. Looks like they'd got you in the grinder Wilbur said Ed. Anyway until Kendall gets on his feet again. Say listen. I've got an idea. You go on in the house and leave this to me said Ed. And as it was all he could do Mr. Pope did.

Mrs. Pope was in the living room and Mr. Pope sat down beside her. Thank heaven *you* don't think I'm a lunatic anyway Carlotta he said. Well you've certainly acted like one said Mrs. Pope and what on earth we're going to do about this psychiatrist that Dr. Coleman's bringing— The worst thing is she said that you threatened Aunt Edith. Mr. Pope remarked gloomily that the whole situation looked like the worst thing to him.

Pretty soon a car swished into the drive and a minute later Dr. Coleman came into the room followed by a tall gray-haired man. The Popes got up and Dr. Coleman introduced them to Dr. Bancroft who fixed piercing eyes on Mr. Pope and said Now suppose we just sit down and talk things over quietly. And at that moment from behind the closed door of Aunt Edith's room there came a high inhuman giggle followed by a shriek.

Good heavens! said Dr. Bancroft and Dr. Coleman rushed to the door and tried to pull it open but it was locked on the inside. And then again came the insane giggle followed by the sound of a gabbling voice—or two voices—it was hard to tell. Then the crash of an overturned table and frantic rattling of the doorknob and the door flew open and a disheveled Aunt Edith plunged into Dr. Coleman's arms. O doctor that terrible horse! she panted. He said things—horrible things. And then *laughed!* O! and her eyes turned up and she fainted.

Dr. Bancroft stepped quickly to the door and looked in. Then he turned with raised eyebrows and a shrug to Dr. Coleman who was bending over Aunt Edith. Nothing there he said. Of course there's nothing there said Mr. Pope. I'm very sorry this happened gentlemen he went on. We've rather tried to protect Aunt Edith. Even to the extent he said with a faint smile of my almost having to take the rap for her. You see he went on she's always had this odd idea about a horse. The things she told you about me Dr. Coleman were merely a transference. I don't know much about these things but as I get it she transfers her own hallucinations to me somehow.

Dr. Bancroft nodded at him. O yes he said it's not at all uncommon. Well Coleman if she's coming around I think—unless Mr. Pope would like us to stay for a little—? Not at all necessary said Mr. Pope. Carlotta will get her to bed and she'll be quite all right in the morning. I'm sure she will said Dr. Bancroft who was plainly anxious to go. Come Coleman he said sharply and the younger man still looking very puzzled said an unwilling good night and they left.

When Mr. Pope came back from the door Aunt Edith was sitting up and Mrs. Pope was holding her hand. You must get me into town she was saying. I wouldn't spend another night in that room. Now Aunt Edith said Mr. Pope I do hope you're not going to be difficult. You know he said I'm afraid Dr. Coleman feels that you haven't been perhaps any more frank with him than I was. Funny isn't it how the horse sort of came home to roost?

Aunt Edith glared at him. I begin to see she said tightly. That horse that spoke to me—it was some abominable hoax. Well I warn you Wilbur— Let me warn *you* Aunt Edith interrupted Mr. Pope. We have two doctors—one a psychiatrist—as witnesses that you claim to have been insulted by a horse. In that case I think any further pressure on Carlotta to get rid

of me would be most unwise. Also there's another point. A person who hears horses talking would hardly be considered capable of administering a trust fund. I suggest therefore that it might also be unwise to withhold on any pretext any part of the full amount of interest earned for Carlotta each quarter.

Well Aunt Edith continued to glare but Mr. Pope faced her calmly and after a minute she threw up her hands. Help me pack my bag Carlotta she said. I'm leaving.

When Mrs. Pope had taken Aunt Edith to the station Mr. Pope went out to see Ed. Well I've got to hand it to you Ed he said and told him what had happened. But what did you say to her? he asked. Nothing said Ed I just stuck my head through the window and waggled my ears and gave her the old giggle. But you said something insisted Mr. Pope—something horrible. She said you did. Yeah? said Ed. Well maybe I did Wilb. You know how I am—always polished and courtly. And being alone with a lady in her bedroom—well maybe I did pay her a compliment or two. Gosh! said Mr. Pope I hope not. I know your compliments. Ed winked at him. You don't know this one Wilb he said and you never will. Mr. Pope decided that it was better to let the matter drop.

THE END

[The end of *The Midnight Ride of Mr. Pope* by Walter Rollin Brooks]