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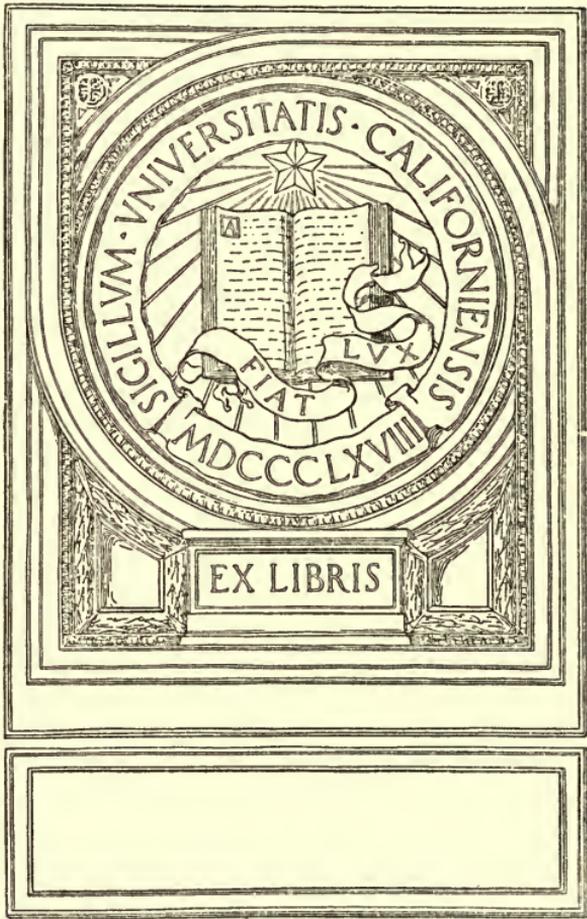


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The
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
of a **BEGGAR**

by I.K.FRIEDMAN

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THE
BLIND



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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A BEGGAR

By I. K. FRIEDMAN

THE LUCKY NUMBER

POOR PEOPLE

BY BREAD ALONE



“‘Yer missin’ de chanct ter make a dime quick,’ I says.”

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BEGGAR

*Prefaced by Some of the Humorous
Adventures & Incidents related in*
THE BEGGARS' CLUB

By I. K. FRIEDMAN

With Eighteen Illustrations by
W. GLACKENS



Boston
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TO THE
ASSOCIATION

*The Mershon Company Press,
Rahway, New Jersey, U. S. A.*

MY DEAR SISTER KITTIE :

I *HAVE* been begging so many favors from you all my life long that I hesitate to make another increase on the wrong side of the account ; but I promise you now to erase “the sign of the kind lady” from your door, and to wrong your generosity no more if you will grant me this one favor :

May I not beg to dedicate

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A BEGGAR

to you ?

M126038

The Beggars' Club hereby resolves to thank Mr. George Horace Lorimer, the editor of "The Saturday Evening Post" of Philadelphia, for his signal kindness in opening the hospitable doors of his sanctum to its hungry and forlorn members; and it furthermore resolves to thank the Curtis Publishing Company for the privilege of including in this volume such of the minutes of The Club as were published serially in "The Saturday Evening Post" of Philadelphia. The Club likewise spreads upon its records an acknowledgment of the debt of gratitude which it owes to Mr. W. Glackens for his sympathetic pencil portraits and illustrations, without which the touching appeal of its members to the public for charity and forbearance might have been made in vain.

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The Beggars' Club

THE BEGGARS' CLUB

A WORD TO NON-MEMBERS

THE Beggars' Club, as the astute reader may have guessed without the reading of a line, does not lay any particular stress on wealth among its conditions for membership; but he may not have surmised that the club was founded for social purposes only by men of wit, or, to be more exact, by men who live by their wits; for while the two often go together they are more often found apart.

The Beggars' Club is just what the name signifies, a club for those who live to beg and who beg to live. To become a member of it a millionaire would have to give his fortune to charity and then appeal to charity to get a modicum of his millions back.

In the rooms of the club money is an objection until it is spent, and he who has more than he can spend is an objectionable

The Beggars' Club

member by the nature of the case. Here a mean man and a man of means are one and the same thing. Here a penny has a use and a value of its own, besides that of serving as the part of a dollar and an abstract unit of the monetary table. The members agree with the rest of the world that poverty is no disgrace, and unlike the rest of the world they honestly mean it. The most worthless is welcomed here for his intrinsic worth and not for the extrinsic qualities of his pocket-book.

If you ever have given the matter any thought you will have recognized the fact that the trade of a beggar is beset with more difficulties than that of any other on earth. The beggar must ply his craft in the most inclement weather; in truth, if he is to meet with any degree of success he must toil in the extremes of heat and cold, and rest when the days are soft and balmy. He commands a smaller wage than any other artisan, but

A Word to Non-Members

be he even on the verge of starvation, he cannot strike for higher wages, since he is his own employer. It is almost impossible for him to form a trades union, for the very reason that it is so difficult to regulate either a beggar's wages or the number of hours that he shall work. He is not recognized by the law, or when the law does recognize him, it claps the poor wretch into jail.

He must go meanly, generally insufficiently clad, and it is an advantage for members of the guild to boast that they are underfed. The moment he dons good clothes and openly acknowledges that he does not suffer from hunger, that very second he must cease to beg.

A starving wife and children are articles that he cannot do without, and they assist him to a telling degree. He must be ever willing to work and yet never able to find work; and if he drudge ever so hard, he must deny that he is working at all. The absence

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of one leg, even of two, is a decided aid to his calling; if he be blind, his chances for good pay are still better; if he be deaf, dumb, and blind, crippled and maimed, his chances are of the best. The more crippled he is, the higher will he be paid.

To be a successful beggar, then, one must be hungry, be ill-clad to the point of rags; one must have a starving wife and children; one must be ever willing to work, yet never able to find work, and one must be a cripple. There is no royal road to beggary.

Moreover, a beggar is loathed and shunned; he is hated and persecuted. He is an outcast. He is detested by honest people because he busies himself at his trade; he is scorned by thieves because he is humble enough to do honest work. Individually they gain the sympathy of the public, collectively they have no public sympathy whatsoever. He may not know it himself, but your true beggar is a paradox.

A Word to Non-Members

It is scarcely to be wondered at if these unfortunate sons of toil seek for some amusement to forget, if for but a moment, the bitterness of their lot and to drown the woes and sorrows of their precarious existence. A beggar cannot afford expensive amusement, and if he find joy in beer it is not because beer is the joy he naturally prefers, but because it is the only one in which he can indulge. He goes to a "barrel-house" in quest of his recreation, because there no admission price is charged and there a larger quantity of his special delight is sold at a cheaper price than elsewhere. Besides, in more senses than one, misery loves company, and there misery finds the most miserable company in the world.

Some twenty and five beggars were wont to meet by chance at irregular intervals in McQuinn's "barrel-house." McQuinn made a generous offer to these same select five and twenty to meet at regular intervals and by

The Beggars' Club

design at his hostelry; and these special inducements, which no beggar was too rich to disdain, were the origin of The Beggars' Club and the corner-stone of their clubhouse.

It will take but a few words to describe McQuinn's, for the reason that there is nothing to describe. The furniture consists of a bar, a few chairs, and a long table, arranged without any particular attention to artistic effect, and you may rest assured that a chair taken out of place would not mar the harmony of design. I might add that the bar and the tables are battered and old, that the walls are cracked and the ceiling crumbled—but long descriptions tire, and I refrain. If the trite expression be allowed me, I will sum it up in a line and say that The Beggars' Club beggars description.

McQuinn himself is the sole striking fixture in the place that is in any way picturesque. His name gives him a nationality;

A Word to Non-Members

but his face might as well belong to one nation as to another. No one people in particular could claim his countenance;—it was so covered with scars and bruises and bumps and cuts that none of his face could be seen. He points to these scars with no little pride, and tells you that every one of them has a history; here as elsewhere history repeats itself; in that long gash across his right cheek history repeated itself several times in rapid succession.

On club nights McQuinn is always behind the bar to keep the beggars drinking and to prevent them from fighting. He will have no penniless beggar in his place, but a beggar with a penny—how fine the distinction!—is ever welcome.

To the stories they tell he heeds only the beginning and the end; for they are all sure to begin with a drink and to end with the same conclusion. In fiction our host prefers the short story, and he would caution all

The Beggars' Club

authors against a long and a dry introduction. He holds that the best conclusion is satisfying, sparkling, and full. I warn you not to dispute his literary theories, for he is strong and quick in argument and he will get the better of you in less than no time.

A composite photograph of the club might be interesting, and would prove, no doubt, a valuable acquisition for an orthopedist's collection. It would show a man with one leg and a quarter, one arm and three-quarters, one eye and a fraction; while his body would be as twisted as a contortionist's, and his face would form a puzzle that could be solved only by taking it apart and putting the parts together in every possible combination. The clothes of this composite man would be simply a rag that had a trick of clinging together.

The oddity of the names justifies another paragraph; for while there may be nothing in a name, there is a heap in an alias; and

A Word to Non-Members

their aliases will help me to make it clear that I am dealing with a peculiar people. The recording secretary, had they one, would have called a roll something like this:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Cripple Tom, | Loony Louis, |
| One-armed Jake, | Mollbuzzer, |
| Blind Bill, | Shirtless Sam, |
| Crutch McAllister, | Poor Peter, |
| Hungry Henry, | Deaf Dan, |
| Pete the Squealer, | Squint Eye, |
| Foxy Basket, | Humble Hinky, |
| Charlie the Conner, | Toothless Tom, |
| Two Twins, | Corner Hugger, |
| Sam the Scribe, | Footless Frank, |
| Harry the Skate. | Lazy Mike. |

Perhaps you would like to attend one of their meetings and listen to a few of the stories by which they drive dull care to death and warm the cockles of chill penury? If you decide upon going I can assure

The Beggars' Club

you in advance of a hearty welcome to their humble board. There you may find the bread you have cast upon the waters, and there you may be paid back in your own coin. I can offer you no other inducements, but if these prove sufficiently enticing I stand ready to secure you an entree into

THE BEGGARS' CLUB.

MEETING THE FIRST

SAM THE SCRIBE was the first to find his way into McQuinn's on Monday night, which, were he not usually last, would not be a fact worthy of chronicling. The Scribe is not a very good club member; he is usually surly, uncommunicative, and not over companionable, but, then, being the only literary member of the club—the others, without exception, being engaged in commercial pursuits—he is allowed privileges.

SAM THE SCRIBE, MAN OF LETTERS

Sam is a man of letters, and if a beggar ever hands you a mendicant epistle—one half sheet of note reeking with woe and thumb marks—you may be sure that Sam is the author. Were he an ambitious man, with the itch for fame, he would long ago have composed "The Beggars' Handy Letter-Writer—No Beggar Should be Without One."

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Nevertheless, Sam's letters are written in accordance with a set form rather than with a set price. For five cents he will write you a letter setting forth the discomfort of being lame; for ten cents he will expatiate upon the misfortune of blindness; for one which details both the misfortune of blindness and the discomfort of lameness he demands fifteen cents. You can see readily enough how the combination can be varied and how he avoids doing a strictly one-priced business.

Blind Bill was the second to enter, and on seeing the man of letters a smile lit up his haggard face.

"Y'er jist de man I'm ater," said he.

"Why?" grumbled Sam.

"I wants yer ter write meh a lame letter; I'm tired of bein' blind. I wants a lame one dis time."

"I don't want to be bothered with business here. Can't a fellow find amusement in his club?"



“I wants yer ter write meb a lame letter : I’m tired ef bein’ blind.”

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Sam the Scribe, Man of Letters

Bill insisted; he even offered an extra nickel as a compensation for dragging business into the leisure hours of this brainworker. Sam was holding out for the consideration, and he borrowed a pen and ink from McQuinn and started to dash off an essay on the pangs and pains of being lame.

He had barely finished his task when Lame Tom fairly ran into the room and shouted:

“Glad y’er here. Yer de very man I wants.” Even The Beggars’ Club can afford a lion.

“Well, and what do you want?”

“I wants a blind letter. I’m tired ef bein’ lame,” responded Tom.

Blind Bill saw an opportunity to turn a dishonest penny.

“See here!” he exclaimed, “ef yer’d been here a minute ago we could have changed our letters. But I’ll tell yer what I’ll do; I’ll sell yer meh blind letter fer half price.”

The Beggars' Club

Sam protested. In his eyes this was equal to an infringement on copyright; but the trade was made before the Scribe had found time to finish the wording of his protest. He changed his tactics, being a wily man, and ceasing to appeal to Tom's sense of honor, appealed to his cupidity.

"Tom," questioned he, "you can't read; how do you know that the letter is genuine? He may be sticking you with a petition for work, for all you know about it."

"I'll take Bill's word fer it," answered Tom; "I was wid him yesterday when he sprung de letter on a cove an' got a dime."

Sam was about to resign himself to his loss and make the worst of it when his fertile mind hit upon still another scheme.

"Bill," said he, turning to face the newly-made lame man, "I played a trick on you in the letter. I wrote that you are a fraud and a liar."

Sam the Scribe, Man of Letters

“De truth never hurts no one,” retorted the other philosophically. “’Sides, I’ll run meh chanctes fer a nickel.”

The Scribe became wroth. “I’ll get even with you fellows,” he shouted. And he did get even with them; those letters were exchanged by stealth that same evening, and I shall tell you later on what came out of Sam’s maneuver.

“Ef yer’re going ter be lame,” argued Tom with Bill, not heeding the Scribe’s anger, “yer’ll need a wooden leg, an’ I’ll sell yer mine cheap.”

The cunning Bill, who even in his blindness had conserved an eye for business, shook his head. “Yer don’t need no peg ter be lame wid.”

“Yes, but it goes better dat way,” cajoled Thomas; “people kind er feel sorry fer de wooden leg.”

“Oh, I’ll work it,” yawned Bill. “’Sides, de Scribe put in a line about meh gettin’ a

The Beggars' Club

collection fer ter buy a wooden peg. I heard him read it aloud when he was a-writin' it."

"All right," replied the erstwhile lame man, as if totally unconcerned, "I'll keep on bein' lame an' I'll work yer beat."

It was high time for the novice in "pegging" to become fearful.

"Come now," queried he, "what will yer take fer de peg?"

"I ain't a-goin' ter sell it." And Tom shook his head.

"Goin' ter give it ter a hospital, I s'pose," observed Bill sarcastically.

Tom did not see fit to heed his friend's taunt, asserting, "I wouldn't sell it, but I'll rent it; fer de blind game mightn't go, an' den I wants de leg back ag'in. I'll let yer have it fer t'ree cents a week; t'ree weeks an' one-quarter payable in advance."

"Done!" cried the other.

Tom proceeded to unwrap a roll of dirty

Sam the Scribe, Man of Letters

paper and linen, and to undo two straps that held the peg to the upper half of his leg.

Bill put on his newly gained property, and began to hobble up and down the room with all the pride of a boy who mounts stilts for the first time.

“Dere’s some fun in dis,” he shouted.

“You’ll see more fun yet before you get through with it,” muttered the Scribe, who had been sitting moodily in his corner.

By this time the other members had filed in and taken their seats around the table.

Hungry Henry drew out a loaf of bread and a ham and started to make sandwiches for the crowd. This was an unusual and unexpected proceeding, and the other members looked at him inquiringly.

Henry saw that an explanation was required and he did not hesitate to give it. Indeed, the only objection to Henry as a member of the Club was his eagerness to talk and his unwillingness to keep still.

The Beggars' Club

HUNGRY HENRY'S TOUCHING TALE

“Gents,” began Henry, “yer needn’t be afeerd ter eat dis bread, ’cause I come by it honestly, an’ don’t let yer appetites be spoiled fer fear dat yer robbin’ meh. I’m proud ter say fer oncet in meh life, I had enuf ter eat. I meets a cove terday an’ I springs de old dodge on ter him.

“‘Mister,’ says I, ‘does yer mind helpin’ a man what’s starvin’ ter de price ef a meal?’

“De cove smiles an’ he says, like all de coves says, ‘Why don’t yer work?’

“‘Well,’ says I, ‘I worked in a rollin’ mill, an’ de mill shut down last week, an’ I ain’t been able fer ter find nothin’ ter do, an’ I ain’t eat a bite since den.’

“‘Yer must be hungry,’ says he wid a grin.

“‘Hungry,’ says I, ‘I’m dyin’ ter eat.’

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘we’ll see what we kin

Hungry Henry's Touching Tale

do'; an' he pulls out a handful of shiners dat would make yer eyes water.

"He fishes out a quarter an' I puts meh hand out. Den he puts de quarter back, an' I swears ter myself. Den he fishes out a half, an' I puts out both meh hands. Den he puts de half back, an' I swears aloud, an' he laffs.

"'If yer hungry,' says he, 'come wid meh an' I'll get yer a meal!'

"Gents, I was hungry in dead earnest; but seein' de cove had fun wid meh I t'ought I'd have fun wid de cove, an' I hangs back.

"'Come on,' says he; 'I t'ought yer was hungry?'

"'I am,' says I, 'but I don't like ter eat in de places where yer goes. Give meh de dime an' let meh go where I wants!'

"'Not much,' says he; 'I knowed yer was a-playin' orff!'

"Well, de cove takes meh ter a saloon, an' he says ter de barkeep, "Dis boy is hun-

The Beggars' Club

gry; he's a-starvin' an' he wants a big san'wich!'

"He grins, an' de guy behin' de bar grins. I was a-grinnin' too, fer I didn't want de guy ter think dat I wasn't on ter him. But in meh stomick I feels queer an' meh mouth waters; fer I was hungry enuf ter cry an' no joke, an' youse fellers knows dat when I'm hungry, I'm hungry.

"'Den,' says I ter de cove, unhitchin' two buttons, 'I gets all I wants er I don't eat, eh?'

"'Sure thing,' says de cove.

"De guy cuts two bricks ef bread, an' he puts a trowelful ef ham atween. It being double size, de cove puts down two dimes, an' de guy grins an' de cove laffs.

"De san'wich goes down quicker en de two dimes. An' I says ter de guy, 'I wants a san'wich next time; yer ain't a-feedin' a mouse er a canary bird!'

"An' fer half a hour I keeps de guy a-cut-

Hungry Henry's Touching Tale

tin' an' de cove a-payin', an' meh jus' beginnin' ter feel dat food had crossed meh hungry lips!

“ ‘ Yer cost meh fifty cents already,’ says de cove; ‘ ain’t yer ever goin’ ter quit?’ ”

“ ‘ Don’t talk quit,’ says I; ‘ I ain’t begun; I’m just workin’ up a appertite. When a man ain’t eat nothin’ fer a week a man’s hungry!’ ”

“ ‘ It looks as ef yer ain’t eat nothin’ fer a year,’ says de guy, his mouth open an’ his eyes out, ez ef I was a freak, which I ain’t.

“ ‘ It may be a year,’ puts in I, ‘ ’fore I strikes dis snap ag’in! I’m layin’ in a serply. Now, please don’t bother meh, an’ leave meh give meh attention ter eatin’.’ ”

“ ‘ It’s one dollar,’ pipes de cove when de guy was a-layin’ de foundation fer de sixth; ‘ ain’t yer afeard ef indigestion?’ ”

“ ‘ No,’ I says, ‘ I ain’t had dat complaint since de time when I eat fer two weeks widout takin’ time fer sleep!’ ”

The Beggars' Club

“ ‘ Say,’ says de guy, layin’ down his knife an’ rubbin’ his arm, ‘ yer ought ter git some one ter feed yer by de hour!’ ”

“ I gives him one look, an’ I says, ‘ Ef I did, I’d git some one ter do de feedin’ ez knows how ter make a san’wich; yer ain’t a-cuttin’ fer a inwalid.’ ”

“ Den I takes de knife from de guy an’ I makes a san’wich ez was a san’wich.

“ ‘ Dat ’ll cost yer thirty cents,’ says de guy to de cove.

“ De cove turns pale. ‘ How much ’ill yer take ter quit?’ axes he.

“ ‘ I’ll calkerlate,’ says I, ‘ an’ I’ll let yer know in half a hour.’ ”

“ ‘ Yer no lightnin’ calkerlator,’ says he.

“ ‘ No, not when I’m eatin’,’ answers I.

“ ‘ I can’t stay here all de night,’ says de cove; ‘ I must catch a train.’ ”

“ ‘ All right,’ says I, ‘ I’ll eat a bit quicker.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, we close at twelve sharp,’ says de guy.

Hungry Henry's Touching Tale

“ ‘It's only nine now,’ smiles I; ‘I'll be thru by dat time.’

“ ‘I'm glad ter hear dat,’ says de cove, Den he says ter de guy: ‘Yer gives dis feller two loaves ef bread an' a ham, an' let him take it home. An' de next time I meets yer,’ says he ter meh, ‘I'll give yer a dime widout axin' ef yer hungry.’

“ ‘An' de next time a gentleman axes yer fer de price ef a meal,’ says I, ‘yer wants ter take his word fer it, an' not believe dat he's a liar 'cause he's poor!’

“ I takes meh ham an' bread an' I walks away, an' de cove calls out an' he says:

“ ‘I wants yer name; I wants ter know yer when we meets ag'in.’

“ ‘Hungry Henry,’ answers I.

“ ‘Yer name must have been born wid yer,’ says he.”

Before the laughter aroused by Hungry Henry's story had died away, Blind Bill arose to his feet and, as if moved by an over-

The Beggars' Club

whelming impulse of generosity, shouted, "Gents, I'll treat!"

Bill's liberality was greeted with a widespread look of disappointment, for the restricting clause, "That is, if McQuinn will trust me," usually followed his unselfish offer. Now McQuinn never trusted anybody, and Bill's munificence passed current for the homage which stinginess pays to generosity. This time, however, the unexpected happened. Bill held a yellow coin to the light.

"Dis is de real article," began he, "an' it breaks meh heart ter break it. It's de first dat I ever had in meh life. I would like ter keep it fer a pocket piece. Gents," spoke he solemnly as a campaign orator, "dere is ez much here ez in five silver dollars er in five hundred cents."

"My," whispered Charlie the Conner, "he's eddicated."

Blind Bill continued: "It takes de Gov-

Hungry Henry's Touching Tale

ermint ter squeeze five hundred cents in dis small coin, an' der ain't no one else dat kin do de trick."

"Dat's right," shouted Pete the Squealer. "I got pinched fer tryin' it."

Heedless of the laughter which followed Pete's observation, Bill went on:

"But dat ain't here, an' it ain't dere; de Governmint had nothin' ter say; I earned it. I'll tell yer how it was guv ter meh, an' den I'll let yer judge fer yerselves whether I earned it er not."

"Yer earned it! Yer earned it!" exclaimed Humble Hinky jeeringly, desirous of cutting a long story short and getting at the gist of the matter, which was the treat.

Bill looked at his interrupter scornfully. "I didn't earn it dat quick," retorted he; "I had ter work fer it." And he was about to give an account of his adventure when Humble Hinky interrupted with, "An' now yer wants ter make us work fer it."

The Beggars' Club

"It 'll give yer a thirst, fer de story is dry," and straightway Bill began the tale of

FIVE FINGERS AND FIVE DOLLARS

"I goes inter a man's store ter day, an' I tells him how I lost meh eyesight from sickness.

"Den yer can't see?' axes de man.

"I wouldn't be blind ef I could see,' answers I.

"Can't yer see at all?' he axes, lookin' at meh right sharp.

"Excuse meh,' answers I, 'but yer 'pinion ef blindness is peculiar.'

"It is sometimes,' he grins, an' de clerks stop workin' an grins, too. 'I don't believe yer blind,' he goes on, 'an' I'm goin' ter put yer to de test!'

"I'm perfectly willin',' replies I. But I feels skeered, fer he was a smart-lookin' feller, an' dis test business is ticklish sometimes.

Five Fingers and Five Dollars

“ De first thing he done was ter throw a quarter on his desk. ‘ Guess what dat is,’ snaps he, ‘ an’ yer kin have it.’

“ ‘ It’s a quarter,’ snaps I, an’ I puts out meh hand ter grab it.

“ ‘ Don’t be too quick, meh blind friend,’ says he, puttin’ his hand over de coin; ‘ ef yer was blind, how could yer tell dat de piece ef money was a quarter?’

“ I was almost caught dat time. I had no bizness ter call de turn, but de sight ef de quarter made meh greedy; but I t’inks quick an’ I answers, “ De hearin’ ef de blind is ‘cute; I kin tell any coin by de ring.’

“ ‘ Yer must have been a payin’-teller in a bank ter know money so well,’ says he. But he gives meh de quarter.

“ I starts ter go out in a hurry wid meh quarter, de clerks all laffin’, when he calls meh back.

“ ‘ I’ll give yer de chance ter earn anuder quarter,’ says he.

The Beggars' Club

“ ‘I’m willin’,’ says I.

“ ‘Ef yer guesses how many fingers I holds up, I’ll give yer a quarter,’ says he.

“ ‘Ef I guesses it,’ pipes I, ‘yer’ll tell meh I ain’t blind, an’ den yer won’t give it ter meh. Ef I don’t guess what it is, den yer surely won’t give it ter meh. Dat bet ain’t fair!’

“ ‘Ef I ever kin use a blind clerk,’ says he, ‘I’ll give yer de job. But I’ll tell yer what I’ll do: ef yer guesses right, I’ll give yer de quarter; ef yer guesses wrong, I’ll give yer a dime. Is dat fair?’

“ ‘No,’ replies I. ‘I’m blind an’ yer might cheat meh, an’ how would I know?’

“ ‘I’ll be de judge,’ says one ef de clerks, an’ I could see from de look on his face dat he wanted de boss beat, so I says, ‘I’m will-in?’

“ ‘Come, how many fingers is it?’ axes he, holdin’ up four.

“ ‘T’ree,’ says I.

Five Fingers and Five Dollars

“ ‘Yer wrong,’ says he an’ de clerk.

“ ‘But I gets meh dime,’ shouts I.

“ ‘Dat game ain’t fair,’ says de man; ‘I loses either way. I’ll tell yer what I’ll do: I’ll bet yer seventy cents ag’in yer t’irty-five cents dat yer can’t call de turn next time!’

“ ‘Give yer coin to de clerk first,’ says I, givin’ him mine.

“ He holds up four fingers an’ I bawls out ‘Four!’ an’ de clerk give meh de coin in a hurry.

“ Hold on,’ cries de man ter de clerk; ‘dat feller is a-cheatin’ meh!’

“ ‘A blind man might guess right,’ says I, a-goin’ out.

“ He pulls meh back by de coat an’ shouts, ‘We’ll have one more bet, anyways!’

“ I agrees ter dat ’cause I couldn’t help mehself.

“ ‘Now,’ says he, ‘I’ll bet yer two dollars ag’in’ yer one dollar an’ five cents dat

The Beggars' Club

yer don't guess right dis time.' An' he puts de two dollars in de clerk's hand, an' I puts in meh one dollar an' five cents, feelin' sorry dat I didn't have sense enuf ter quit.

“ ‘ Now,’ axes he, holdin’ up his five fingers, ‘ how many?’ ”

“ ‘ Five,’ shouts I, bein’ willin’ ter lose meh reputation fer honesty rather den meh dollar an’ five. De clerk was a-goin’ ter drop de t’ree dollars in meh hand when de boss snaps his fingers an’ bawls out:

“ ‘ Hold on; don’t be so quick.’ An’ he says ter meh:

“ ‘ How could I hold up five fingers when I’ve only got four, meh thumb bein’ gone?’ ”

“ ‘ No, sir,’ says I; ‘ a man what had his thumb cut orff can’t snap his fingers!’ ”

“ ‘ An’ de clerk drops his money in meh hand an’ de man says:

“ ‘ Yer hearin’ is very ’cute.’ Den he t’inks a minute an’ says:

“ ‘ I’ll bet two dollars ag’in’ yer t’ree dat

Five Fingers and Five Dollars

yer don't guess it dis time! An', Mr. Clerk, yer needn't be in sich a hurry ter get rid ef meh money!'

"Den he holds up one finger. 'One,' hollers I afore he has de chanct ter haul it down an' hold up two. An' de clerk hands meh de coin.

"'Yer seen it,' says he.

"'I didn't,' says I.

"'Den how did yer guess it?' axes he.

"'It's de most natcheral thing in de world,' says I, 'fer a man ter go back ter one finger after him havin' up five.'

"'Well,' says he, 'I'll give ye de five dollars an' let yer go! An' some dark night I'm comin' around ter borrow dose blind eyes ef yourn!'"

And Bill drew his story to a close, tossing the five-dollar gold piece to McQuinn with the carelessness of a man who is used to handling gold as if it were so much dross. McQuinn examined it with the care of a man

The Beggars' Club

who is used to having dross foisted on him for so much gold.

“Look-a-here,” he roared, marching up to Bill, “dat ain’t nothin’ but a gilded quarter. What does yer mean by tryin’ ter shove queer?” And without delay he threw Bill from the clubroom into the street.

Throughout the evening one member, evidently a stranger, for none of the members could claim his acquaintance, sat stupidly in a corner, never smiling, never changing the expression on his face.

Crutch McAllister, who had been eyeing him closely all evening, was irritated beyond endurance by the stranger’s stolid indifference.

When Blind Bill’s gold proved spurious and the stranger in the gates failed to see the humor of the situation, Crutch McAllister could control himself no longer and he turned and smote the melancholy guest with all his might and main.

Five Fingers and Five Dollars

“ Yer can’t palm dat deaf an’ dumb racket off on ter us. It don’t go here,” he yelled.

“ Dat’s right, Crutch, make him speak. Make him!” and they all pounced on the silent guest.

“ Let him alone,” yelled McQuinn, pulling the others off, “ let him alone. Dat feller is all right; I knows him. He can’t speak an’ he can’t hear.”

“ I’m sorry dat I hit him, den,” apologized Crutch, “ but de guy had de right ter holler an’ tell meh dat he was deaf an’ dumb in de first place!”

MEETING THE SECOND

AT the first meeting we attended, Sam the Scribe, if you remember, exchanged the mendicant letters of Blind Bill and Lame Tom. I promised to tell you the result of that maneuver, and here it is.

LETTER THE FIRST

Bill had practiced "pegging" until he deemed himself master of the theory of the art and able to put his theory into practice. You may think that it is the easiest thing in the world to play lame, and so it is if you have not been unfitted for it by playing blind too long. Bill found himself on the point of saying constantly, "Mister, can't yer help a man dat had his eye blinded by sickness ter buyin' a lame leg?" or, "Mister, can't yer help a blind man dat had his leg blowed orff by sickness ter buyin' a wooden eye?"

This sudden change of occupation confused his mind and totally unfitted him for

Letter the First

active business. He became fearful, since he was no longer able to support himself, lest he become an article of common charity. To a man who has earned a livelihood for so long a time this is humiliating in the extreme, and poor Bill was about to give way to despair when it suddenly dawned upon his intellect that the best thing to say was nothing at all. The letter he had purchased from Lame Tom told the whole story; what need was there for comment or footnotes on his part?

He resolved to be timid no longer, but to rely on the letter and to have faith in the spirit.

He remembered that One-armed Jake had told him that a certain "gent" who kept a grocery store never refused assistance to the needy. In the words of Jake, "De gent is a soft mark; yer tells yer story an' yer gits yer coin. He ain't de kind what gives yer words ef comfort an' den tells yer he'll give

The Beggars' Club

yer case to de Aid Sassiety ter investigate; er tells yer yer a fraud, er axes yer ef yer can't git work wid yer feet. Nop, yer tells yer story an' yer gits yer coin."

So Blind Bill betook him to the grocer with the soft heart; if successful there, he would venture into unknown fields anon.

"Seein' es yer is sich a kind-lookin' gent," said Bill, as he hobbled up to the dealer in provisions, "I takes de liberty ef showin' yer dis, knowin' it would touch yer heart."

The "kind-looking gent" put on his glasses and read the letter. Here is what he read:

"To whom it May Concern: The bearer of this note is blind. He had his eyes blown out in a boiler explosion. Before that he was a machinist and earning the comfortable sufficiency of twelve dollars a week, on which he kept his wife and family respectable. Now he can find nothing to do and

Letter the First

starvation stares him in the face. Can you help him? He will bless you, so will his wife and his family."

There was a twinkle in the reader's eye and a smile lurked about the corners of his mouth. Bill was not slow to see the smile and the twinkle, and fearing something was wrong he lost his presence of mind, and felt with horror that his thoughts were rushing into a jumble.

"How long have you been this way?" queried the shopkeeper, feigning pity.

"Since last Monday," replied the beggar. When the words slipped out of his mouth he felt his heart jump into it. He knew that he had answered incorrectly.

"Came on you rather sudden, didn't it?"

"No; I was born dat way." From mere force of habit Bill referred to his blindness.

"Born what way?" questioned the other sharply.

The Beggars' Club

“Born lame!” shouted Bill, rejoicing that the right answer had come at last.

“That’s too bad,” said the grocer, assuming sorrow.

“It’s awful,” whined Bill.

“Can’t you do anything for it?”

“Do anything fer it! I tried everything, but when de eye is gone,” answered Bill, reassured by the other’s consoling tone, “dere ain’t no good in medicine, an’ glasses don’t help none.”

“Did you apply the glasses to your leg?”

“Eh?” grunted Bill, surmising that something was amiss, and not knowing just what.

“What I want to know is, are you lame or are you blind?”

For the moment the unfortunate beggar knew not himself whether he was crippled or sightless, and not daring to answer anything, he asked:

“Don’t de letter say?”

Letter the First

“Don’t you know yourself, without the letter?” thundered the grocer.

“Yes, I knows, but yer sees de letter tells jist how de trouble wid—wid mehself—well, it tells de date an’ all.”

It flashed over the mendicant’s mind that someone had played treacherous tricks with the letter; his mind became more confused than ever.

“Never mind the date; I want to know what the trouble is before I assist you. Are you lame or are you blind?”

Bill looked at the crutch, and he looked at the letter, and he looked at the grocer’s face; but neither crutch nor letter nor face helped him out of his quandary. He fell back upon the truth as the last resource. “I used ter be blind,” said he, all simply.

“Oh, you used to be blind, but you ain’t any more?”

“Yes, dat’s it,” cried Bill, rejoiced to find his difficulty solved.

The Beggars' Club

“Well, if you were blind and you're not blind any more, why do you come to me for assistance?”

“'Cause I'm lame,” ventured Bill.

“Why are you lame?” roared the man of sugar and spices, trying his browbeating tactics again.

“'Cause de letter says so,” pleaded Bill, nonplused beyond the hope of redemption.

“But the letter don't say so!”

“Be yer sure?”

“Certainly I'm sure.”

“Would yer mind readin' meh de letter?” he blubbered, his faint heart sinking to the bottom of his wooden peg.

“Why, can't you read it yourself?” The voice of the inquisitor became cajoling again.

“Sure, sure,” replied Bill boldly; “sure I kin read it.”

“But how can you read it if you are blind?”



*“ But how kin I read de letter ef
I'm blind ? ”*

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Letter the First

“Dat’s so; how kin I?”

“That’s what I want to know, how can you?”

“Well,” put in Bill, as if anxious to help the grocer out of his dilemma, “be yer sure dat de letter says dat?”

“Says what?”

“Say’s dat I can’t read ’cause I’m lame,” ventured Bill.

“No, no; it don’t say that.”

“Don’t it? Well, I knowed it didn’t.”

“Now,” said the grocer, veering his tactics, “I’ll give you a dime if you read the letter.”

So he was to be remunerated! Well, he hadn’t played his part so badly, after all! Bill’s heart grew big with hope.

“But how kin I read de letter ef I’m blind?” queried he with erstwhile slyness.

“But you’re not blind; you’re lame!” bel-lowed the grocer.

“I ain’t lame; I’m blind,” insisted Bill.

The Beggars' Club

“Then why do you go about on a wooden leg?”

“’Cause I’m blind,” whimpered Bill, his thoughts turned topsy-turvy by the cross-questioning. He hobbled toward the door as fast as one wooden leg and one flesh-and-blood leg would carry him.

The grocer stopped the beggar, handing him a coin.

Bill slipped the money into his pocket, wondering if it were a reward for his lameness or his blindness; but so long as he had been successful at one of them it mattered not which. He had his hand on the door when the grocer said:

“What I want to know is——”

“Ain’t yer got yer money’s worth?” interrupted Bill.

He took the hint, and with the extra question slipped in an extra coin.

“I want to know who wrote that letter?”

Letter the First

Fearing another trap, Bill tried to dodge with, "What does yer want to know fer?"

"Because I don't believe you have any knowledge of its contents."

"Yes, I has——" Here Bill stopped, not wishing to step into the winding labyrinth from which he had just extricated himself with such great difficulty. "I wish yer'd be dat kind." The beggar was solicitous about the wording of the brief.

The grocer, as if reading the letter, repeated:

"To Whom it May Concern: The bearer of this letter pretends to be blind, but he can see as well as you. He pretends to be lame, but he can walk perfectly when he unhitches the peg which encumbers his good leg. He is known as the greatest liar and fraud in the State. Don't give him anything."

When the last word was out Bill burst forth into a volley of oaths, and he stamped on the ground with his wooden leg in wrath.

The Beggars' Club

“Sam de Scribe done dat. Oh! oh! I'll get even wid him. A nice trick ter play on his best customer!”

The lame man left the shop in a blind rage.

LETTER THE SECOND

It was Bill's intention to make directly for McQuinn's and read the law to Sam; but the worst intentions are sometimes thwarted as well as the best. He had barely turned the corner when he met Lame Tom; and then for the first time it dawned upon him that Tom might have had a finger in this pie. The more he considered it the more plausible did it seem. He would punish his enemies one by one. The grocer was just in the humor for receiving other applicants for charity. He would send Tom, the unsuspecting, to him.

“An' how goes de blind game?” asked Tom.

“Don't go.” Bill shook his head.

“Why?”

Letter the Second

“ I only makes a half ter-day ! ”

“ A half de first day an’ yer ain’t satisfied. What does yer want? Maybe yer’d like ter run de mint? ”

“ Well, de first guy gives meh a half, but de others turns meh down. ”

Tom became excited. “ Where did yer find dat mark? ”

“ I’d tell yer, but yer’d go an’ spoil it fer meh. ”

“ Yer knows meh better ’an dat; why would I spoil it? ”

Bill refused to divulge his golden goose, and Tom grew wroth.

“ All right! ” exclaimed he; “ I’ll get even; yer wait. Who told yer, anyways, ’bout half de marks yer knows? ”

“ Well, ” spake Bill, as if reluctantly, “ it was dat grocer aroun’ de corner. ”

Tom started to go, but Bill detained him. “ Yer ain’t a-goin’ dere right now an’ spoil it all fer me, be yer? ”

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“ Sure; I berlieves in catchin' a man when he's in de givin' humor. Dat never lasts long.”

Tom entered the shop just as the grocer had finished relating to a friend the humorous incident of the lame beggar with the blind letter.

“ They must have marked my door with blue chalk,” he whispered to his friend on Tom's advent. Tom had none of Bill's qualms or misgivings or timidness, and he approached his subject boldly, but politely.

“ I begs pardon fer disturbin' yer; but I'm blind an' I ain't got no place ter sleep, an' I t'ought as maybe yer'd help a feller out.”

The grocer, winking to his friend, said sharply, “ I don't believe you're blind.”

This was a setback to Tom, who had expected that “ the mark ” would give without the asking of annoying questions.

“ I wish dat yer believin' would make it

Letter the Second

so," he retorted, "but I kin prove it dat I'm blind," and he handed him the testimonial, which read:

"A year ago the bearer of this testimonial was unfortunate enough to have both of his legs cut off by the cars. Since then he has been obliged to beg for a living. Before he had his legs cut off he was a cabinet-maker earning a profuse living. Now his family is reduced to starvation. Please help him."

The grocer handed the communication to his friend, saying, "Read that aloud." His instructions were obeyed to the letter.

Tom's hopes for receiving a half-dollar fell quicker than the man read.- No one, however, could have told it from the expression on his face, nor, unlike Bill, did he lose his presence of mind.

"That proves that you're a fraud and a cheat, and I'm going to have you arrested," shouted the man of sugar and spices.

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"That's right," echoed his friend warmly.

"It don't prove no sich thing," disputed Tom hotly. "It proves dat I'm blind, an' dat letter was changed on meh; ef I wasn't blind, would I be goin' round wid a fool letter like dat?"

"Your argument merely proves that you can't read," thundered the grocer.

"But I kin read."

"Then you're not blind," flashed his adversary.

Tom cursed himself inwardly for walking into a trap with both eyes open. He made one supreme effort to extricate himself.

"I mean," he subjoined quietly, "as I could read afore I was taken blind, an' it's de most natcheral thing in de world fer a man ter say dat he kin allus read ef he could read oncet."

"That's true enough, but Sam the Scribe was in here a moment or two ago, and he told me that he wrote the letter for you and

Letter the Second

that you're no more blind than a cat at night."

Figuratively speaking, Tom scratched his head. He remembered that Sam had threatened vengeance, and when the Scribe thirsted for vengeance it was hard to find whisky sufficient to quench his thirst.

The grocer was not slow to see his advantage, and he cried exultingly, "Besides that, you said that you were born blind."

"So you did," came from the mendacious echo.

"So I did," re-echoed Tom, fearful of losing anything, and hoping that one word might do quite as well as another.

"Well, if you were born blind, how in the world could you have ever read?"

It is a poor beggar who cannot have an inspiration. "If youse fellers gives meh half a dollar I'll explain de whole thing ter yer; but I ain't a-goin' on a-talkin' fer nothin'."

The grocer and his friend assented to the

The Beggars' Club

proposition. "But remember," said they, "if you don't explain it to our satisfaction we get our money back."

"Sure," agreed Tom. "But I kin explain anything. First, I said I was blind—dat's right, ain't it?"

"Correct," came from the two in a chorus.

"Den I said ez I could read, an' yer axed meh how, bein' blind, I could read?"

His opponents raised no objection.

"Den I said ez I could read afore I was blind, an' ez it was natcheral fer meh ter say ez I could read allus, seein' ez I could read oncet."

The summing-up of his argument met with no rebuff.

"Den I says I was born blind, an' yer axed meh how bein' born blind I could ever read at all. Eh?"

"That's correct," assented the other side, wondering if there was any escape between the two horns of the dilemma.

The Postscript

“ Well, I was born blind. Den I got meh sight agin. Den I learned ter read. Den I lost meh sight by readin’ too much by nights an’ I been blind ever since. Dat covers all de points, eh? ”

“ You’ve earned your money,” laughed the grocer; “ take it and go.”

“ Some people ain’t so smart as dey tink, an’ youse fellers don’t want ter judge a man by de clothes he wears,” shouted Tom.

THE POSTSCRIPT

Tom left the shop with a feeling mingled of joy at his victory and anger against Bill for having placed his life and reputation in jeopardy; but his anger against Bill was as nothing when weighed in the balance with his hatred for the Scribe. He would wither the one with his scorn; he would smite the other with his fist.

Lame Tom met Blind Bill before either

The Beggars' Club

his wrath or his scorn had had time to lose a degree of heat by cooling.

“How was de mark?” asked Bill with an insinuating grin.

“Dead easy,” came the answer; “yer might as well 'a' told meh ter ask fer a dollar an' I'd 'a' had it.” He displayed his half-dollar proudly.

Bill lost his breath. “Yer got dat wid dat letter?”

“Wid what letter?”

“Wid de wrong letter.”

“How did yer know dat I had de wrong letter?”

“'Cause I had yourn an' I knowed dat yer must 'a' had mine.”

“Den why didn't yer tell me dat I had de wrong letter?”

“Well, I caught a half wid de wrong letter, an' dat's more'n I ever caught wid de right one, an' I t'ought ez yer might do de same.”

The Postscript

“ So I did. What more does yer want ter know? ”

“ I steered yer agin de mark. Yer might give meh half.”

Tom was astonished at his brother's boldness. It actually dulled the edge of his scorn.

“ But yer got a half, didn't yer? ”

“ No, I didn't git nothin'. He cussed meh an' mixed meh up so dat I didn't know where I was standin'. An' dat's all I got fer meh trouble.”

“ But yer jist said yer got a half.”

“ But I lied,” confessed Bill, thinking an open confession might be good for his purse.

“ How I hates a liar!” ejaculated Tom, throwing up his hands with infinite disgust.

And the lame man hastened away, refusing to be led by the blind one.

Sam the Scribe expected a warm reception at the second meeting and that is the reason why he stayed away. Effusiveness always

The Beggars' Club

bored him; he had long ago grown tired of having his literary efforts criticised, even though the comments were favorable.

When the club had assembled, Deaf Dan began :

THE FATE OF THOSE WHO WILL NOT HEAR

“ Gentlemen, a peculiar thing happened to me to-day; so peculiar that I was almost struck speechless in all truth. I went into a store to-day, walked up to the proprietor and began to speak with my fingers. The man looked at me, and, without changing the expression on his face, answered me in the deaf and dumb alphabet. Now it has always been my boast that I am a man of some education; but the deaf and dumb alphabet is, unfortunately, one of the things that I never learned at school. My finger alphabet is one of my own invention and differs from that in general use. When the man began to speak with his fingers I was fright-

Those Who Will Not Hear

ened at first and I wanted to turn and run. Then it struck me that he was only bluffing, and the faster he used his fingers the faster I used mine. When he tired of the exercise he took a piece of paper and wrote:

“ ‘ I don't understand you ; did you learn the mute alphabet in China ? ’ ”

“ Now, I thought to myself, he may be in dead earnest ; the trick is to catch him either way ; so I put down one of the only two German sentences I know :

“ ‘ *Ich bin ein Deutscher*—I am a German.’ ”

“ ‘ And he looks at me and smiles and scratches down, ‘ *So bin Ich*—So am I.’ ”

“ Luckily that was the other sentence I knew and I could make it out ; but this was as far as I could go in German, and I was about to paste him one on the head and run away when an idea struck me in the nick of time. I dropped the pencil and smiled and scraped my foot, as if I was overjoyed to

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meet a countryman; and all the time I was working my fingers in every direction. He looked at me and shook his head; but I went on with my fingers as if to say: 'Yes, you are a German. You can't fool me. I know one when I see him.'

"He wrote something in German and handed it to me. I couldn't read what he had written, but I shook my head as if I did, and I went on with my fingers.

"He grabbed the pencil and chalked down in English: 'Will a dollar do you?'

"I was on the point of nodding 'Yes,' but I thought to myself, 'Here is the trap; don't you do it. He'll say, "So you do read English, you fraud; get out of here!"'

"I looked at him hard, put a puzzled expression on my face and went on with my fingers.

"Then he put something down in German. 'Good,' thinks I to myself; 'he's translated the last sentence from English into German.'

Those Who Will Not Hear

And I let my head wag up and down until my neck ached.

“And what do you think that rascal does? He hands me a cent and chuckles.

“Gentlemen”—and Dan ceased spinning his yarn long enough to reflect—“how I wish I had followed the advice of my father and learned German!

“Well, when the man handed me the cent I was mad; but I never let on. ‘I’ll fool you yet,’ said I to myself, and I put the penny into my pocket as if it was just what I expected. Then I had him puzzled. He couldn’t make out whether I was disappointed or not.

“‘Say, but you’re a sharper!’ he bawled out.

“It was my turn to say something, but I kept quiet. I looked at him as if I was surprised that he could speak. Then I took on a disappointed air; I changed that in a second for the injured air. I looked as if I had

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lost all faith in humanity. I put my hand into my pocket and slunk away as if my heart was broke. An actor couldn't have done it any better.

“He called me back and tried to tell me how sorry he was and how he didn't mean to hurt my feelings. I looked at him with a vacant stare. Then he gave me a dollar.

“I slipped the dollar into the depths of my pocket; then I turned and touched him on the shoulder.

“‘My friend,’ said I, ‘never try to beat a man at his own game, and being deaf and dumb is my business.’

“It was his turn for playing hurt. ‘Get out of here, you confounded rogue,’ he yelled.

“And I did get out, but the dollar went with me.”

MEETING THE THIRD

THE Two Twins were indeed a silent and a stingy pair, and they opened their lips as rarely as their purses. The twins were tolerated in the Beggars' Club merely because they were unique and because their family connections were eminently respectable.

They were as like in dress, speech, and looks as the two Dromios. Morally considered, they were alike—neither of them had any morals. They were commonly supposed to be sixty years of age, and their looks did not belie the common supposition. They were dried, weazened, and wrinkled, and but two teeth apiece from being toothless. The only effect that age had had upon their characters was to make them worse.

Between them they had one virtue; they loved each other. One was indispensable to the other. Jerry was a kind of right leg to Tom, and Tom was a kind of right leg to Jerry. The way of the transgressor is al-

The Beggars' Club

ways hard, but it becomes doubly hard with the right leg gone, and this may be the reason why Tom clung to Jerry and Jerry clung to Tom.

For years the twins had stood on the same corner, on the lookout for odd jobs and chores; indeed, they have stood there so long that they have given the corner a certain air of distinction. I should not be surprised if the street were to be named after them when they die. The truly great are only appreciated after their death. But all this is a mere pointing of morals and does not adorn the tale of

TWO BEGGARS AND A BONNET

“Meh an’ Jerry,” started Tom, “has a story that is surprisin’. You tell it, Jerry,” and Tom, surprised at his eloquence, turned to Jerry.

“Naw,” hawed Jerry, “do you tell yer part an’ I’ll tell mine.”



*“Never try ter beat a man at his
own game.”*

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

Tom, seeing that assistance was out of the question, went on: "Where meh an' Jerry stands is a millinur lady—a lady what makes head-pieces for other ladies—what now an' then gives meh an' Jerry a job fer to carry out her hats to de fool people what buys 'em.

"To-day she calls meh in an' she says, 'Now, this bonnut is in a hurry, an' ef yer carries it nice an' quick I'll give yer a quarter!' An' she gives meh de number an' de street. An' she axes me does I know de street.

"'Sure,' says I, 'meh sister Mary lives on that street. Yer knows, ma'am, meh sister Mary what married de saloon-keeper, him that is wuth a million, keeps two servants an' a porter.'

"An' she cuts me short an' says, 'Never mind yer relatives; this is in a hurry.' Which was aggravatin', seein' as a poor man is allus proud ef a rich sister. But I takes

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de box an' de book ter sign an' I goes out es ef I was in a hurry—which I wasn't.

“On the corner I meets Jerry. ‘What has yer got in de box?’ axes Jerry.”

“An' I axes yer what yer was a-gettin',” put in Jerry, as if trying to remind Tom of something forgotten.

“An' I told yer a quarter,” answered Tom proudly.

“‘Yer old fool,’ says you, ‘yer kin leave de bonnut at sister Mary's, an' get a bite ter eat, an' a tin full of tea, an' a quarter asides. An' sister Mary lives five numbers lower on de street, which is wuth considerin.’”

Here Jerry relieved Tom. “An' a heap of arguin' I had ter do ter make this old fool see how it was better an' easier ter leave de bonnut at Mary's. He was afreerd that de millinur lady would have us arrested. ‘Can't a man make a mistake in deliverin'?’ axes I wid a wink.

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“ Knowin’ how close sister is an’ how she hates ter give us anything ’cause us is beggars an’ her allus afeerd an’ ashamed that de neighbors might diskiver it—we fixed it atween us ter say that we was lately become rich an’ we brung her de bonnut fer a gift, an’ how dresses an’ sich truck was ter follow.

“ Mary was in an’ she answers our ring. ‘ Well,’ says she, ‘ youse beggars here ag’in ater victuals? Youse is a disgrace an’ a shame.’

“ ‘ No, we ain’t a disgrace an’ a shame any more, Mary,’ puts in Tom an’ meh; ‘ we is rich now an’ we brung yer a gift—a bonnut what cost a fortin!’

“ ‘ Come right in,’ says Mary; an’ she opens de door wide, an’ Tom an’ meh steps in, Tom grinnin’ so I had ter kick him ter be still.

“ An’ Mary tries ter explain how havin’ a headache she was cross all morning, an’ de

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baby was sick an' a lot of wimmen lies. 'P'r'aps,' says she, 'you an' Tom would like a cup of tea an' a bite ter eat?'

“ ‘Well,’ says Tom, ‘we just eat dinner at a fashunable hotel, but we don't mind a cup ef tea.’ An' all de time Mary was a-dyin' ter ask how we come by de fortin, an' we a-thinkin' how we could answer what she axed.”

Jerry paused for breath and Tom went on:

“So I takes de bonnut out of de box an' I shows it ter her, an' Mary clasps her hands an' she screams, 'It's a dream.' It had two high peacock feathers what was black an' white, an' it looked as good as a circus tent with red an' white flags on top. An' she looks in de glass an' de bonnut fits her like de peach does de stone. Then she kisses meh, which was suddin an' not accordin' ter habit, it bein' all on account of de bonnut.

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“ ‘ Now,’ says she, ‘ I’ll go an’ make youse a cup of tea an’ cook somethin’ hot.’ An’ she puts de bonnut back in de box an’ leaves meh an’ Jerry in de parlor, which is better en standin’ outside an’ drinkin’ cold tea out ef a rusty pan.

“ An’ Jerry he says ter meh when he was alone, ‘ Tom, when yer goes, take de bonnut wid yer!’

“ ‘ What fer?’ axes I.

“ ‘ Never mind,’ says Jerry; ‘ I sees a dollar in sight an’ no work.’

“ So I says no more, knowin’ as Jerry was a-thinkin’ hard an’ meh not wantin’ ter puzzle him an’ ter lose half ef de dollar. When Mary comes back with de tea an’ de lunch like we never see afore, an’ two ef her husband’s cigars—which was on account ef de bonnut—she says: ‘ Now, I wants youse ter come often an’ be ter home here, an’ I expects yer on Sunday fer dinner.’ An’ Jerry he laughs an’ I steps on his toes.

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“Then Mary axes how we come by de fortin’, an’ I looks at Jerry, not knowin’ what ter say. An’ Jerry says quick an’ solemn-like, ‘It was mines!’

“An’ Mary axes, ‘How did that happen?’

“An’ I answers fer Jerry, seein’ as Jerry was in a trap, ‘It’s a long story an’ hard ter explain, but ter make it easy fer a woman ter understand, meh an’ Jerry bought stocks an’ shares an’ de whole blame thing goes down, only our stocks an’ shares goes up, an’ de other fellers loses their money an’ we makes ourn.’ ‘Oh, I see,’ says Mary. An’ I was glad that she seen, ’cause ef she didn’t we had been in a trap.

“A neighbor comes in afore Mary has de chance ter ax any more questions, an’ when Mary’s back was turned I grabs de bonnut.”

It was now Jerry’s turn for his part of the duologue.

“When we reaches de street, Tom axes, ‘What now?’

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“ ‘Give meh de bonnut,’ says I.

“ ‘An’ Tom says: ‘You’ll sell de bonnut ter Mary er else pawn it, an’ then where’ll I be?’

“ ‘That ain’t de game at all, Tom,’ says I. ‘I takes de bonnut back ter de millinur lady an’ tells her you was kilt by de cars, an’ I brung it back. An’ she’ll give meh half a dollar fer takin’ it out ag’in, an’ you en meh ’ll both have thirty-seven cents.’ But Tom hangs on to de bonnut, not seein’ where he was a-comin’ in.

“ ‘Why not take it right to de name what’s on de tag an’ ax fer fifty cents charges fer deliverin’?’ says he.

“ ‘Tom,’ says I, ‘yer a blamed old fool; we kin get a half dollar at both ends as well as one.’ So Tom ’lowed he was wrong an’ I was right, an’ he gives me de box.

“ ‘When I goes into de millinur lady’s place with de bonnut she almost faints. ‘What,’ shouts she, ‘ain’t yer delivered that

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bonnut yet? It ought ter been there two hours ago.'

" 'Excuse me, madame,' says I, 'it was Tom as took out de box an' not meh; I'm Jerry.'

" 'An' what has Tom been doin' all this time, the rogue!' shouts she.

" 'Excuse meh, ma'm,' says I, a-squeezin' a tear out of meh eye wid my sleeve. 'Tom ain't a rogue any more; he's dead! He was kilt by de cars. His last word was, " Jerry, ef yer loves meh, bring that bonnut back ter de millinury lady."

" 'That's too bad,' says she, 'but I must get de bonnut out right away,' says she, 'er it will miss de lady what's going ter de hop, an' I wants meh pay! An' it's too late ter find anybody else; yer must take it out; yer must.'

" 'How kin yer ax meh that, ma'm,' says I—'meh what is feelin' so bad about meh brother Tom?'

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“ ‘That’s all sentimint,’ says she. ‘Drink this an’ you’ll feel better.’ An’ she offers meh a quarter ter hurry out wid de bonnut, but I hangs out fer fifty cents, sayin’ as a man’s affections fer his lost brother was wuth at least an extree quarter. An’ she says, ‘Well, there ain’t no time fer argu-mint. I’ll give yer fifty cents, only hurry.’ ”

“Yer tole meh it was only a quarter,” bawled out Tom in a fury.

“I must have been wrong one of de times, then,” explained Jerry nonchalantly.

“Well, as I was sayin’, she gives meh de fifty cents an’ she writes de name an’ de address in de book; there not bein’ time, she don’t stop ter put on a tag.

“ ‘Ma’m,’ says I, ‘if you will give meh one of them empty boxes fer a gift I’ll hurry extree quick, I will.’ An’ she axes meh what fer in Heaven’s name I wants de box.

“ ‘Ter keep a few relics from Tom in that is extree dear ter meh,’ says I, a-pullin’ out

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meh handkerchief, an' a few brass buttons, an' an ole newspaper, an' an empty bottle, an' a piece of string.

“ So, she bein' anxious ter git meh gone, gives meh a bonnut box, grumblin' all de time an' sayin', ‘ By de time that bonnut is delivered all meh profit 'll be gone. I giv' yer brother a quarter an' yer fifty cents, an' de bonnut box cost meh fifteen cents, which makes ninety cents fer taking a bonnut a mile an' a half. I could git a cab fer that, I could.’

“ ‘ That's too bad,’ says I; ‘ Tom might just as well have waited ter been kilt on de way back.’ An' I trots off, bein' angry that I didn't have sense enough ter cry ag'in an' git another quarter.

“ Outside I meets Tom, an' he says, seein' de two boxes, ‘ Yer don't mean ter carry out them two boxes fer de price ef one?’

“ ‘ No, Tom,’ says I; ‘ de one box is empty. She guv it ter meh!’

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“ ‘ She giv yer de empty box fer carryin’ out de full one,’ says he, ‘ an’ yer took it like a ole fool? ’

“ ‘ An’ a quarter asides,’ answers I.”

“ Which was a lie,” howled Tom indignantly.

Jerry did not allow his brother’s aspersion to interfere with what the rhetoricians call the swift onward flow of his narrative.

“ ‘ An’ what are yer goin’ ter do with that empty box?’ axes Tom.

“ ‘ Leave it at sister’s,’ says I. ‘ We’ll say as we was thinkin’ ’bout de mines an’ de stocks, an’ we fetched de box away, not thinkin’. An’ we’ll fool the stingy old fox twice an’ maybe borry a quarter asides.’ ‘ Jerry,’ says Tom, ‘ yer a gen’us; no one but a gen’us could have thought ef that.’

“ Well, Tom an’ meh goes up ter sister’s flat. An’ I waits downstairs while he totes up de empty box.”

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Here Jerry looked at Tom beseechingly, and Tom relieved him of the burden and went on to tell the further adventures of the bonnet.

“ I goes up de stairs an’ Mary opens de door, an’ I sees she was angry, but I holds up de box afore she has de chanct ter speak. ‘Excuse meh, Mary,’ says I, ‘but in meh trouble about de mine an’ de stocks I took de bonnut away, not being used ter carryin’ one.’

“’En Mary smiles an’ axes meh ef I wouldn’t stay an’ have supper. ‘I ain’t got time,’ says I. ‘Stock’s goin’ up all de day; but ef yer has a cup of coffee an’ a bite ter eat ready I don’t mind. An’, Mary,’ I goes on, ‘I’ll bring yer a picture ef de mine on Sunday an’ yer kin hang it on yer parlor wall. But I must hurry along now an’ mind de stocks.’

“When de door was shut I runs up ag’in an’ rings, an’ Mary answers. ‘Mary,’ says

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

I, 'in meh flurry alongside ef de stocks goin' up I left all meh money wid Jerry—would yer mind lettin' meh have a quarter till Sunday?'

"An' Mary, who was always that stingy yer couldn't get a penny without beggin' an' beggin', an' a nickel without cryin' an' cryin', she says, 'Yer might just as well have fifty cents es a quarter. I ain't de kind es forgets a brother in trouble.'"

"Yer old skinflint," thundered Jerry, "yer tole meh yer couldn't get a red from her. Yer owes meh a shillin' "

"An' I'll pay it some day afore I dies," smiled Tom blandly, hastening on to say:

"When I reaches de street I finds Jerry walkin' up an' down an' cursin', which is unusual, him bein' so lazy.

"'What's de matter?' axes I.

"'Oh, Tom,' says he, 'we done it, we done it. We left de wrong box wid Mary—de one wid de bonnut. This here one is empty.'

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“‘How did that happen?’ I axes, turnin’ pale.

“‘It all comes along yer argumint about carryin’ de boxes,’ answered Jerry. ‘I fooled yer by givin’ yer de box wid de bonnut in, an’ I forgot ter change when yer went up de stairs.’

“‘It serves yer right,’ answers I, ‘fer tryin’ ter play tricks on yer brother, an’ makin’ meh do de extree work’; but I feels sorry ter see Jerry a-lookin’ so scared, an’ I says, ‘Yer a blamed old fool fer a gen’us, Jerry!’

“‘An’ why?’ axes Jerry.

“‘Why,’ shouts I, ‘could anything better a-happened? That mistake is wuth a fortin’. Yer an’ meh kin eat a week at sister’s fer de bonnut, an’ we kin charge de lady just es much fer deliverin’ de empty box es de full one.’”

“‘Tom,’ says Jerry, ‘I’m proud of yer; yer a gen’us.’

Two Beggars and a Bonnet

“So meh an’ him goes ter de house, which was a brownstone one an’ no flat, an’ we rings de bell.

“‘This is swell,’ says Jerry ter me; ‘we’ll raise de price ter thirty cents apiece.’ An’ I hands Jerry de box, knowin’ Jerry is better at drivin’ a bargain.

“‘Here’s yer bonnut,’ says Jerry when a lady comes ter de door.

“‘Thank de Lord,’ says she; ‘missus is almost crazy.’ An’ she reaches out her hand ter grab de bonnut.

“‘Not so quick, Miss,’ says Jerry; ‘meh an’ him each gets thirty cents fer takin’ youse de bonnut!’

“‘That’s outrageous,’ says she; ‘I never heerd de like ef it. I’ll call missus.’

“An’ de missus, what was a tall lady with a thin voice, comes a-runnin’ down de stairs an’ a-scoldin’: ‘I never heerd ef sich a thing an’ I’ll not pay it. I never pays anyone fer deliverin’ goods,’ says she.

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“‘No, ma'm,’ says I, ‘not generally speakin’, but this is in a hurry.’

“‘Kin two go quicker en one?’ she snaps ag’in.

“‘No,’ answers Jerry, him bein’ ready this time, ‘but ef I happened ter be kilt on de cars, why, Tom could take de bonnut.’

“‘Which is de great p’int about de Tom an’ Jerry Bonnut Deliverin’ Company,’ says I.

“‘This is all very funny,’ says she, ‘but youse kin leave de bonnut, an’ I’ll arrange it with de millinur lady.’

“‘Not much,’ says Jerry; ‘that wouldn’t be so funny fer us. Yer kin pay us first, an’ ef it ain’t right yer kin git it back from de millinur lady.’

“‘Well, I’ll pay,’ says she, ‘’cause I must have de bonnut, but it’s an impisition!’

“‘An’ she pays us an’ we runs off. An’ that’s all there is to de story,” ended Tom.

“‘Except,” added Jerry, “that meh an’

A Beggar's Strategy

Tom is goin' ter sister's fer dinner on Sunday!"

McQuinn was the one hearer who did not enjoy the strange adventures of the bonnet—it came under his category of the long and the dry. "It's gettin' close onter twelve o'clock," grumbled he, "an' all this talkin' for only two rounds."

One-armed Jake took the hint, likewise time, by the forelock, suggesting, "I kin work in a short story an' another round 'tween now an' twelve o'clock."

"Dat's de kind," assented McQuinn, looking threateningly at the twins, and before the beer was bubbling in the can Jake had already delivered his introduction of

A BEGGAR'S STRATEGY

"Meh an' Foxy (I see Foxy ain't here to-night) worked a racket dat was all right fer Foxy, but what didn't go at all fer meh.

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Him an' meh started out ter-day an' he axes meh what I has on.

“ ‘No scheme at all,’ answers I; ‘meh brain is givin’ out. I’m gettin’ old!’

“ ‘Well,’ puts in Foxy, ‘I got a scheme, but not havin’ tried it I ain’t sure dat it ’ll work. Did yer ever try de sympathy game, Jake?’ he axes.

“ ‘Dere ain’t no game what I ain’t played,’ says I; ‘sympathy game an’ all.’

“ ‘Dis is a new sympathy game,’ answers he, ‘an’ I’m sure dat no one has played it. Yer see, Jake, it goes like dis: yer fixes yer-self fer de lame man an’ I fixes meself fer de blind man.’

“ ‘Hold on, Foxy,’ says I, ‘dat’s old; dat was done before any man on de earth was ever blind er lame!’

“ ‘Give a feller a chance,’ snaps Foxy; ‘let me finish. Here’s de new part: I stands on de corner wid meh hat in meh hand, an’ yer hobbles up ter meh, an’ yer looks sorry

A Beggar's Strategy

fer meh. Den yer drops a dime in meh hat. Den a whole crowd of people 'll say, 'Did yer see dat beggar give de other beggar a dime? How deservin' he must be.' Den dey all stops an' drops a dime in meh hat. Some ef em more an' some less.

" 'Dat's a very fine game fer yerself, Foxy,' says I, 'a very fine game for ter work meh fer a dime.'

" 'Not at all,' answers he; 'ef it don't work I gives yer de dime back, an' ef it do work—why, we diwides.'

" 'Ef it's sich a fine scheme,' answers I, 'yer kin give meh a dime an' I'll drop de same dime in yer hat.'

" 'An' Foxy smiles an' he says, 'I knows yer, Jake; yer ain't honest; yer'd run away wid de dime.'

" 'Both ef us would be takin' de same chanct, Foxy,' answers I. 'Yer kin give meh de dime an' I'll put it in.'

" 'All right, Jake,' says he, 'but I'm sorry

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yer so sispicious.' An' he fishes thru all his pockets an' turns 'em inside out, an' he shakes his head.

" 'Yer sees how it is, Jake; I'm willin' ter trust yer, but I ain't got de dime; I'm busted,' says he.

" 'All right, Foxy,' says I, 'I'll risk de dime on yer, but ef yer don't do de square thing by meh I'll git even.'

" So meh an' Foxy walks on, an' Foxy watches sharp, an' when he sees de right corner, he stands still an' he takes orff his hat, an' he begins ter sing a song de like ef which I never heerd afore. He must have made it up ez he went along; it sounded like Chinee ter meh. But whether de song was Chinee er Japanee, it done de work. Yer never seen sich a crowd!

" An' I takes off meh hat an' I hobbles thru de crowd an' I begs an' I don't get a red. Den I fishes a dime out ef meh pocket an' drops de dime inter Foxy's hat, a-sayin'



W. G. K.

"An' he begins ter sing a song."

A Beggar's Strategy

ter mehself, ' Good-by, dime; meh and you'll never see each other ag'in.' Den de crowd loosens up. Yer'd a thought it was a-rainin' silver. I niver seen sich an invistment fer a dime in all meh born days. In five minutes his hat was dat full I t'ought it 'd break.

"Foxy puts de coin in his pocket an' walks away, an' I follers. When we gets to de alley I axes him how much it was.

" 'Ten dollars an' eleven cents,' says he.

"Den yer kin give meh five dollars an' five cents an' keep de extree cent fer yer-self,' says I.

"An' Foxy grins an' I knows something is a-comin'.

" 'Jake,' axes he, 'de dime what yer put in meh hat had a hole in it, eh?'

" 'Yes,' answers I quick, afore I t'ought ef it had a hole in it er not.

" 'Yer a rogue,' shouts he; ' I knowed yer didn't put a dime in meh hat. Dere was no dime wid a hole in it!'

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“ ‘Come ter think on it,’ says I perlitely, ‘de dime I put in didn’t have a hole in it.’

“ ‘Jake,’ axes he, ‘which is a lie, de first er de second, er both?’

“ I reaches out an’ I grabs him by de t’roat. ‘Look here,’ I yells, ‘two lies er no lies, are yer goin’ ter do de square thing by meh?’

“ An’ Foxy, seein’ I means business, he agrees ter divy an’ I don’t let meh hand orff his throat till he does. An’ when he gives meh de coin I hands him a punch, an’ Foxy yells. An’ I turns ter go out of de alley when Foxy bawls:

“ ‘Say, Jake, I didn’t do de square thing an’ I’m ashamed ef mehself. Now, Jake, yer an’ meh kin work de same racket over ag’in. I’ll trust yer to do de right ding. I’ll play lame man an’ yer kin play blind man, an’ sing an’ hold de hat!’

“ ‘All right, Foxy,’ says I; ‘here’s meh hand on it!’

A Beggar's Strategy

“ So meh an’ him starts fer a new corner. An’ when us hits on one, I takes orff meh hat an’ I shuts meh eyes ter play blind an’ sings fer all I’m worth. It didn’t take long fer de crowd ter come, an’ Foxy hobbles up ter meh thru de big crowd an’ he stops in front ef meh an’ looks inter meh hat an’ he grins. Den he hobbles away, not droppin’ de dime in. ‘ Yer a long time a-spendin’ dat dime,’ I was a-goin’ ter yell out, but I dasn’t.

“ Den he hobbles around meh ag’in an’ I was a-reachin’ out ter land a long kick on his shins when he yells out :

“ ‘ Look out, Jake, de cop is comin’.’

“ Like a fool I opens meh eyes an’ looks around, an’ de crowd laffs an’ howls an’ I sneaks away. An’ if I catches Foxy I’ll make him a bracelet out ef meh ten fingers fer his neck!”

“ Dat reminds meh,” vociferated Loony Louis, “ ef——”

The Beggars' Club

“Save yer remimberences fer another time,” frowned McQuinn; “the clock has struck twelve, an’ it’s time fer honest people ter be in bed.”

MEETING THE FOURTH

SAM THE SCRIBE, having appeased the wrath of Lame Tom in his suave way, was on hand to greet his comrades. He looked even more absorbed than was his wont, and all held their peace, feeling sure that Sam had something to say.

CALIFORNIA COX AND THE BEGGARS' UNION

“Gents,” began Sam when all the club members had assembled, “California Cox and his dog Mike is in town. I ain’t seen Cox in years, and I almost fell over to-day when I caught sight of Cox and his dog on the corner, playing their same old game. He’s got the greatest dog alive—ain’t another one like him anywheres. Smart as a man, that dog! The ‘California’ trained him. Spent a year eddicatin’ him and now the dog is paying it back.”

“What’s his game?” asked Pete the Squealer.

The Beggars' Club

“Cox plays blind,” answered Sam, “wearing his sign and all; sits on a campstool, playing the accordion, an’ the dog Mike dances around on his hind legs until a crowd comes; then he barks, snatches the hat from Cox’s head and passes it around. If that dog comes along to someone that won’t drop coin in the hat he just lays down and cries, and the crowd laughs at the tight-fist and the next feller is kind of shamed into giving up.”

“An’ him only a dorg?” asked One-armed Jake skeptically.

Sam, vouchsafing no answer, went on to say: “Well, I watched the dog and Cox at work for a while, and it made me sick to see the coin rolling and rolling into that old hat of his. And so easy, too! I reckon the mint don’t drop coin no easier.”

“I moves,” yelled Lame Tom, “dat dis club trades One-armed Jake, Loony Louis an’ Mollbuzzer fer dat dorg!”

California Cox

The Scribe shook his head impatiently at the interruption and went on: "Now I've made up a scheme for separating Cox from his dog, and if the club will stand by me and do what I say we can begin work to-morrow and get Mike Cox the day after."

"I moves," cried Charlie the Conner, "dat Cox, Mike Cox, de dorg, be made a honerary member ef dis club right now."

"Before you take a vote on that," smiled Sam, "I'd like to tell you my scheme and coach you in your parts," and without any further hindrance he outlined his wicked plan for stealing an innocent dog from its dependent master.

On the following morning, in accordance with the instructions received from Sam, the members of the Club gathered on the corner pre-empted by California Cox and his dog Mike.

After enjoining each member not to forget his part in the plot, Sam left his com-

The Beggars' Club

rades and approached Cox, a huge fellow, all bone and muscle, who sat peacefully playing his accordion, to the droning measures of which his trick dog Mike was prancing about on his hind legs, holding the rim of his master's hat in his mouth.

A large black sign, painted in white letters, hung across the broad chest of the mendicant, warning the world that the wearer was blind, but Sam, refusing to heed the signal, stepped up to him boldly and said:

“Hello, Cox! Do you remember me?”

“I don't remember yer voice,” said Cox, “an' I can't see yer face.”

“I wrote your first blind letter for you. Do you remember me now? I'm Sam the Scribe.”

“I paid yer fer de letter; what more does yer want? Interest maybe?”

“Oh, nothing,” came from Sam. “I've got a paying job now.”

“What doin'?”



*“Cox sat peacefully playing his
accordion.”*

California Cox

“President of the Amalgamated Beggars’ Union.”

“Never heard ef dat yet,” growled Cox, scenting mischief.

“Of course not. It’s something new; but you’ll hear of it soon. Have you got a membership card?”

“No, an’ I ain’t a-goin’ ter git none neither.”

“Then quit work, Cox, before the Union runs you out of business. You’re a scab!”

“Sam, yer up ter yer tricks. I knows yer.”

“Good-by, Cox, I’m off. The delegation will be around here in a few minutes.”

“Hol’ on a minute, Sam,” bawled Cox; “is dis straight?”

“Straight as a pin,” replied Sam. “We’re incorporated regularly, according to the law of the State, and we’ve got our charter. It will cost you two dollars to join and you’ll have to give up the dog. Rule number one

The Beggars' Club

prohibits the use of all animals and the begging of all children under fourteen years of age."

"Afore I gives up dat dorg," thundered Cox, springing to his feet and grasping his heavy stick, "I'll see youse an' yer Union in a place where de North Pole would burn fer kindlin' "

"Good-by," shouted Sam, out of reach, "I've warned you; I've done the best I could. You'll be whipped so that your own dog wouldn't know you from a lump of mud."

"An' if I ketches yer near dis corner again," roared Cox, "I'll make yer look like whipped eggs, ready ter go inside ef a cake."

Not five minutes had elapsed before the Beggars' Club advanced toward Cox in a body of the whole, with Sam for spokesman.

"Here's the delegation I promised," began Sam, keeping out of reach of the huge fellow's fist and stick.

California Cox

“Show yer card!” went up the cry, “er git out.”

“I’ll give dis crowd all de cards what it wants!” yelled Cox, springing to his feet irately, grasping his dog Mike in his arm (it was always his first movement, being along the lines of self-preservation) and reaching down for his stout stick; but the weapon was gone, being now the property of Foxy Basket, who intended to wield it against its legitimate owner.

Singling out Foxy and the stick, Cox made for them with a sudden spring, punching and kicking his way through the intercepting crowd of beggars, who dodged his powerful blows, running and screaming. A second or two thereafter, when a crowd had collected to learn the cause of the trouble, every separate member of the Club had made good his escape, including the triumphant and grinning Foxy, waving his spoils of the battle.

The Beggars' Club

“ See here,” said a policeman, pushing his way through the mass of people toward Cox, “ what fer is this disturbince, Oi’d like ter know? ”

“ A gang of hobos has jist been aroun’ here,” puffed out the breathless Cox, “ try-in’ ter make trouble an’ sayin’ I’d have ter join der Union er——”

“ Oi can’t have no more av this,” interrupted the bluecoat, “ Union er no Union, phwat do yer serpose Oi care? This disturbince av order an’ public traffic ain’t a-goin’ ter do. You move on now er Oi’ll be after a-runnin’ yer in.”

“ But dis Union is a fake,” Cox explained.

“ Fake, is it? Phwat do yer serpose I care? You hobos kin fix it atween yersilves. Move on, er Oi’ll be runnin’ yer in—an’ quick.”

Almost blinded, in all truth, by wrath, swearing and mumbling to himself, Cox folded his camp-stool and his accordion,

California Cox

tied his dog to its chain, and went in quest of green fields and corners new. Sam, who had remained behind to listen to the dialogue between the officer and Cox (it had all happened as he had foreseen and planned), approached the wandering mendicant, and asked with a broad grin on his smug face:

“Well, Cox, did you show the cop your card?”

Cox gave his answer by making a swift lunge for Sam, dropping his camp-stool and accordion during the operation, but holding on to his dog tightly. Sam had the advantage, which he did not scorn to use, of a smaller body and swifter legs, and he made good his escape. Pete the Squealer calmly picked up the accordion, Shirtless Sam seized the camp-stool, while Hungry Henry yelled:

“Yer kin git dese back when yer joins de Union.”

The Beggars' Club

California Cox, giving vent to his feelings in language fitter for wrath than publication, continued his search for an advantageous corner. "I'll have ter stop," he muttered to himself, "an' buy a new accordion, fer de dorg won't do his turn without de music, an' a new camp-stool besides, which'll come ter more'n dat confounded Union card in de fust place."

He hastened to a department store, invested in a new instrument, astonished the clerk by his imprecations against it, and replaced his camp-stool, which astonished another clerk. His foot had barely touched the pavement outside when the voice of Looney Louis bawled at his ear:

"Did yer buy a Union card in dere?"

He turned with a howl in the direction of the accusing voice, but in that surging crowd he might as well have sought one particular atom in the air. "I'll put meh hands on ter one ef 'em yit," he muttered, "an' if I does

California Cox

I'll give him fer meh card ter dat blamed Union!"

Finally he selected his corner, one which was a mile or two removed from the scene of his previous operations, put his camp-stool in its place against the electric-light post, tested his new accordion, and settled down to business with a vengeance, hoping to make up for lost time. Mike balanced his lithe body on his hind legs to seize his master's hat and pass it through the crowd of mere noon-day idlers and of busy people who stopped for a second's amusement on their way from one task to another. The grateful sound of the coin jingling in Mike's hat was just beginning to appease the master's wrath, when Blind Bill yelled out, high and clear above the notes of the droning accordion:

"Say, fellers, dat scab Cox is tryin' his old flim-flam on de public ag'in."

"He's a sly one," replied Lame Tom from

The Beggars' Club

the fringe of another group. "I bet yer he ain't so blind but what he kin tell de head from de tail end ef every coin in de hat."

"I knowed him in Cal——" Foxy Basket started, but he did not stop to finish his observation, for the burly beggar had jumped from his camp-stool, grabbing his dog first, and darted in the direction of the disturbers, not in the least particular which one he should succeed in capturing first.

The three, running pell-mell down the street, put an increasing distance between themselves and their pursuer; while the on-lookers were convulsed with laughter at the strange sight of California Cox, his breast still adorned by the sign advertising his blindness, moving so unerringly and swiftly (Mike in arm) past truck and car and horse, tearing like mad with unerring vision after the three hobos, discernible now by their tattered garments alone. Cox returned, empty-handed, out of breath and of temper,

California Cox

to face the banter of a throng increased to tremendous proportions by the laughter and the uproar.

California Cox had a good control of his rage when necessity held the reins of it, and turning a deaf ear to the jeering of the street wits, he pushed his way to the electric-light post, only to find himself minus another accordion and another camp-stool. To increase his agony—the elements are as merciless to the mendicant as to the millionaire, and it never rains but it pours—another policeman was at hand, now that the disturbance was over, to bid him move on or to rest in jail.

“It’s jist a gang ef hobos an’ deir fake Union,” Cox tried to explain.

“Union or no Union,” said the bluecoat, “Oi ain’t a-goin’ ter stand fer no disturbance the loikes av this. It’s somethin’ else Oi have ter be doin’ besides watchin’ hobos an’ settlin’ their disputes.”

The Beggars' Club

California Cox, perplexed, dedeviled, knowing not what to do nor whither to turn, bent his steps to his lodging-house in the slums, counting that day lost, the low descending sun seeing him poorer than when it arose, and resolving to make some one (he sent up a prayer that it might be Sam the Scribe) meet the deficit.

II

The Beggars' Club met as usual that night at McQuinn's, so pleased by what it had done during the day that the usual order of business was suspended, and the time given over to the discussion of each member's share in the first steps of the plot to divorce California Cox from his dog Mike. The laughter was so loud, the screams of merriment so deafening, that McQuinn left his retreat behind the bar and threatened to turn the club out of doors.

California Cox

“I tell you,” said Sam the Scribe, when McQuinn’s warning had restored order, “Cox will be here before another hour is over to take out a card and join the Union. He’s figured out that he can’t do business without our permission and this day’s trifling has cost him more than——”

“Will he bring Mike along?” interrupted Hungry Henry eagerly.

“You bet,” answered Sam, “where Cox goes Mike goes too. He’s afraid to leave——”

“Do we get that dorg to-night?” interrupted Blind Bill in his turn.

“I don’t know,” replied Sam slowly, reflecting; “to-night may be a little soon.”

“He’ll kill the hull gang ef us,” said Loony Louis, arising. “I’m goin’ ter clean!”

“An’ meh! An’ meh! An’ meh!” shouted the others, following suit.

“Keep your seats, gents,” ordered Sam, authoritatively. “I know Cox and his ways.

The Beggars' Club

He'll sue for peace; he's too greedy for money to spoil our noses just to spite his own."

There was the light swing of the outer screen doors, the bark of a dog, a heavy foot-step across the floor; and the Beggars' Club turned to a man.

"There he is now," said Sam, "sure enough."

Leading his dog by a chain, a new and still heavier stick in his hand, the huge figure of California Cox wended its way to the center of the Club's charmed circle. There was a broad smile on his face, which somehow suggested art rather than the spontaneity of nature.

"We've been expecting you," said Sam calmly.

"Yer have, has yer?" grinned Cox, extending his hand as a sign of truce, towering head and shoulders above the Scribe, looking as if he could have crushed him

California Cox

without effort between his thumb and his forefinger. "Well, Sam, old feller," he went on, still smiling, "I come ter take out a card."

"Here's the card," said Sam, handing him a piece of pasteboard on which was written in red ink:

The bearer, California Cox, is hereby permitted to beg on the streets of this city according to the laws and regulations of the Amalgamated Association of Union Beggars, the said Cox being a legitimate member of the body aforesaid and entitled to all of its privileges.

(Signed)

Sam the Scribe, Sec. and Treas.

"How much did yer say dat was?" asked Cox, slowly spelling out the words of the writing.

"Two dollars," replied Sam.

"What! Two dollars fer dat bit ef paste-

The Beggars' Club

board!" rejoined Cox. "It didn't cost no two cents."

"I know," said Sam, "but it's not the card yer paying for; it's the privileges to beg undisturbed."

"It's de first time in all meh life dat I ever heard ef a man payin' ter beg," objected Cox.

"Times is changed, Cox."

"I should say," he glared; "dere's no sich thing as freedom in Amerikee no more. An' here's another thing, dat card don't say nothin' 'bout meh dorg Mike. Is Mike in de Union—de Union ef (glancing at the card) Amalega Beggars?"

"Amalgamated," corrected Sam suavely. "No, he ain't; it's against the Union laws, as I explained to you in the first place, to employ animals or children under fourteen."

"Why fer?"

"Well, the Union is trying to save skilled

California Cox

American labor from the competition of cheap Dago beggars and their monkeys; and to put a stop to children taking the bread out of grown-up folks' mouths, that's why."

"That's a pretty law, dat is! It's a reg'lar beaut'—it ought ter wear a diamond collar 'round its neck. What kin I do without de dorg? I spent a hull year a-trainin' him."

"I'm sorry, Cox, but——"

"I don't care a yeller hair orff ef Mike's yeller back if you're sorry er glad es kin be!" he replied, his anger getting the better of him for the minute. "I'll leave fer California ag'in before I gives up Mike."

"It's the same there, Cox; the Union has branches all over."

"I'll see de branches an' de main tree turn inter blue grass afore I gives up Mike. Dat dorg is wuth from five ter ten dollars a day anywheres."

The Beggars' Club

“Holy Gee!” exclaimed Hungry Henry, “an’ him only a dorg.”

Sam lifted a warning finger; quiet reigned in the clubroom again. “I’ve had my say, Cox; the law is the law.”

“An’ bunco is bunco,” yelled Cox, “an’ I’m going ter start work right here to-morrow morning. And if youse fellers bother me again I’m going to make hash out ef de whole crowd, ef it costs me ninety days. Do yer hear? I’ve a mind ter start in right now!” And he showed his willingness to begin work by swinging his heavy stick.

“All right,” replied Sam, still cool, despite the consternation of those around him, “you want war, and you can have war. We just gave you a taste of the power of the Amalgamated to-day; look out for to-morrow! But you had better keep good-natured and part friends with the gang; this is only business on our part.”

California Cox

“It’s mighty bad bizness all the same,” said Cox, taking his anger in hand and cooling off again.

“Supposin’, jist ter show there’s no hard feelings, dat you let de dorg do his turn,” interjected Loony Louis.

“Mike don’t perform unless he’s paid,” remarked Cox; “an’ I lost meh accordion.”

“Here it is,” yelled Hungry Henry, forgetting himself in his eagerness to see the dog do his tricks, and handing him the instrument.

“Thanks,” said Cox grimly, fingering the keys, “an’ seein’ it’s meh own an’ a new one at dat, I won’t bother ’bout returnin’ it.”

Mechanically he began to play and mechanically the yellow dog, not at all embarrassed by its chain, grabbed his master’s hat, and, prancing around on his hind legs, passed it from one member to the other. The beggars were so delighted with Mike’s sagacity, so infatuated by his antics, so flat-

The Beggars' Club

tered by the diplomacy which pretended to take them for their betters, that they who had been mendicants all their lives long, turned donors now and dropped their coin into the extended hat. Mike's dogged determination won the day for his master.

California Cox emptied the hat, counted the money and remarked quietly: "Es luck would have it, meh friends, dere is jist two dollars here, which is jist enuff ter pay fer meh lost camp-stool. I'll bid youse an' de Amalga Association good-night." And he marched out slowly, leaving the club breathless by his boldness and his cunning.

"He beat ye, Sam," cried the two twins, recovering from their astonishment first; "him takin' away de accordion, our cash, an' de dorg."

"The game ain't over," replied Sam caustically; "it's just begun."

California Cox

III

Two whole days passed and California Cox went the usual tenor of his way without let or hindrance from any member of the club. The quiet was too quiet to put Cox entirely at his ease; he would have liked some slight disturbance, if only to prove that the club and Sam were doing their worst and that this worst was feeble at its best. The lull predicted a tornado that would break too suddenly to allow him to creep under shelter.

Cox's soul was prophetic; for Sam was by no means idle. Angry that he had been humiliated before his fellows and bearded in his own den, the Scribe went to the unusual length of spending his own money to wreak vengeance. It was he who wrote out and paid for the advertisement, printed in three of the dailies, reading: "California Cox, the celebrated blind beggar, wishes to purchase

The Beggars' Club

five yellow dogs. Good price paid for the right parties. Apply at his stand, corner of B. and C. streets, Wednesday morning at ten."

"That will give Cox two days to think nothing is wrong," explained Sam to his comrades, "and you fellows want to keep away from him or you will spoil it all. Meet me on Wednesday morning and we'll have that dog or my name ain't Sam."

As early as half-past nine on Wednesday morning the members of the Club assembled at Cox's corner, watching, in silent satisfaction, the number of yellow dogs increase as the minutes went on. Loony Louis and Deaf Dan and Blind Bill and Lame Tom and Sam himself had a yellow cur under his arm; but these five canines were mere dots in the growing sea of yellow.

No one would have believed that the populous city sheltered so many dogs of that one hue. There were boys there with yellow

California Cox

dogs, men with yellow dogs, women with yellow dogs, and girls with yellow dogs; all, it is true, were not particular about the difference of a shade or two in color, and many of the canines might have passed muster for brown, and some few had black; but since the advertiser was blind and a beggar, the owners argued that he could not detect the deceit, and if he did, beggars not being choosers, he ought not to complain. There were big dogs and small dogs, St. Bernards and pugs, bulldogs and fox-terriers—every breed of dog that showed a streak of yellow within or a dab of yellow without.

The city editors of two of the papers had their attention called to the odd advertisement by the business office, and several reporters were on hand, wondering and eager for a “story.” The barking and yelping of the dogs, the odd assembly of fanciers, attracted a crowd, and it was difficult for those who came to sell to pick their way

The Beggars' Club

through the still greater throng of those who came merely to see.

Long before the patient Cox refused to purchase yellow dogs from clamorous owners who wished to sell, he began to scent mischief and he knew from what evil quarter the bad odor came. When the thirteenth man came along with the thirteenth dog and Cox had said, "No, go along wid yer dorg," for the thirteenth time (always an unlucky number), he lost his temper and he swore he would cuff the fourteenth. The fourteenth happened to be more stalwart of frame and more persistent in character than any of his predecessors, and he urged and urged the superior points of his yellow dog over all others, until the persecuted Cox flew into a rage and struck at him and the fancier struck back, and all of the thirteen others who had been refused and those without number who feared they would have their trouble for their pains pitched in and went

California Cox

tooth and nail for Cox and his assailant, not knowing one from the other.

“Now’s our time at last,” whispered Sam the Scribe to his band of conspirators, and they rushed in, yelling and screaming, and the mob, following suit, rushed in with them, so that there was nothing but a tangle of yellow dogs and men and boys and women and girls. That corner never witnessed such a pandemonium, and it is much to be doubted if it will ever witness another.

“Take Cox’s dog and tie yours in its place to the post,” yelled Sam to Hungry Henry. And Henry did as he was bade in no more time than it took to do the bidding.

“Kill him! Stop thief! He’s takin’ Mike, meh dorg!” thundered Cox, freeing himself at last with one supreme effort from the mixture of dogs and men that were pinioning his arms, caving his ribs and snapping at his big calves.

“I’ll choke yer!” roared Cox, striding for

The Beggars' Club

Hungry Henry; but Henry, with a calm grin, wheeled suddenly, and passed Mike Cox on to Blind Bill, who, handing him his own poor yellow cur in return, tossed the pride of Cox's heart to Lamé Tom, who, tossing his cur back to Bill, whirled Mike Cox through the air to Loony Louis, who formed the connecting link between Deaf Dan and Lamé Tom.

So bewildered was California Cox by the maneuver that he paused as if paralyzed, unable to tell his own carefully bred and trained animal from the continual whirl of yellow tails and backs and legs of worthless curs that went barking and yelping from the hands of one of the conspirators into the hands of the other; and to make matters worse, if that were possible, the crowd was adding to his bewilderment and its own amusement by flinging its own unsalable mongrels into the maze started by the beggars. Even two officers of the law who had

California Cox

come to make arrests remained to burst their sides with laughter.

California Cox, recovering from his paralysis as suddenly as he had been seized by it, let forth a demoniac yell and made a mad dash for Deaf Dan at the moment when he thought his dog Mike, traveling through the circuit, had landed in Dan's extended hands.

"I'll pound yer inter a ball smaller en de dorg!" roared Cox.

"Join the Union," yelled Dan in return, starting to run.

The officers, seeing the time for interference had come, regained their lost gravity and seized both Cox and Deaf Dan.

"He's got meh dorg!" gasped Cox; "arrest him."

"It ain't his dog, it's mine," retorted Dan. "He advertised to buy it and now he's scheming to get it for nothing."

"Clear out!" ordered the bluecoats; "take your curs and get away from this or

The Beggars' Club

we'll pull for the patrol and run the mob av yese in."

"But it's meh dorg—meh trick dorg, meh Mike!" yelled Cox, beside himself.

"Well, thin," said one of the police, "take another and go home. You don't ixpict us to be a-pickin' out yer yiller dog from this howling bunch, do yer? Grab one an' git out av this, an' be quick, er Oi'll run yer in an' sind ye over."

The members of the club scattered in every direction, one one way, one another, in order that they might confuse Cox if he should start in pursuit. When Sam the Scribe took enough courage to pause and look around he saw Deaf Dan and Loony Louis racing side by side along the ground, the huge figure of Cox but a few yards behind. Suddenly Dan and Louis changed dogs and parted their ways. Cox, borrowing speed from rage, hurtled after Louis, gaining on the trembling beggar with every

California Cox

step. In his confusion Louis flung the coveted prize on the ground, hoping that Cox might be so overwhelmed by the recovery of his favorite that he would give up the chase and let him escape; but the California giant, swooping down on the yellow cur that fell from Louis' terrorized arm, gave vent to a yell of despair, and then, doubling his pace, flew down the alley into which the trembling Louis had turned.

Heartless and hopeless, for a reason unknown even to himself, seeing no other loophole, the wretched Louis opened the cover of an empty ash-box and plunged himself, ostrich-like, head foremost into its depths. Cox saw the strategem, tore the cover open and hauled Louis out by the nape of his neck.

“Didn't yer git yer dorg?” whimpered Louis.

“Yes, I got meh dorg,” hissed Cox, tightening his hold.

The Beggars' Club

"I'm glad ef it," whined Louis; "I did meh best ter take him fer yer!"

"Yer did, eh? Well, I 'preciate yer efforts. Take dis an' take dat fer meh thanks; but since yer didn't take de right dorg, take dis an' take dat for meh regrits. Don't scream 'cause dey're too light. I'll make 'em harder an' harder."

"Hold on," moaned Louis; "maybe I kin git de right dorg back from Sam; he knows——"

Cox ceased his blows for a second, considering. "No, yer don't," he muttered; "one trick 'll do meh fer to-day. Youse is a slippery lot, an' I'll take de grease out ef yer, one by one, as I get yer! Take dis fer de Amalga Association ef combined double-dealers, an' here's an extree nice one fer yerself."

"Look behind yer, Cox!" yelled Louis suddenly, his wits growing stronger as his strength decreased. "The cops is comin'."



“ ‘Join de Union,’ yelled Dan.”

California Cox

California Cox, for whom the word "cop" had an ominous ring, releasing his grip on Louis, turned to look, and found that nothing but a long vista of alley met his frightened gaze. Louis seized advantage of that moment as if it comprised the rest of his life and he spurted down the alley at a rate with which his legs, inspired by a lesson and a warning, had never moved before. It was the vengeance of one man staked against the life and limb of another, and baffled vengeance, in the shape of Cox, found itself looking at the top of a fence over which the terrorized Louis had leaped.

"I've a-traveled thru dis country from California ter Maine," murmured Cox, compelled to admiration, "but dose fellers takes de blue ribbon fer work along deir line. If Mike wasn't gone, I'd give up an' steer clear of deir district; but I'll get Mike back to-night at McQuinn's or I'll turn Sam de Scribe inter insect powder."

The Beggars' Club

IV

Looney Louis was barely able to crawl into McQuinn's that night to attend the hasty consultation of the Beggars' Club.

"Never mind," consoled Mollbuzzer, looking commiseratingly at Louis' bandaged eye and arm and neck; "it 'll help yer considerable in beggin'."

"I'm a-telling youse," mumbled Louis in return, "dat only fer dat fence meh beggin' days would be over. Oh, but she was a pretty jump! A man kin only do dat oncet in his life, an' in de mornin' I'm goin' ter crawl aroun' dere an' look at de fence ag'in an' study how I done it."

"Never mind, Louis," smiled Sam the Scribe, "one twenty-fifth interest in the dog is yours. When Cox comes around to-night you can——"

"I'm goin' right now," exclaimed Louis. "Yer don't ketch meh anywheres near him

California Cox

where dere ain't a fence aroun' an' a high one. He's a most terruble feller! Good-night, gents." And no amount of persuasion could prevail upon Louis to be at hand to greet Cox.

"Does yer think he'll come, Sam, sure enuff?" asked Hungry Henry.

"We got the dog, ain't we?" asked Sam by way of answer.

"Yes," replied Henry; "he's one ef de two tied dere in de corner to de leg ef de table."

"Well, then, Cox will be here."

"But what will he do ter us?" asked Blind Bill.

"I'm no fortune-teller," said Sam, "but it's only common-sense to suppose that he'll try persuasion to get the dog back, and that failing——"

"He'll try our necks," interrupted Moll-buzzer.

"Maybe," went on Sam, undisturbed,

The Beggars' Club

“but I don't believe it. We have him scared to death, and he don't know what we're going to do next. He'll accept our terms, sue for peace, join the club, and let us share and share alike in the earnings of the dog. Leave me to handle him when he comes in. One of you fellers had better take Mike Cox and throw him inside of the barrel in the back yard; and don't forget to put a stone on top of the cover.”

“Which of the two dorgs is Mike Cox?” asked One-armed Jake.

“Dis one,” said Crutch McAllister, pointing to the larger of the two.

“No it ain't!” yelled Mollbuzzer; “it's de other one.”

Sam eyed the two dogs for a few minutes and scratched his head. “Mollbuzzer is right,” said he; “it's the smaller one.”

“Well,” said Deaf Dan, “we got mixed up in the shuffle of yellow dogs and so we carried away two.”

California Cox

“That was right,” asserted Sam; “it’s always best to be sure.” He was by no means sure himself, but he dared not say so.

“Will we let de big dorg go?” asked Squint-eye.

Sam remained lost in thought for a second or two. Squint-eye repeated his query.

“Put Mike, the little dog, inside of the box against the wall, and put the big dog outside in the barrel,” ordered Sam.

Sam’s command had scarcely been complied with when the screen doors were flung open and California Cox entered. The club retreated into various corners, each member looking anxiously for a free inch or two wherein to squirm, to dodge, or to run.

Sam’s heart fell when he saw that Cox’s face, somber and hard set, wore no semblance of even a pretended friendship; and for the first time he feared that in the flush of victory he had overestimated his own

The Beggars' Club

powers and the sacrifices that Cox would make for the sake of peace.

“Well,” started California Cox, laying his stick down on the table with a thump; “I don’t see de cadger I laid hold ef dis afternoon, an’ I wants ter see him bad. I hates ter leave a job half done an’ I wants ter put de finishin’ touches on ter him. But you’ll do in his place, Sam,” he shouted, wheeling suddenly and grasping the Scribe by the throat. “You’ll do ter begin on, den I’ll lay out de others. Dey kin choose turns.”

The members, without the waste of a second’s time, made for the back door, the front door, and the windows, each picturing himself in Sam’s place, and none of them liking the picture.

“I guess neither Sam er de dorg ’ll belong to de club no more when we gets back,” whispered One-armed Jake to Foxy Basket, on the run.

“I’d like ter help Sam,” replied Foxy in

California Cox

subdued tones, "an' so I would ef I was made out ef Injee-rubber. Poor Sam; what good is all his learnin' an' eddication now?"

McQuinn, seeing the peril in which Sam stood, left his bar and swaggered up to Cox. "See here," he said, doubling his fist, "I ain't goin' ter have nothin' like dis goin' on in meh place."

"It's yer place, is it?" asked Cox, holding Sam by his left hand, freeing his right.

"It is," replied McQuinn, "an' it ain't big enuff fer ter hold both ef us."

"Den one ef us gets out," shouted Cox, landing a blow on the saloon-keeper's chin that sent him to the floor, dazed and useless for combat.

"Now, Sam," muttered Cox, jamming the Scribe against the wall, "I'm ready ter give yer meh free and undiwided attention. Dere's a hole in de wall, I sees; and I don't know but what I'll make yer inter plaster ter fill it. Yer'd make a smooth grade ef

The Beggars' Club

plaster, wouldn't yer, eh?" he asked, twisting Sam's ear until he shrieked from pain. "Yer agrees ter de propersition, I sees. Well, we'll let it hang fire fer a minute until we finds Mike."

"He's in the box there," gasped the Scribe, white as the material into which Cox threatened to turn him.

"A nice place fer him, eh? Inside ef a box! Wanted ter suffocate him, eh? I'll take him out fust an' put yer in aterwards. Yer needn't yell wid fear; I'll see dat yer fits."

With such gentle speech did Cox throw rather than drag the palpitating mass which was Sam over to the box, and holding the Scribe with his right he threw the cover of the soap-box off with his left.

California Cox let forth a war-cry that awoke the Scribe from his dumb terror and threw him into an active state of pain, the like of which he had never experienced be-

California Cox

fore, nor was it the first time, either, that the wily Scribe had found himself in predicaments of somewhat the same nature.

“So yer would palm dat miserable yeller cur off fer meh Mike, would yer? Still up ter yer tricks, eh? Tricks is natural ter yer, eh? Yer’d make a fine trick dorg yerself, yer would. I’m goin ter learn yer ater a while; but afore we begins yer eddication bring out Mike Cox, or I’m afraid dere won’t be blood enough left ter supply yer tricky brain.”

“He’s in the barrel outside—near the back door,” moaned Sam. “I put him in there.”

“In a barrel, eh? Put him in dere same as if he was merlasses. Mighty nice ef yer, dat was! I’ll do de same by you. I’ll put yer in, a little bit at a time. I’ll label it Amalga Union an’ roll it inter de river,” he commented tenderly as he dragged and bumped and thumped Sam into the yard.

The Beggars' Club

“Mike, oh Mike,” called California Cox, and then he whistled. There came an answering bark through the darkness of the littered yard from the direction in which the barrel stood. “Thanks be ter Gawd,” cried Cox, throwing up both his arms. “At last!”

Sam re-echoed the sentiment.

In the excitement of finding his long-lost treasure—one might almost say his long-lost child, so dear and necessary had that dog become to his existence—Cox forgot Sam and rushed for the barrel. The Scribe, in his excitement forgetting Cox, crawled through the yard and into the saloon on all fours, like a cat.

Not two seconds thereafter Cox rushed into the saloon carrying the dog in his arms, but when the rays of light from the oil lamp fell on the yellow bundle, curled closely against his broad chest, he flung it away with an oath of surprise and rage.

California Cox

“It ain’t Mike,” he yelled. “Mike had a small white star on his head.”

“Maybe Sam stole the star,” whimpered McQuinn, shaking in his boots, supporting his wrenched chin on his right hand.

California Cox caught sight of Sam the Scribe stealing past the front window of the saloon, and he was at the threshold with a leap, only to bump squarely against the form of Loony Louis, who was fondling a small yellow dog and peeping into the saloon timidly.

“Don’t yer kill meh, Cox,” pleaded Louis, seeing the utter impossibility of escape; “I jist come here on purpose fer ter bring yer de dorg back.”

“It’s Mike Cox an’ no mistake dis time,” cried Cox with delight. He loosened his tight grasp on Louis’ bandaged neck.

“I don’t git killed den?” asked Louis hopefully.

“No,” answered Cox; “I guess I ham-

The Beggars' Club

mered yer enough fer one day, an' seein' yer brung de dorg back yer kin go."

"Don't I git no riward?" whined Louis.

"Riward!" shouted Cox, dumfounded; "I'd like ter know fer what? Fer stealin' de dorg, maybe!"

"I didn't steal him," replied Louis indignantly; "I finds him barkin' 'round yer lodgin'-house when I was a-goin' home an' I grabs him, thinkin' it might be Mike Cox."

"Yer gittin' yer neck fer a riward, an' if it ain't enuff——" Cox doubled his big fist.

"I s'pose it 'll have ter do," muttered Louis, crawling off.

The Autobiography of a Beggar

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BEGGAR

I

I COMES INTER DE WORLD

Bein' de account ef how meh reserches in Hebrew brung meh ter de study ef antropolergy.

I WAS born—well, what's de use ef puttin' down what everyone knows? I was born an' dat settles it. I don't know de day nor de year, but what has dat got ter do wid it, anyways? De main fact is dat I was born. Ef I had ter do it over ag'in I might change meh mind, but bein' born an' dyin' is where beggars comes in even wid millionaires. Did yer ever stop fer ter think dat de only diffrunce twixt men is what dey does atween de time dey is born an' die? We is all born equal an' we dies equal, but we don't live equal. Hurrah fer equality! Anyways, I

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am forty years old, er I ought ter be; I kin tell dat 'cause I can't be ten, and I'm too old ter be twinty, an' I must have been thirty a long time ago. Forty is a good place ter stop orff, an' I'm goin' ter let it go at dat. Not ter know yer age is a good way ter keep young, eh? I rekomind it ter wimens. Oh, wimens, giddy wimens, joy ef a man's folly, as de poet says—but dey comes later in de story.

Where was I born? I don't know ef it's any ef your perticuler bizness, but it bein' dat I'm writin' meh histree fer de sake ef a antropolergist an' his noble coin (which comes in furder on) I don't mind sayin' I was born in a alley ef Chicago on de big West Side. Ef yer kin find dat alley yer pretty smart—smarter en meh—'cause dey have carted it orff long ago an' thrown it inter de lake. Maybe dey done dat in meh honor, an' maybe dey done it 'cause dey needed de space. Yer kin take yer pick.

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Meh mother was a Irish washerwoman an' meh father was a German by profession afore he come ter Amerikee. His trade was ter watch meh mother work an' ter lick me. He didn't work no union hours at either end. Dey give meh a grand eddication, startin' meh out early in life wid a baskut on meh arm ter bring home what I could. I stoled oncet an' dey licked meh—fer not stealin' more when I had de chanct. (I'm goin' back an' scratch dis part out.)

I ain't told yer meh name yet, fer de fact is dat yer jist ez well orff ef yer don't know it, an' I've got one eye on de perlice while I'm writin' dis, which ain't comfertuble. Sam de Scribe says bein' a literary guy ain't no snap, an' Sam knows more en a cross-eyed cow, I'm a-tellin' youse. Meh real name is George Schwarz, I t'ink; but I've changed meh name so often accordin' ter circumstances dat I ain't sure ef I'm right. It's a funny world, eh? Seems yer got ter

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have a name same ez a dog er de number ef a house. Dey named de first man Adam an' ever since den we took names ter be in line. Style and fashun is responsible fer all meh woes.

I was arristed oncet (oncet? Ha! Ha!), an' de jidge axes meh what was meh name. "I ain't got none," I says.

"Thirty days fer havin' no name," he says.

"Please, yer honor," I pipes up, "meh name is Mollbuzzer."

"Twinty more fer contimpt ef court," he says.

Well, meh secret is out, so I might ez well tell yer meh name is Mollbuzzer. It's a name what thieves calls a feller what picks wimen's pockets and bothers wimens in gineral; Moll, meanin' wimens, I guess; an' Buzzer, like all names, explainin' itself. It ain't pretty, I admit; but it was guv meh agin meh will an' I ain't complainin' none,

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fer it might hav' been worse; but I don't see how. I don't want yer ter think I ever picked a pocket, fer ter tell yer de truth, it's a slick trick an' I never could get on ter it, an' I'm too honest, anyways. I was pinched oncet fer tryin', an' I left it alone ever since. Dear reader, do likewise. Yer must have rubber fingers ter pick pockets, an' begin practicin' young. It's a inborn gift like writin' poetree er paintin' a pict-shure er bein' a carpinter, an' dere's no use ef cryin' ef yer ain't born dat way. Meh motto in life is, ef yer can't get what yer want, don't sit down an' cry, but jist go an' grab it.

I must tell yer how I come to write de sweet story ef meh life, 'cause I ain't a-doin' it fer fun. It come about all along ef goin' in de public libraree fer ter read a book. "Yeagers," which is de English fer beggars, likes librarees in winter, 'cause dey is warmer en de weather, an' 'cause yer kin

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git a nice big book, hide yer head ahint it an' go ter sleep widout payin' fer yer bed. De day I went in it was colder en a corpse, an' dere was nothin' doin' on de street, no one bein' out ter see how deir breath looked.

So I goes inter de riference-room an' I says ter de cove wid a blue coat at de desk, "Bring me a book." An' he looks at meh sharp an' he says :

"What kind ef a book?"

"A histree book," says I, thinkin' ez dey must be de biggest, 'count ef histree bein' so long.

"What kind ef a histree book?" says he.

"United States histree," says I.

"Which one?" axes he.

"Is dere more en one?" axes I.

"Sure dere is," says he, laffin'.

"Well," says I, "bring me de biggest." An' he goes orff a-laffin', an' soon he comes back wid de histree, an' I carries it to de desk an' starts ter read de pictshures. Den

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I finds a piece 'bout George Washington which wasn't so slow, an' I reads dat. George was a iligent ginerall an' a good Prisdint, considerin' he come first. Den I finds a piece 'bout a duck named Aleck Hamilton, who, so a feller named Dan Webster says, "hit de rock ef national finances wid de rod of wisdom" an' made money come out ef it when de countree an' George Washington was hard up. But I don't believe dat—no, not meh. Aleck, I guess, would have made a better hobo en George, seein' he was so good at comin' games. Well, I started ter write meh own histree an' not de histree ef Amerikee; but I come on ter a part 'bout a cove named Aaron Burr, who was at de head ef all ef 'em when it came ter de playin' ef games.

De first thing Aaron done was ter put Aleck Hamilton out ef bizness wid a gun, an' den he comes de rock and rod game hisself; but de peepul bein' on ter de trick, he

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gives it up ter grab de Mississippi River, but dey catches him, an' it was all over wid poor old Aaron. He had ter skip ter Paris an' live on cold victuals de same ez us. His-tree teaches dat dere ain't no game what ain't been played long ago.

Well, I reads on a bit an' falls asleep, a-dreamin' I was Aleck Hamilton hittin' de rock wid meh little rod an' tellin' de peepul like dis: "Feller-citizens, each ef youse kin step up an' give me one little dime; den I will hit de rock wid meh rod an' make de coin bubble, an' each of youse gets a big silver dollar. Ef de rock don't work yer gits de dime back. Step up, feller-citizens, an' git rich quick. De first guy an' dime takes two silver dollars."

An' de feller-citizens, never havin' been done dat way yet, bein' still young an' inner-cent, steps up lively an' hands meh a nice lot ef new dimes, which I was puttin' in meh pocket, when someone grabs meh, an' I

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swings meh rod, thinkin' he was a-goin' ter take de dimes away from meh, an' I wakes up. It was de libraree cove wid de blue coat.

"What are yer doin'?" he says. "Dis ain't no lodgin'-house; yer can't sleep in here!"

"I wasn't sleepin'," I says, mad at him fer comin' along when de dimes was all mine, "I was only a-thinkin'."

"Well, yer makes a awful noise when yer thinks," he says.

"I was thinkin' about Aleck Hamilton hittin' de rock," I says.

"I don't care," he says, lookin' puzzled. "I'll have ter put yer out ef yer sleep ag'in."

"Can't a feller t'ink?" I grumbles, an' he goes orff back ef his desk, an' I goes back arter him an' says:

"I'd like anudder histree book—a very old histree book—de older de better," fer I wanted ter see what sort ef games dey

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played in de times afore George Washington was born.

De cove in de blue coat grins an' he says, "De oldest histree book we got is in Hebrew."

"Good, dat sounds ez old ez old clothes; bring it along," I says.

"Kin yer read it?" axes he.

"Kin I read it! I wouldn't axe fer it ef I couldn't read it. I guess meh own uncle is Hebrew," I says.

An' he brings de book out an' I goes along wid it till I comes ter where a real old gent wid long gray hair an' gold specs was sittin' an' readin', an' I takes a seat opersite him, thinkin' maybe he would lay de gold specs down an' I might pick 'em up.

An' I pretends not ter see de old gent; but he looks up ater a while an' watches meh, fer I was a-mumblin' an' a-mumblin' ter mehself an' a-waggin' meh head up an' down ez ef de Hebrew book was more excitin' en de

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tale ef " Buck Bradley's Ranch, Er Up Agin de Pirates in Missouri." He looks sirprised an' den he looks over at meh an' he says:

" Excuse me, my friend, but in what langwidge is de book dat yer is readin'?"

" It's in Jew langwidge er old Hebrew," I says.

" Yer don't say," he smiles. " Is yer fond ef it?"

" It's meh faverite langwidge," I says.

" What does de book treat on?" axes he.

" On old Hebrew games," says I.

" I never knowed dere was sich a book in Hebrew," he says.

" Yer kin read it ef yer likes," I says, pushin' de book ter him.

" No, thanks," he says; " I can't read Hebrew."

" Yer can't?" I says, "it's too bad. It's amusin' ter discover how old our new games is."

" Dat interests meh," he says. " I'm a anterpolergist." An' he gets up an' comes

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ter take a seat next ter meh; de cove in de blue coat lookin' on wid his eyes wide open.

“What's a anterpolergist?” I axes him.
“Is it somethin' new?”

“Compearatively speakin',” he says. “A anterpolologist is one who studies de science of man.”

“Same ez a cop?” I says.

“Not 'xactly,” smiles he, rubbin' his gold specs, but not layin' 'em down like he orter.

“What makes de name so long?” I axes.
“It sounds ez ef it took two pounds ef steam ter blow it thru a whistle.”

“It comes from two Greek names,” he says, “meanin' man an' science.”

“I thought dere was two Greek names in it,” I says. “Dose Greeks is awful on names. I knows one what has a fruit store, an' his name is longer en a bunch ef bananas.”

An' de old gent rubs his glasses an' laffs an' says, “How come yer to study Hebrew?”

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“How come yer ter study anterpolergy?” axes I, not knowin’ what else ter say.

“Well,” he says, “’count ef meh interest in man.”

“It was de same wid meh an’ Hebrew,” I says.

“Would yer mind readin’ meh a bit out ef de book?” axes he.

“Sure not,” says I. An’ I says ez ef I was a-readin’, “Mohowee, mohowwhoaa, mohah-aha,” er somethin’ dat was jist ez good.

“Not so loud, ef yer please,” says he.

“Yer have ter read Hebrew loud,” says I, “it bein’ part ef de langwidge.” An’ I goes on readin’, louder an’ louder, an’ de cove from behind de desk comes runnin’ up an’ sayin’:

“Dis won’t do; yer makin’ too much noise an’ disturbin’ evrybody. Yer go right out er I’ll call de cop from downstairs,” he says.

“It was meh own fault,” pipes up de old gent. “I axed him ter do it.”

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An' I goes out inter de hall an' de old antropolergist comes a-runnin' ater meh. "I'm sorry dat happened," he says.

"So am I," I says, "'count ef de cove chasin' meh out I loses a dollar an' a half translatin' two pages of Hebrew fer a minister."

"Well," says de old gent, "I'll make it right. But supposin' we gits somethin' ter eat, it bein' near noon, an' I wants ter talk wid yer; yer interests meh."

"I'm sorry," I says, "but I really ain't got de time. I'll have ter go an' tell de minister what happened."

"It won't take us long," he says.

"All right," says I. An' he takes meh inter a basemint restaurint an' he starts ter ax meh a whole pile ef questions, like dey all does; it bein' human natcher ter want somethin' fer yer money.

"How comes it," he axes, "ef yer kin read Hebrew so good dat yer English is so bad?"



A. S. K. K.

“Would yer mind readin’ meh a bit
out of de book?”

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“Bad company done it,” I explains.

“How come ye ter git in bad company?”

he axes.

“Count ef meh Hebrew,” I says.

“Explain yerself,” he says.

“Well,” says I, “I got so interested in Hebrew dat I wouldn’t do nothin’ but read old Hebrew books, an’ meh wife got mad at meh fer neglectin’ her, an’ she runned orff an’ I took ter drink. Dat’s de histree ef it.”

“Who learned yer de Hebrew?” he axes.

“I learned it in collidge,” I answers.

“What collidge?” axes he.

“Hebrew collidge,” I says.

“I never heard ef it,” says he.

“Yer hearin’ might be bad,” says I, an’ he laffs.

“Where was yer born?” axes he.

“I was born in England,” says I.

“What did yer father do?” axes he.

“He was prisidint ef de Hebrew Collidge,” I says.

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“ Den de collidge was in England? ” axes he.

“ Sure,” says I.

“ Why didn’t yer say so den? ” axes he.

“ Why didn’t yer axe meh? ” says I.

“ What was yer mother? ” axes he.

“ Meh father’s wife,” says I.

“ I know dat,” says he, laffin’; “ but what was her nationalitee? ”

“ She was Chinee,” I says.

“ Chinee! Dat’s funny! ” says he.

“ It’s wasn’t funny at all,” says I; “ meh father was like meh. He was terribul on langwidges. Whenever he wanted ter learn a new langwidge he married a new wife. His fust wife was German, an’ his second was French, an’ his third was Spanish, an’ his fourth she was Chinee. An’ dat’s all I knows,” I says, de dinner bein’ over, “ an’ I’d like meh dollaran’ a half which yer promised meh.”

“ Here it is,” he says, “ but yer is de big-

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gest fakir what ever I seen in meh born days, an' I don't think yer knows any more Hebrew en a cat."

"Didn't yer hear meh read it in de libraree?" I axes, puttin' de coin in meh pocket.

"Dat was no more Hebrew en it was Chinee," he says.

"Dat shows yer don't know Hebrew from Chinee," I says.

"Take yer money an' go 'long," he says.

"I don't want yer money den," I yells; "I wouldn't touch it wid a pair of gloves," an' I lays it on de table, hopin' he would add anuder dollar an' apolergize.

"Thanks," he says, takin' de coin an' puttin' it in his pocket.

"I don't believe yer knows any more ant-erpolergy en a pig," I says, "even if yer did beat meh out ef a dollar an' a half."

"I didn't beat yer," says he; "yer gave it back ter meh."

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“Keep it an’ welcome,” I says; “I never knowed anybody ter get money dat way what did him any good. An’ yer calls meh a fakir an’ a liar an’ meh self-respect is more ter meh in all de money in de world.” An’ I goes out, lookin’ mad an’ hurt.

“Come back here!” he yells, an’ I comes back an’ he says: “I’ll tell yer what I’ll do, we’ll go out an’ I’ll buy yer a Hebrew book wid de dollar an’ a half, seein’ as yer likes Hebrew so much.”

“All right,” I says, thinkin’ I would rather have de Hebrew book en nothin’; “all right; dat’s jist what I wanted was a Hebrew book.”

So we goes inter a old bookshop aroun’ de corner an’ de old gent axes de man ef he has a Hebrew book, an’ he says dat he has de Bible in Hebrew, which was t’ree dollars.

“I knows where I kin git it fer a dollar an’ a half,” I whispers ter de ole gent.

“We’ll go an’ git it right now,” he says.

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“ But de man what has it is only dere at night,” I says; “ give meh de coin an’——”

An’ de ole gent smiles an’ he says, “ Yer is a good one, yer is; but I guess I’ll buy yer dis book here.”

“ An’ throw a dollar an’ a half away!” I says, meh heart in meh mouth; “ I’d ruther see yer give it to de poor. Dere ain’t no Hebrew book wuth t’ree dollars,” I says, “ Hebrew bein’ out ef style fer a long time.”

“ Well, dere is anuder store next door,” says de old gent; “ maybe dey has some Hebrew books.” So we goes in dere an’ de man says he has a Hebrew book on Moses fer a quarter.

“ Dat’s jist what I wants!” I says; “ I’ve been a-lookin’ all over de earth for a Hebrew book on Moses. Glory Hallelujah!” I says.

“ It’s yourn now,” says de old gent, givin’ de cove a quarter.

“ An’ yer kin give meh de two dollars an’ seventy-five cents which I saved yer,” says I.

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“How so?” axes he.

“How so!” says I. “Didn’t yer want ter pay de cove next door t’ree dollars fer a Hebrew book only fer meh?”

“De agreemint was only fer ter buy a Hebrew book,” he says.

“No, sir,” pipes I; “de agreemint was ter buy a Hebrew book fer a dollar an’ a half; so ef yer gives meh de book on Moses an’ a dollar an’ a quarter asides we’ll call it square.”

“All right,” he says; “yer is de best dat I ever seen; take de book an’ de money an’ go.”

“Thanks,” says I, puttin’ de coin in meh pocket. “I’ll sell yer de book on Moses back fer fifteen cents.”

“Not much,” he laffs.

“Yer missin’ de chanct ter make a dime quick,” I says.

“I t’ought yer wanted de book on Moses so awful bad,” he says.

“I t’ought so, too,” I says, “but in dis

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book de Hebrew is written so bad I can't read it."

"Den why does yer want ter sell it back ter meh?" axes he.

"What's de diffrence ter yer," I says, "seein' ez yer can't read Hebrew anyways, ef it's good Hebrew er bad Hebrew?"

"Please go away," he says; "I ain't got no more time."

So I takes de book an' de old gent goes orff a-laffin' ter hissself an' I follers him, an' ater a while I pulls him by de coat-tail, puffin' fer wind, ez ef I runned all de way.

"You agin?" pipes he. "What does yer want now?"

"Thank Gawd I found yer," I says.

"Why fer?" axes he.

"De cove in de store," I says, "told meh a lie; dat Hebrew book ain't on Moses. It's in yer line—it's a book on anteropology. De title is two Hebrew words meanin' man an' science. Jist de thing yer wants," I says;

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“de whole thing is in dis little Hebrew book—all yer wants ter know about science an’ all dere is about man.”

“But what good is it ter meh, my friend,” he laffs, “ef I don’t know Hebrew?”

“I kin learn yer how,” I says, “fer ten cents a hour an’ it ’ll only take ten hours.”

“No, thanks, I ain’t got de time,” he laffs.

“But ain’t yer goin’ ter give meh fifteen cents, runnin’ all dis way? I might have died from heart disease,” I says.

“I tell yer what yer kin do,” he says, kind ef thinkin’ ter hissself, “yer keep de Hebrew book an’ write meh down de story ef yer life from de cradle to de grave—don’t leave out nothin’, an’ bring it ter meh in de libraree an’ I’ll give yer twenty-five dollars fer it. I have a notion dat dere’ll be more antropolergy in it den in de little Hebrew book.”

So dat’s why I’m writin’ meh histree from de cradle ter de grave. I had to write dis down about de old cove ter kind ef git a

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start, but I'm goin' back an' scratch it all out, only him wantin' it he might give meh dat fifteen cents fer dis part what he wouldn't give meh fer de cute little Hebrew book.

II

MEH START IN LIFE

Start right an' you'll end wrong anyways.

WELL, old gent an' antropolergist, ter go back in meh story a foot er two, I never runned away from meh home, sweet home; I jist natcherally quit, bein' a independent boy an' wantin' ter earn meh own livin' an' not support meh parents any more. I was fourteen den, very tall an' strong fer meh age, an' hungry; more hungry en tall, I guess.

De man what give meh a start in life was a blind "yeager" by de name ef Wily Will. I've seen all de beggars der is (includin' meh friend Foxy Basket), but dat blind man was de king ef 'em all in some ways. I ain't got no reason ter love him, but I give him credit; he knowed his bizness. He's dead ez a door nail now, so de truth won't hurt him none,

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which is de big joy of bein' dead. Peace ter his cinders! He was short, thin, small, rather gray on de top kind ef a feller when I knowed him first, all bone an' muscle, wid a grip like a bulldorg's teeth. Bulldorg's teeth an' handcuffs has de two best grips ef anything on earth, an' I've had 'em all tried on meh.

Wily Will was de oddest beggar in de world, which yer will learn ez I go along. He jist kep' ter hissself, not 'cause he was proud er stuck-up (few beggars is), but jist 'cause he thought it was good fer bizness. Yer knows how most of 'em is, livin' in a house tergither, an' tradin' secrets an' marks, er workin' wid a boss er a king; but Wily Will he jist went his own lonely way an' wouldn't speak ter eny ef 'em.

I seen him beggin' around when I started out on meh own hook, an' I axed him ef it wouldn't be a good idee fer meh ter lead him up an' down, an' he reached out an' nabbed

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me by de wrist an' he never let me git loose till I runned away from him.

We lived in a shanty in de rear ef a tenement on Quincy street, an' de only furniture was newspapers on de wall, a bed on de floor, an' a stove where he done his cookin'. Fried eggs an' a bit ef bacon an' coffee was his favorite dish. Also he liked ter play de fiddle an' ter sing. Also he was a miser, which is a strange combination, an' comes later on. His perticler game was ter sell lead pencils.

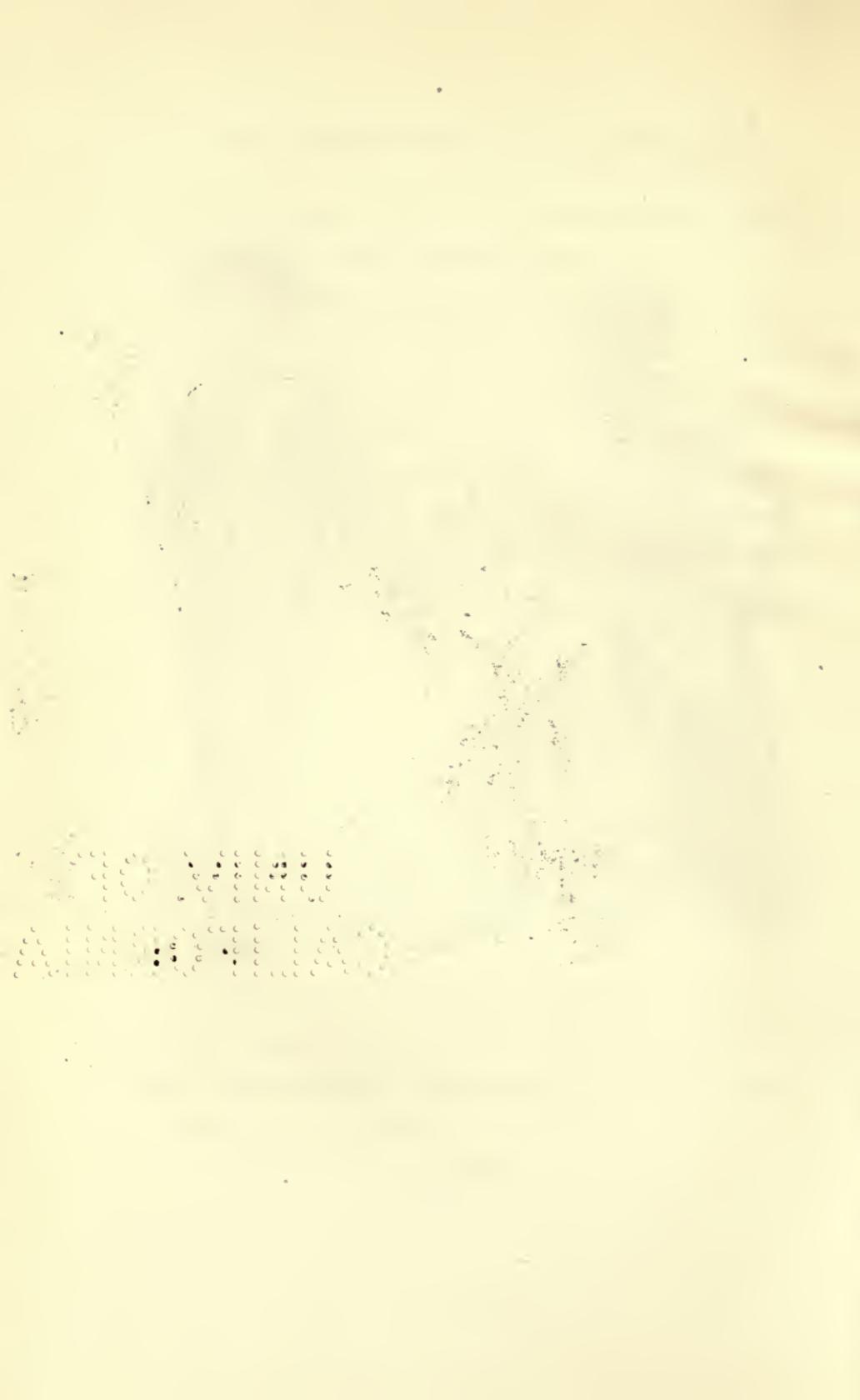
De first day we went out he says ter meh, "Keep yer eyes open an' yer mouth shut. Don't talk none. I'll do all de talkin'. Yer mother is dead an' I'm yer father, an' dat's all yer needs ter rimimber ef it comes ter a pinch."

"But meh mother ain't dead," I says.

"I ain't takin' yer ter Sunday-school," says he, handin' meh a nice lick on de ear. "Hold yer tongue."



*“ An’ be never let me git loose till
I runned away from him.”*



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“Yer might change wrists,” I said ater a bit.

“Git used ter it,” he says.

He didn't beg on de streets none 'cause he said he had reg'ler customers in de stores an' it looked bad. We wint around from place ter place an' he got a nickel here an' a dime dere, an' oncet er twice a quarter, an' more often a cussin'.

He didn't talk none ter meh, only mumblin' to hisself agin bad bizness an' hard luck all de time. I kin tell yer afore dat mornin' was over I was dead tired ef meh job. I could hardly pull meh legs along, but when I lagged behint he gives meh a pinch an' says, “Yer leadin' meh; I ain't a-leadin' you.”

I was hungry, too, an he wouldn't give meh nothin' ter eat, sayin' two meals a day was enuff fer a boy. He didn't drink none an' he kep' out ef saloons altergither, sayin', “Saloons is no good fer our line.

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Dey wants a dollar wuth ef fun an' time fer ivery cent dey gives up."

"Yer made a dollar an' ninety-five cints already dis mornin'," says I, countin' up on meh fingers; "ain't yer goin' home?"

"Keep still," he says; "de pencils cost meh a dollar an' forty."

"But dey didn't keep de pencils; yer got 'em yet."

"Ye little fool," he says, "don't I have ter sell de pencils afore I makes anything? An' how does yer know I took in a dollar an' ninety-five?"

"I counted up," I says.

"Yer ter mind yer own bizness," he says.

"Yer told meh ter keep meh eyes open," I said.

"An' yer mouth shut," he says, pinchin' meh arm.

De first place we went inter dat afternoon, de cove says ter him, "I don't berlieve in encouragin' beggars; but ef a man comes in ter

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sell somethin' I allus berlieves in buyin' what he's got."

"Dat's a good principul," says Wily.

"But yer pencils ain't no good at all," says de man; "de last ones what I bought had no lead in 'em."

"Well," says Wily, "yer knows how iverybody cheats a blind man. It's a shame; dose pencils cost meh two cents an' a half apiece an' I sells 'em fer five. I'm sure dese new ones is all right."

"How much will yer give meh a dozen fer?" axes de man.

"Fifty cents," says Wily.

An' de man gives him de half, an' Wily says, "I see I only got eight. I'll leave de rest de next time I comes aroun'."

"I don't do bizness dat way," says de cove.

"Come ter think," says Wily, "de boy has got a package in his pocket."

"I ain't," I pipes out.

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“Yer fergot,” he says; “I put ’em in yer coat dis mornin’ ”; an’ he slips his hand in meh pocket an’ sure enuff he pulls out de pencils.

An’ when we gits outside he says ter meh, “I got a notion ter take yer in de alley an’ wallop de life out ef yer. Didn’t I say ter keep yer mouth shut? Yer nearly cost meh a half dollar.”

“But de pencils come ter most a quarter,” I says, “an’ ——”

“Shut up,” he roars; “yer too smart; I’ve a mind ter let yer go.”

“I wish yer would,” I says; “I’d start in de pencil bizness fer mehself.”

“I’ll pencil bizness yer when we gits home,” says he. An’ he starts in an’ cusses dat cove fer keepin’ de pencils, callin’ him de puttiest names whatever I heard fer cheatin’ a blind man. He was crazy ’bout dose pencils; it seemed ter hurt him more en ter lose money. I never seed de like, fer dey

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didn't cost no more en two fer a cent. An' I says ter him ater a bit:

"Is yer goin' ter bring de cove de new pencils in de mornin'?"

"I ain't crazy," he says.

"But you'll lose a good customer," I says.

"I ain't lookin' fer customers," he says; "any fool kin sell things."

"I know," I says, "but——"

"Yer knows nothin' at all," he says; "not even enuff ter hold yer tongue." An' all de way home dat night he kept cussin' an' mumblin' agin people what wanted somethin' fer deir money. "Dey kill the beggar bizness," he says; an' like de little fool I was I pipes up an' axes:

"Why don't yer quit sellin' things an' jist beg, den?" An' dat rimark cost meh a crack on de ear.

In de night fer supper he gives meh a hunk ef bread, an' he says ez he would give meh a fried egg an' a piece of bacon, which he

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cooked fer hisself, only it was meh fault dat he lost dose dozen pencils. Den he gits out a book an' writes down de names an' de numbers ef de peepul an' what dey gives him, an' I watches him close an' says:

“Don't fergit de man what kep' de pencils.”

“You undress an' go ter bed,” he says, sharp.

An' I undresses, not thinkin' ef what was ter come, an' what does he do but take meh clothes an' search meh pockets. De dime an' de nickel what I managed ter steal on him rolls on de floor, an' he seen 'em jist ez ef he had eyes. “Yer rascal!” he yells, “stealin' from meh! I'll learn yer!”

“I had de dime an' de nickel afore I come ter yer,” I says.

“Den yer should have given 'em ter meh,” he growls; “boys ain't got no bizness wid money, anyways.” I'd ruther not write down how he tried ter separate meh skin

Meh Start in Life

from meh bones. "Now yer turn over on yer side an' go ter sleep," he says when he was thru whalin' meh.

Den he takes his fiddle an' plays an' sings an' I pretends ter sleep, but I didn't, fer I wanted ter see where he put de coin what he took in dat day. Along ten o'clock he puts de fiddle away an' ties meh clothes up in a bundle an' puts 'em under his bed, so I seen dere was no chanct ter run away. Den he moves de bed a bit an' lifts a plank out ef de floor, an' he takes out a bag ef money (a whole bag ef it; I hope ter die ef it ain't so, Mr. Anterpolergist) an' he counts it, an' plays wid it, an' sings ter it, an' talks ter it like ez ef dat coin was kids. Den he ties it up agin an' puts it back under de bed agin. I s'pose he had de notion dat if he slept over de coin it would hatch de same ez ef it was eggs. Den he mumbled some more ter hisself 'bout de cove what kept de dozen pencils an' he went ter sleep.

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De next mornin' I made up meh mind ter keep meh eyes wide open, an' run away de first chanct I got, 'cause he fed me worse den I could feed mehself by playin' basket, which means de same ez playin' doormat, er beggin' fer food at kitchen doors. 'Sides, I seen dere was no chanct ef gettin' de bag ef coin, seein' he slept over it an' meh clothes too. I was a-dyin' ter ax him how much coin der was in de bag, but I didn't dare.

On de way downtown he says ter meh: "Yer go an' get dem pencils back. Tell de cove dat yer father made a mistake an' give him de wrong ones, an' dat he'll come 'round dis afternoon an' give him a dozen new ones in deir place. I'll wait fer yer right by de outside door an' ef yer brings 'em back I'll give yer two fried eggs an' a slice ef bacon fer yer supper; an' ef yer don't I'll wallop yer."

So I goes inter de cove an' tells him what Wily says, an' he laffs an' gives meh de pen-

Meh Start in Life

cils, takin' 'em out ef his drawer. An' I seen de chanct I was a-lookin' fer, an' 'stead ef goin' out de front door I steals out thru de back an' leaves Mr. Wily a-waitin'. I bet he swore some.

I begged on de street a bit dat day, bein' hungry, an' oncet I got a dime, but a cop seed meh an' he says ter meh ef he catches meh agin he'd pull meh in, an' I got skeered. Why is it I was so young an' green den?

In de afternoon I reaches in meh pocket an' feels de dozen pencils, which I clean fer-got, an idee strikes meh, an' I walks back ter de cove's place, thinkin' ez maybe I could giv' him de pencils back an' work him fer a dime. An' I no sooner pokes meh little blond head in de door den de cove yells, "Dere's yer boy now!" An' Mr. Wily, who who was standin' dere, makes a spring fer meh, an' I runned lickety split down de street, never turnin' ter look. I have been skeered often in meh life, most enuff ter git

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used ter it, but dat was de wust skeer a man could have. But dat was de last time Mr. Wily ever got in de same block wid meh. Awful smart feller, Wily; yer see, he figured out dat I would come back ter sell de cove dat dozen pencils, an' he must have been waitin' dere all day ter grab meh. I guess dose dozen pencils worried him until de day de daisies turned away from his toes.

III

GETTIN' ALONG IN DE WORLD

When yer in Rome do de Romans, which dey would do ef dey come here.

WHOO! Mr. Anterpolergist, ef it's all de same ter you I'd like ter skip de time when I jined a gang ef kids what made it deir trade ter break inter empty houses fer de sake ef cuttin' out de lead pipes. It wasn't no lead-pipe cinch, as I found out aterwards when de fly cops grabbed meh an' dey sent meh to de riform school fer t'ree years. I made up meh mind den an' dere dat I'd quit stealin,' riform, leave dese git-rich-quick schemes alone, an' earn a honest livin' by beggin'. Beggin' is a heap slower, but it's surer.

When I came ter Chicago agin, riformed but still happy, I made direct fer "De Star Ef Hope," a dime lodgin'-house on Union

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street, which is de winter haven ef rest an' plenty fer hobos an' "yeagers." I made de acquaintance ef Sam de Scribe dere, an' I kin say dat meh fortin' was fixed from dat day on. Sam was makin' it his bizness den ter write letters an' ter supply infermation. He kept reg'lar books in which was writ all de names ef de easy marks in Chicago. His book was big ez de Chicago directory almost. He charged yer ten cents fer givin' yer de name ef a house where yer could git clothes, an' from ten cents up ter fifty fer de name an' number where yer could git money. Pay was allus in advance. Sam got us goin' an' comin', fer ef de clothes we brung back was good, he bought 'em back from us agin an' sold 'em oncet agin. I used ter wonder what he done wid all his money.

One day I started out from "De Star Ef Hope" wid anudder feller what we called Shirtless Sam, an' we didn't git very far afore we seen a plumber comin' out ef a

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saloon, wid a bag ef tools, drunk ez a bottle ef rum.

“ Seein’ plumbin’ tools an’ lead pipes,” I says ter Sam, “ makes me feel kinder ter home. I used ter be in de plumbin’ line fer a short time mehself.”

An’ thinkin’ maybe I could git de tools away from de plumber, him not bein’ in de condition ter use ’em anyways, I starts ter speak ter him an’ he axes us ter come in an’ have a drink, which we done. An’ he takes out a paper wid a name an’ a address on an’ he says, “ I got ter go ter dis house an’ fix a leakin’ water pipe, but I ain’t a-goin’ ter fix no water ter day, not meh!”

So I takes de paper way from him when he puts it back in his pocket, an’ Sam he grabs de bag ef tools an’ runs an’ I ater him.

When we got inter de alley, Shirtless Sam says ter meh: “ We kin take dese tools ter Sam de Scribe an’ sell ’em.”

“ Ater fixin’ de pipes fer de lady,” I says,

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fer de thought ef lead pipes kind ef made meh homesick, an' I was timpted agin.

“But yer ain't no plumber,” says Shirtless Sam.

“Yer jist come along an' watch meh an' see,” I says.

So we went to de name an' de number, an' de gurl, which was a Swede, comes to de door an' axes us why we was so late, growlin' 'bout de water leakin' thru de house an' spoilin' de carpits.

“Don't yer worry none,” I says; “meh an' dis gent here 'll fix it quicker en yer kin wink yer eye.” An' den I tells her de boss said ez we was ter collict de bill in advance.

“De missus is out,” she says; “she jist had ter go downtown fer a bit, an' I don't know what ter do!”

“Well,” says I, “de missus bein' out” (which is what I wanted ter know), “yer kin fix de bill wid de boss aterwards!” An' she shows us inter de parler where de leak

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was, an' says it must come from de bathroom upstairs.

Sam an' meh shins up to de bathroom an' I says ter him, closin' de door tight, "Sam, dis is a cinch, de missus bein' out an' dis lead pipe bein' wuth a couple cents a inch easy!"

"What yer goin' ter do?" he says. "Cut de pipes out an' flood de house out? We'll be sint over sure!"

"I knows meh bizness, I guess," I answers. "Now you keep busy downstairs an' leave meh an' dese pipes alone fer a while." An' I goes downstairs in de basement fer ter find de place ter turn de water orff, but I couldn't find de place an' de Swede gurl didn't know where de water pipe was, an' bein' in a big hurry I says, "Well, we kin let it go jist ez well ez not."

When I come up to de bathroom agin I finds Sam a-cuttin' a hole thru de floor big enuff ter put de bathtub in.

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“What are yer doin?” I yells.

“It’s de only way fer ter find de leak!” he says.

“Yer kin leave de plumbin’ part ter meh,” I says, “an’ go down in de parlor an’ look out fer de missus.”

“All right,” says he, grabbin’ a hammer an’ a saw an’ a chisel, “I’ll take dese ter make a bluff at bein’ busy.”

An’ while I was cuttin’ two wood plugs ter stuff in de ends ef de pipes what I intended ter cut out, I hears a terruble noise from de parler, an’ Sam he yells up, “Oh, Moll-buzzer, come down quick; de ceilin’ is cavin’ in, an’ I can’t find de leak!”

I kites down de stairs a skeert out ef meh wits, an’ sure enuff dere was a hole in de parler wall big enuff ter put de bathtub in, an’ de water was a-comin’ out like from a summer fountain; fer Sam must ’a’ cut a hole thru de pipe! An’ de Swede gurl was a-sittin’ on a chair, rockin’ herself up an’

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down, an' a-hidin' her head in her apron like she was goin' crazy.

“Who toled yer ter do dat!” I hollers. “Didn't I say ter leave de plumbin' ter meh? Does yer want de whole house ter come down?”

“Well, Mollbuzzer,” he whispers, “de Swede gurl was a-standin' around an' lookin' an' I had ter do somethin' fer a bluff!”

“Fer Heaven's sake don't touch it agin,” I says, an' I climbs up de ladder he had dere, an I puts meh head in de hole ter look aroun' an' all de time dere was a little river flowin' northwest by southeast thru de parler. It made meh turn pale, I kin tell yer.

“Dere ain't much time ter monkey, Sam,” I says, thinkin' about de nice lead waitin' upstairs. “Jist yer hand meh a couple ef dem rugs on de floor an' I'll stuff 'em in here ez best I kin.”

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An' when he grabbed de rugs de Swede gurl come ter herself, an' she lets out a most fierce yell, grabbin' Sam by de arm ter git de rugs from him. "Meh Heavens!" she screams, "what is youse goin' ter do! De house is ruined now! O Lord, what 'll I do? I wish missus was back, I do. It 'll take a week fer ter git dis parler back inter shape!"

"No it won't, neither," says Sam, pullin' de rugs away from her an' handin' 'em ter meh, "yer kin turn de hose on, light de stove, an' use de broom an' dry it out in less en no time!"

"Wimens makes meh nervous when I'm workin'," I says to de gurl. "Now yer jist run out ef here. I knows meh bizness when it comes ter plumbin', I guess."

"I ain't goin' out, neither; I'm goin' ter stay right here an' see what yer doin'," she says.

An' jist den de water breaks out like from

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a fire-engine hose an' dose rugs falls out on de floor an' I gets wet to de skin, an' de Swede gurl hollers like a ijiot.

“ Dere, yer see what yer done!” I yells, flyin' orff de ladder, “ count ef yer wimen's ways ef standin' 'round here. Go an' git a candle, fer dat pipe broke in anudder place, an' I must find it. Run fer yer life er de whole ceilin' 'ill be down on yer head in a minute!”

“ Sam,” I says when she was gone, “ we're in a lively fix. Dis job is wuth two years apiece now, an' it 'll be worth more every minute. Dere ain't nothin' ter do but ter saw orff de legs from dat gold chair an' stuff 'em in de pipe.”

“ Yer had better put de rugs back, Moll-buzzer,” he says, lightin' his pipe an' puttin' his feet on top de marbul table, like ez ef dere wasn't nothin' de matter.

“ I'm wet enough,” I says; “ you kin do it. It's yer fault, anyways!”

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“ No use ef both ef us gettin’ wet,” he says, sittin’ calm an’ smokin’ an’ leavin’ meh ter saw de legs ef de chair orff.

Den de Swede gurl, not findin’ de candle in de kitchen, goes up ter de bathroom fer it, an’ when she seed what we done up dere she screams like a whole insane ’sylum.

“ Shin upstairs, Foxy,” I says, “ an’ lock de gurl in de bathroom, fer I’m afreerd she’ll make trouble fer us! ”

An’ I climbed up on de ladder agin, feelin’ wet an’ mad, ter plug de pipe wid de chair legs an’ ter put de rugs an’ two soffee pillers in de hole. De leak stops den, but dat Swede gurl begins ter scream agin like fury an’ ter bang and pound de door ef de bathroom.

“ Sam,” I yells, goin’ inter de hall an’ callin’ up, “ de leak is stopped an’ de gurl is locked up, so I guess it’s a good time ter fly de coop! ”

“ But de pipes an’ de plumbin’ tools is

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locked up wid de gurl, an' where is we goin' ter be ahead?" he axes.

"We'll have ter go, anyways," I says; "it's gettin' dangerous. Maybe we kin take a couple ef coats ter make up fer our loss ef time an' trouble!"

"I tell yer what yer kin do, Mollbuzzer," he says; "cut a hole thru de parler wall an' we kin pull de tools thru de hole."

"I ain't a-goin' ter do no sich thing," I says.

"If you don't I will," he says, a-startin' down; "a few more feet ef hole ain't a-goin' ter make no differunce, an' dose tools is ourn, anyways. Why fer should we leave 'em here?"

An' afore I could stop Sam he climbs up de ladder agin, jerks de rugs out, an' begins ter hammer an' chisel thru de plaster an' de slats.

"Yer crazy," I yells, a-tryin' ter stop him.

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“ I ain’t, neither,” he answers; “ I kin put meh head thru already! ”

“ De Swede gurl ’ll ketch yer by de neck an’ choke yer ter death! ” I says.

An’ sure enuff, jist ez I said, de Swede gurl sticks her foot thru de hole which Sam made an’ gives him a kick what sent him tumblin’ orff de ladder. “ Oh, Mollbuzzer, I’m dead! ” he yells; “ I’m dead! ” An’ so he would ’a’ been ef I didn’t ketch him.

“ Dose Swede gurls is terribul,” he says, sittin’ down an’ feelin’ ef his head. “ I’m never goin’ in a house agin where a Swede gurl is! ”

“ Got enuff? ” I axes.

“ We kin cut down de whole wall,” he says; “ an’ let de Swede gurl an’ de tools an’ all come thru! ”

“ Dere’s de missus! ” I says, hearin’ de bell ring; “ I guess dere won’t be time! ”

“ I guess not,” he says; an’ we went out

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by de back door, meh freezin' ter death wid de cold an' de wet an' him cussin' all de time 'cause I didn't do as he wanted an' sell dose tools ter Sam de Scribe. I guess he was right.

IV

GETTIN' EVEN WID DE WORLD

In which I tells de secret ef how I missed gettin' rich, an' don't charge nothin' fer it.

I STAYED in "De Star Ef Hope" up till January de first, which was de day when Sam de Scribe come ter meh an' says, "Moll-buzzer, I got a scheme. I want ter be de J. Pierpont Morgan ef de beggar world. We kin make a trust ez easy ez not, an' I'll be prisident an' yer kin be secretary. Morgan's got everything else an' I guess he won't bother 'bout us none. Ef he does I kin squeeze him inter a corner. It might be a good idee," he says wid a wise wink, "ter take Morgan in, ef he behaves hisself."

"Quit yer jokin', Sam," I says, "what's up?"

"Well," says Sam, "de cops has got dis joint spotted pretty clost an' I think we better move out an' rint a place ef our own. I



“Sam de Scribe come ter meb an’
says: ‘Mollbuzzer, I got a scheme.’”

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knows a whole house near Fulton street what we kin rint fer twenty dollars a month. We kin take de best 'yeagers' in de town wid us, an' ef we work things proper we kin run all de rest ef 'em out, er make 'em work fer us!" I said ez I was willin', an' de next day Sam picked his men, which was about a dozen, an' we went over near ter Fulton street ter live. De house wasn't much ter brag about inside ner outside, an' all we put in it was ourselves an' heaps ef rags an' newspapers fer beds.

Most ef de dozen has made deir names so familiar in de newspapers an' de jails dat dey is famous widout wantin' ter be, which is hard when yer thinks ef de number ef peepul in dis world what is dyin' fer fame an' can't git it. De most useful in de lot, next ter meh an' Sam de Scribe, was a feller we called Doctor Dan. He knowed all about medicine an' surgery an' makin' bandidges, him havin' been a horse doctor er somethin'

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like it oncet. He showed us how ter dye our legs an' arms red wid acids an' make 'em look ez ef dey was burned in a fire er hurt in a exploshun, accordin' ez Sam's letters said. Fer a fact I seed him coax one ef de "yeagers" inter havin' his two long legs pulled out ef joint, fer de sake ef workin' de Amerikin peepul better. De beggar's name was Cripple Charlie, an' I kin tell yer he was most mad when he wanted his two legs put back inter shape an' Dan couldn't do it ez he promised. He swore he'd have Doctor Dan arristed fer practicin' widout a license, an' ef Sam hadn't smoothed it over de rascal would have done it.

Our earnings was mighty good, fer Sam said he wouldn't have no beggar in de place what couldn't bring in two dollars a day, an' he made 'em all work an' contribute der share to de treasury. Ef yer wants ter know what Sam done to de treasury yer'll have ter ask him, 'cause he never tole meh. Der was

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more en one row over it, but Sam could always arithmetic it out how every man would git his share in de end ef de season. We used ter "prowl," which is ter beg, all day an' most all night, fer we diwided ourselves inter shifts an' took turns. We spent our idle moments playin' a game called "Turn-over," which is played wid nine cards. It was Sam de Scribe's own invention, I guess, 'cause he had all our money long afore de rest ef us learned how. Maybe he used ten cards, but I watched him close an' I could never see. Since den I have learned better en ter play any man's game but meh own, an' ter be sure I understand meh own game.

De twelve ef us jist took what part ef de town we wanted, an' ef we caught any other beggar on our quarters, we jist made him join us er git out. Dey howled first, but dey soon found out it was cheaper ter come in, 'cause we follered 'em aroun' an' made sich trouble fer 'em dat dey got sick. Afore de winter

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was over we had twenty-five in de house, an' we was collectin' from ten ter twenty-five cents a week from ez many more. Den Sam de Scribe he got de swell head an' changed his name ter Samuel de Cadger King; which made trouble. I warned him, but he wouldn't listen, sayin' he was goin' ter be king er nothin'.

Sam invented a system ef signs which we used ter mark on de houses. De sign ef a cross dog was \times ; fer a cross dog an' a cross woman it was $*$; fer a kind lady it was \circ ; fer food an' clothes it was \oplus ; fer money it was \square . An' so we had signs fer most every-thing, which saved a heap ef time an' trouble. But Hungry Henry an' one er two more ef 'em got mad at Sam fer puttin' on airs an' playin' king, an' dey left de house an' went aroun' de town changin' our signs, an' I nearly lost meh leg by goin' inter a house marked wid de money sign an' findin' a lively bulldorg in de back yard.

V

DE THEFT EF DE PERSEAN CAT

Bein' de account ef why it ain't no more wrong ter steal animuls den ter steal anything else.

Now, talkin' about bulldorgs an' kind ladies an' beggars' signs reminds meh ef what happened ter meh wid a Persean cat. I was a-travelin' thru de alley one day when I seen de sign ef a kind lady on de back-yard door. Den I peeped over de fence an' I seen dat de back yard was full ef cats, dem cats bein' in a wire cage what had tracks fer 'em ter walk up an' down, jist like a elerwated railroad. I axes somebody what it means, an' he says:

“It's a old maid lady what keeps a catery er a cateract—dat is ter say, a home fer cats.” An' he pints out one cat, a big white feller wid a long fuzzy tail, an' he says dat dis one was a Persean cat an' wuth five hundred dollars!

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“What fer is he wuth dat much?” axes I. “Is it a’count ef his skin?”

“Oh, no,” laffs he, “it’s nice fer ter see an’ ter have aroun’ de house!”

“Kin he do tricks?” axes I.

“No,” grins he, “but some people fancies cats an’ some dorgs an’ some birds; old maid ladies preferrin’ cats ginerally.”

“Why fer?” axes I.

“Cats bein’ considered good luck,” explains he, “now dem Malteaser cats keeps de consumptshun away, an’ de Persean cats keeps orff rheumatism. A cat is full ef ’lectricity,” he says, “some cats havin’ one kind an’ some anuder.”

“Rich folkses is queer wid deir money,” says I.

“Not so funny when yer comes ter consider,” he says; “fer dem cats in de long run don’t cost no more en doctors. An’ ef yer has all kinds ef cats yer don’t need no doctors.”

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

An' I goes orff a-scratchin' meh head an' wonderin' how I could coax dat five-hundred dollar Persean cat inter meh pocket, when I runs up agin Hungry Henry. An' we considers fer a while an' den we puts all de coin what we could scrape up inter buyin' a big baskut wid a cover. An' we goes along de front ef de house where de old maid lady an' her cat lives. I notices a pile ef coal dere, an' I has an ideer, an' so I sends Henry wid de baskut aroun' de corner fer ter wait till I calls him. An' I rings de bell an' axes de gurl what comes to de door ef she wants de coal put in.

"I'll call missus," says she, "an see." An' den de old maid lady, what has long side curls an' glasses an' sharp eyes, an' is tall an' thin, comes down an' axes:

"How much a ton?"

"Jist give meh a bite ter eat, says I, "an' a hot cup ef coffee an' I'll put in de coal what's dere fer a dollar."

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“All right,” says she; an’ de girl takes meh inter de kitchun an’ trots out de grub, an’ while I was a-thinkin’ an a-watchin’ fer de Persean cat de missus comes down an’ says:

“Dere’s a board er two gone from de coal-bin in de back yard. Kin yer fix it?”

“I kin,” says I, “but I won’t.”

“Why fer not, I’d like ter know?” says she.

“It’s agin union laws,” I says, “fer de coal-heavers an’ coal-carriers ter do carpenter work.”

“Dear me! dose unions is gettin’ awful,” says she.

“I’m sorry,” I says, “yer bein’ so kind an’ a old maid lady asides, an’——”

“What has dat got ter do wid it?” says she, a-gettin’ red ez a hot coal.

“Nothin’ perticular,” I says, seein’ as I must have made a mistake an’ not knowin’ just where, “but it do seem no more en right

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

fer a singul lady ter pay only half ez much ez——”

“Jane,” says she to de gurl, cuttin’ meh short, “git a carpinter.”

“Hold on,” I says; “I knows a feller out ef a job what ’ll be glad fer ter put dem boards back fer a dime. I kin get him here in less en a minute.”

“All right,” says she; “hurry along.”

“No hurry, mum,” says I, “no hurry; he’ll be dere all day. An’ I meant no offenses, mum, when I says ez singul ladies an’ double ladies——”

“Hurry along,” snaps she.

An’ I runs out an’ brings Henry back. An’ de gurl leaves us in agin, an’ I says loud, so she kin hear:

“Got all de tools in de baskut, Mr. Henry?”

“Sure,” says he; “hammer an’ saw an’ all.”

An’ de old maid lady comes down an’

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says, "I like fer ter have de price fixed in advance."

So Henry an' meh starts fer de yard where de cats is, an' him, like a fool, goes right ter de cateract an' peeps thru de wires at 'em.

"Don't mind dem cats," scolds de old maid lady; "dey will take care ef demselves. What 'll yer charge ter fix dose boards?"

"Well, I'll tell yer," says he, lookin' at de bin, "I'll fix it, an' take a cat fer meh little gurl ter home."

"I guess not," says she, laffin'; "why, dat Persean cat alone is wuth more en a hundred coal bins."

"I tole yer so, Henry!" I yells, a'count ef him not bein' willin' ter believe meh when I tells him de price ef a Persean cat.

"Tole him what?" axes she, lookin' sharp at meh.

"Dat Persean cats, keepin' rheumatism

De Theft of de Persean Cat

away, is wuth more en a coal bin, an' him not willin' ter believe it."

An' she laffs agin an' says: "Oh, dear; youse is two funny men." An' she an' Henry agrees on de price ef two bits fer ter fix de coal bin; an' she says:

"De gurl 'ill pay yer when yer done, fer I must be a-goin' downtown."

"An' who'll pay meh?" axes I.

"I'll be back in time," says she, an' she goes an' leaves meh in de yard wid Henry.

An' Henry says ter meh: "You go an' git a barrul full ef coal in an' I'll look aroun'." An' when I comes back wid de coal he says:

"Dere's a big Newfoundlander dorg next door; yer kin hear him a-barkin' at dose cats."

"Well?" axes I.

"I'm a-goin' ter fiddle aroun' a while," says he, "an' knock a hole in de fence an' leave de dorg in."

"Why fer?" axes I.

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“Ter skeer dose cats,” says he.

“What good ’ill dat do?” I axes.

“Well,” says he, “I’ll knock de lock orff de cateract, open de door, an’ let dose cats out, an’ de gurl ’ill come an’ chase de cats an’ de dorg, an’ I grabs de Persean cat an’ puts him in de baskut. See?”

“I see,” says I.

So he goes ter de gurl an’ says he fergot his hammer an’ his saw, an’ she gets ’em from de house; an’ he comes back into de yard an’ says ter meh:

“Mollbuzzer, go an’ talk to de gurl while I saws out a hole in de fence an’ takes de lock orff de cateract.”

So I goes into de house an’ de gurl says, “What’s de matter now?”

“I broke a hole in de barrul,” I says, “an’ I’ll have ter have anudder one.”

“You’ll find one in de cellar, downstairs,” says she.

“I won’t go down in no cellar,” I says,

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“a’count ef ghostes which lives in cellars and downstairs places.”

An’ de gurl laffs an’ she goes down inter de cellar an’ I looks out ef de kitchun winder an’ seed Henry a-cuttin’ a hole fer de Newfoundlander dorg.

“Der ain’t time ter cut de whole fence down!” I yells; “dat dorg ain’t no elerphunt!”

“Mind yer own business,” says he, a-sawin’ an’ a-hammerin’ away, “an’ keep de gurl busy.”

An’ when de gurl comes back wid de barrul I says, “Dat barrul won’t do.”

“Why not?” she axes. “It’s de same ez de udder one was.”

“Dat shows all yer knows about barruls,” I says. “It looks de same, but it ain’t de same,” I says. “Ef yer ever carried coal yer’d know a barrul wid three hoops don’t hold ez much ez one wid two hoops, ’cause it don’t stretch so much.”

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“ I never heard de like,” says she. “ Yer kin take one hoop orff.”

“ All right,” I says; “ git meh a pair ef scissors.”

“ Scissors!” says she.

“ Yes, scissors,” I says, a-tryin’ ter gain time. “ I ain’t a-goin’ ter take de hoop orff de barrul wid meh teeth.”

“ Sunday an’ Monday!” yells she, a-peepin’ out ef de winder ef a suddint, “ what is dat carpinter a-doin’ ter de fence? An’ dat big Newfoundlander dorg next door! Missus said ter fix de coal bin, not ter tear de fence down!”

“ He’s gettin’ boards out ef de fence ter put in de bin,” I explains.

“ I’ll board him,” says she, a-takin’ a broom an’ runnin’ fer de door.

“ Hold on,” I says, a-standin’ in her way, “ yer wouldn’t hit a lonely carpinter man,” I says.

“ Let go!” she hollers.

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

“Oh, Mollbuzzer, come quick!” yells Henry in de yard. An’ I pushes her back an’ shuts de door an’ springs fer de yard jist when Henry throwed de door ef de cateract wide open, an’ de Newfoundlander dorg springs in de yard, a-barkin’ an’ a-howlin’ an’ a-makin’ fer de cateract. An’ dose cats meows an’ meows an’ spits fire ez ef all de rheumatisum an’ consumptshun in de world was let loose at ’em. An’ dey goes a-flyin’ an’ a-spinnin’ fer de top track in de cateract.

An’ Henry makes fer de back fence, de baskut on his arm, an’ his hands a-bleedin’ awful, so I knows de Persean cat was ourn.

But de Newfoundlander dorg loses his head an’ seein’ he couldn’t get one ef de cats he makes fer Henry, an’ he almost has him by de leg, but Henry has had more practice in fences, I reckon, den dorgs, fer he gives dat Newfoundlander de double quick wid

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his boot across de nose an' jumps inter de alley like a skeered rooster.

An' de gurl, a-screemin' an' a-yellin' more en de blame cats an' de Newfoundlander, slams de cateract door shut. I makes fer de fence, but de dorg shows his teeth an' looks bizness out ef his eye, an' dere I was atween de gurl an' de Newfoundlander.

"Dis is a outrage!" screams she. "I'm goin' ter get de law on you!"

"Get de law on!" I screams back, "but call de dorg orff. Ef yer does I kin git dat five-hundred-dollar Persean cat back, which I seen jump over de fence."

"O Lord! it's so!" she says; "missus 'ill be crazy. Sunday an' Monday! dat cat was de pride ef her heart, it was," an' she leans her head agin de cateract like ez ef she was a-goin' crazy, too.

"Call de dorg orff!" I yells agin; "dat five-hundred-dollar cat ain't a-goin' ter come back 'cause yer keeps yer eyes shut!"



“ An’ dose cats spits fire ez of all de
rheumatism an’ consumpsibun in de
world was let loose at ’em.”

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

'An' de Newfoundlander, seein' dat dose cats was come ter de ground floor ef de catteract agin, he makes fer 'em, an' I springs fer de fence, an' de dorg turns fer meh agin an' de gurl hits meh a whack wid de broom, a-hollerin':

“ I'll hoop yer! I'll barrul yer! I'll scissors yer!”

An' de Newfoundlander samples a yard ef meh pants, which I was erbliged ter leave wid him; an' I kites ater Henry.

An' I hears a meowin' an' a-barkin agin, an' I turns an' sees dose cats a-runnin' right an' left fer de fences an' everywhere, which frightens de life out ef meh, fer I didn't know de habits ef Malteasers an' Persean cats, an' I thought maybe dey was ater meh. So I runs as I never hopes ter run agin; an' none too quick, neither, fer peepul was a-comin' down dat alley like ter a fire, an' a cop er two wid 'em.

Henry an' meh figured it out an' we

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thought it would be better ter rent a room fer de night at de Star Ef Hope an' ter lay low instead ef goin' back home. We stayed dere a long time, too skeered fer ter speak, but in de night Henry he wakes up ter hisself an' he says:

“ Molbuzzer, now dat de five-hundred Per-sean cat is ourn, what will we do wid it? ”

“ Yer don't expict ter put it in a bank,” I answers, “ de same ez ef it was money? De fust thing ter do is ter read de papers in de mornin' an' look fer a riward! ”

“ But I'm gettin' nervous 'bout de whole blame bizness,” says he.

“ Well, den,” says I, “ maybe it 'ill be better ter go back home an' see Sam.”

“ Yes,” he says, “ an' Sam 'ill want de cat, tail an' all, fer readin' jist a line! ”

So we talked it up an' down, an' come to de point dat we t'ought it would be best ter go back home wid de blamed cat an' tell

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

Sam what happened an' take his advice. An' Sam was mighty mad at first an' called us traitors; but seein' it might be a good bizness fer us t'ree, he cooled orff an' says he would help all he could. An' sure enuff, we reads a piece in de paper de next mornin' sayin' fifty dollars reward an' no questions axed fer de return ef de cat ter de old maid lady.

"No questions 'ill be axed," I says; "dey'll jist grab us an' put us in jail, an' dat will be all! Who'll take de cat back?"

"I'll take de cat back jist ter akomerdate yer," says Sam.

"An' grab de riward ter akomerdate us, too," says Henry.

"Well," says Sam, "we'll diwide; yose fellers kin each keep ten an' meh thirty."

"That's jist plain robbery an' no diwision at all," I says.

"But I'm takin' de chances ef bein sent ter jail," says Sam.

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“All t’ree ef us ’ill go an’ share an’ share alike,” I says.

“Dat’s right enuff,” Henry says, “but I can’t see how yer kin diwide fifty dollars equal atween t’ree peepul!”

An’ jist den dat Persean cat gets out ef de baskut somehow, an’ afore we could grab him by his long fuzzy tail he runs thru a hole in de wall an’ is gone out ef our sight!

“Yer see what yer done by yer argufyin’ an’ yer disputin’,” swears Sam. “Now none ef us gets nothin’! Mollbuzzer,” he says, “kin climb on de roof an’ watch wid a stick so ez de cat can’t git away thru de chimbley, an’ you, Henry, kin watch de hole in de wall here.”

“Git some one wid de rheumatism,” I says, “ter coax de cat back.”

“Rheumatism, yer grandma,” says Sam, him not knowin’ ez much about Persean cats ez meh; “I’m goin’ ter see a horse doc-

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tor what I knows, Doc Dan not bein' ter home."

"What fer a horse doctor?" axes I.

"I knows what I'm about," says Sam, an' he goes away, an' Henry shins on top ef de roof, an' I watches de hole in de wall ef de room.

An' Sam comes back soon an' says, "It cost meh twinty cents fer catnip an' fried fish what de horse doctor told meh fer ter buy ter coax de cat back."

"Dat's more en I'd pay fer a meal fer mehself," says I.

"All right," says Sam, "but yer ain't wuth no five hundred an' fifty dollars, neither."

"It's strange," puts in Henry, "dat a cat should be wuth more en a man, ain't it? How does yer explain it, Sam?"

"Get de cat back an' I'll explain it aterwards," says Sam.

An' Sam he puts de catnip an' de fried

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fish near de hole, an' ater a while de cat puts his head out thru de wall an' he grabs it.

“Don't kill him,” I says.

“Yer kin hold him,” says he, a-hollerin' blue blazes, “ef yer knows so much!”

So we puts de cat back in de baskut, an' along night we goes ter de home ef de old maid lady an' de cateract.

“De cat comes back,” I says ter de gurl when she comes to de door.

“Ain't youse de biggest rasculs in de whole world?” she axes, gettin' red in de face.

“No questions axed,” I says, “accordin' to de riward.”

“Thank the Lord anyways dat it's back,” she says, “fer missus is sick in bed an' almost dead wid——”

“Wid de rheumatism?” I axes.

“You an' yer rheumatism,” says Sam, “don't talk so much.”



*“An’ Sam he puts de catnip an’ de
fried fish near de hole.”*

De Theft ef de Persean Cat

“Give meh Lady Grimalakins,” says de gurl.

“We didn’t bring no lady; we brung de cat back,” I says.

“Dat’s de name ef de cat,” says she ter me.

“Is Persean cats named de same ez peepul?” I axes.

“Keep still, you fool,” says Sam; “let de gurl get de coin.”

“Git de fifty,” I says to de gurl, “an’ Lady Persean is yourn fer life; an’ yer kin tell de old maid lady ter put in an extree five fer a new pair ef pants dat de Newfoundland dorg——”

An’ Sam he gives meh a punch in de ribs, an’ de gurl comes back wid de old maid lady, her glasses an’ her side curls an’ all, a-lookin’ whiter en de Persean cat. An’ she starts in ter say, what we knowed already, dat we was de greatest rasculs in de whole world, jist like ez ef we come ter steal de

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cat instead ef takin' it back, which is jist like wimmens.

An' Henry says ter her, "Lady Grimalakins——"

"Dat ain't her name, but de Persean cat's," I says ter him, pokin' his head.

"Well, den, mam," he says, "we didn't come ter learn yer 'pinion on polertics, but fer ter get de riward."

"I ain't sure it's de Persean cat yit," says she; "I'll take de baskut inside an' ef it's Lady Grimalakins I'll send de fifty out."

"No yer don't," says Sam.

"I'll cut a big hole in de baskut, mam," says I, takin' out meh knife, "an' yer kin look in."

"Fer de love ef Heaven," says she, "put dat awful knife away; you'll kill dat cat yit, yose will!"

"Yer bring a candul," says Sam, "an' we'll open de kivver ef de baskut an' yer kin peep in!"

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“An’ it won’t cost yer nothin’ extree,” pipes I, “fer takin’ a peep,” fer sayin’ which Sam kicks meh shin.

So dey gits a candul an’ seen it was de Persean cat an’ all, an’ dey gives us de fifty; which makes men think more ef cats den ef dorgs.

An’ we was gone a bit when Sam he turns an’ he says, “Youse might tackle dat Newfoundlander dorg next an’——”

“I guess not,” says meh an’ Hungry Henry ter oncet.

VI

IN WHICH LIFE IS LIFE

Tellin' why de older we gits de more trouble we leaves behint us an' de more worry we puts in front ef us.

WELL, ter git back ef mehself a piece, when Sam heard from meh how dose traitors an' rebels had changed de signs on all de houses so's it weren't safe to go nowheres, he only grinned, an' went on walkin' thru de town wid his nose in de air orderin' dis "yeager" an' dat "yeager" orff de streets de same ez ef he was de mayor, de whole council, an' de fire department. I warned him agin, but swelled heads ain't got no room fer words ef savin' grace.

De next thing dose traitors done was ter go aroun' an' put deir marks on every house in de whole town. Again I tole Sam an' oncet agin he grinned an' said, "I'm goin' ter stay king er nothin'!"

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“ You’ll be jist plain nothin’, den, Sam’,”
I says.

“ Leave de king bizness ter meh,” he says, “ dose fellers is goin’ ter git hurt, Mollbuzzer!”

An’ sure enuff de newspapers begins ter print pieces on how de whole town was marked up wid beggar signs, an’ how de perlice was neglectin’ deir duty, an’ how de mayor was no good, an’ how Chicago was de hobo paradise (which I never could see meh-self), an’ how it was time something was bein’ done.

An’ Sam he puffs up like a feather bed when he reads it, an’ he orders us ter stay orff de streets fer two weeks, sayin’ ez he would feed us out ef de treasury; an’ he did feed us, but I never come so near starvin’ in all meh life. An’ some ef ’em got mad an’ madder at Sam a count ef his fine airs he was givin’ hisself, an’ dey skipped out an’ jined de traitors.

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“Yer see what things is comin’ ter, Sam,” I says.

“Mollbuzzer, stick to yer king,” was all he says, “an’ you’ll never regrit it!”

An’ I kin tell yer I was mighty glad I stuck, fer ’bout two days ater dat de cops woke up an’ cleaned de streets ef “yeagers,” arrestin’ every one dey could find, an’ Hungry Henry an’ six er seven more ef ’em was booked ter spend deir winter in de bridewell.

Some ef ’em got mad an’ squealed ter de police about our beggar house, but Sam was too smart ter go an’ get caught ez easy ez dat, fer when de cops come all dey found was de newspapers on de floors. We had moved over ter Jefferson street.

A new “yeager” comes in one day what was dressed swell, dat bein’ his game, an’ what could speak an’ write like a real gent. Also he had fine manners. When a cove would hand him a dime on de street he

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would allus say, "My dear sir, aren't you too extravagant," er, "My expectations have been more than realized by your generosity," which sounded kind ef sarkastick, but which seemed ter keep de coves good-natured, so ef he happened ter touch de same cove twict de same day de cove didn't seem ter mind it. He called hissself Gentleman George, which made Sam jealous, ez I could see, Sam growlin' ter hissself dat dere was only one gent in de place, an' dat was him.

"Kings don't want no gents 'round 'em," he says.

I seed more trouble agin, an' I warned Sam agin, but it wasn't no use, fer he said he had read all de histree books in de library an' he knowed how a king ought ter do. Well, I'm gettin' ahead ef mehsself, which shows what a long ways I got ter go an' how much dere is ter write down.

Sam an' Gentleman George an' Doctor Dan puts deir heads tergither one day, an'

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dey fixes it up atween deirselves ter have George fall orff de cars an' sue de company fer damages, Doc Dan agreein' ter do all de damage ater George fell, George de suin', an' King Samuel de collectin', I guess.

I heard what was in de wind an' I said ter Sam I'd squeal ter de cops ef he didn't take meh in. Sam got most awful mad an' he swore ef us hobos bothered him so much he'd give up de king job. "See here, Mollbuzzer," he says, "what has yer got ter do wid it? yer ain't a-goin' ter get hurt like George, er twist bones like Dan, er serply de brains like meh."

"That's right, King Samuel," I says, sarkastick, "but I kin be witness fer de railroad!"

"Ef yer wasn't an ole friend ef mine an' hadn't been a faithful subjiect so long, Mollbuzzer," he says, "I'd run yer out ef meh domains; but seein' ez yer is, yer kin come in de scheme an' git one quarter ef

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meh third!" It seemed mighty little; but even a quarter ef a third is better en nothin', providin' de quarter is big enuff.

Sure enuff Sam and George goes out one night on de cable cars an' Sam tells de conductor ter stop, but George jumps orff ahead ef time an' Sam was so feared he wouldn't git hurt dat he gives him a sly shove an' a hard kick; an' George falls down on de street an' rolls a summersalt an' yells like a Injin.

Den de car stops an' everybody jumps orff to see what de trouble was. An' George he stands up an' den he falls down agin, swearin' somethin' is broke, but he didn't know what particular part giv way. An' de conductor takes de names an' de addresses ef de peepul what seen de accident. Someone wants ter call de perlice an' de doctor an' de patrol wagon, an' den George gits up an' he says he feels much better, an' Sam says he'll git a cab an' take his friend

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home; he was more skeered en hurt any-ways, he guessed. Den de car goes on.

Dat night Doctor Dan wants ter pull George's leg out ef joint, but Cripple Charlie kep' yellin', "Don't yer let him do it, George. Look at meh. Yer kin never git it back inter shape agin;" which made Sam so mad dat he chased Charlie out ef de house an' tole him ter git out ef town er he would send him where Hungry Henry an' de other traitors was. I tole Sam he was a fool ter do it, an' he tole me ter keep still.

So all Doctor Dan could do was ter burn George's leg wid acids an' put some medicine on it, what he said would freeze all de feelin' out ef it, so ef yer stuck a pin in it de leg wouldn't hurt none; an' he tried a needle ter see, an' George he cussed most terribul an' hollered out dat he wasn't goin' ter make hissself inter no human pin-cushion even ef he could ride around de town in his

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own private cable car. But Sam coaxed him inter lettin' Dan put on more ef de freezin' medicine an' try another needle. George seemed ter git used ter it ater a bit an' not ter mind; but he thrung his cane at meh when I stuck him wid a long pin fer ter see fer mehself ef it was so. Den Doctor Dan ties George's leg wid bandidges.

In de mornin' a lawyer what chases street car accidents comes aroun' ter see George, an' Sam takes him inter a corner an' dey talks bizness, an' de lawyer goes upstairs wid Sam ter see George, an' he heard him holler an' yell, an' den he tells Sam dat dey got a clean case agin de company fer ten thousand dollars; which made me so excited thinkin' ef meh quarter ef a third dat I couldn't beg all day, an' I hung aroun' de house playin' "Turnover" wid George, an' beggin' him ter let me stick a pin in his leg, which he wouldn't do.

I think we stood ter diwide ten thousand

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dollars atween us, an' Sam was figurin' on buyin' new clothes made ter his order an' a diamond necktie pin ter show George who was de real' gent; but Cripple Charlie tipped de game orff ter de cops, an' about de time dat Sam was lookin' ter see de lawyer come 'round wid de ten thousand dollars in five an' ten cent pieces, a patrol wagon full ef cops drives up ter de door instead, an' we all runned fer our lives, an' t'ree got ketched, includin' George, who couldn't run, 'count ef his leg bein' tied so tight wid bandidges.

Sam says ter meh aterwards, " I told yer, Mollbuzzer, I would fix him fer callin' hisself Gentleman George. De bridewell 'ill do his manners good; he'll have time now ter study more ef 'em."

" I don't care what yer says agin George, Sam," I says, " but he had de finest manners ef any beggar I ever seed," which made Sam most awful mad at meh.

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Dat was de last word I heard from Sam fer almost a whole year; where he went I don't know, but he tole meh afore goin' dat he would be back some day ter take care ef Cripple Charlie, which he said cost him more en four thousand dollars.

Dat was de end ef Sam ez J. Pierpont Morgan fer dat winter. A beggar trust, ef I do say so fer Sam, is harder ter run en de steel trust any day, fer de cops don't bother Morgan none. Sam had J. Pierpont Morgan on de brain. Yer couldn't git it orff wid a monkey-wrench. He was allus screamin' around what he could do ef he had Morgan's money an' his chanctes. He used ter say ter meh, "Mollbuzzer, ef I gits de money from George's accident I'm goin' ter New York ter see Morgan!"

"Fer what, I'd like ter know?" I says ter him.

"Oh, jist fer nothin'," he says, lookin' de king, wid his nose in de air.

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Dat Cadger King bizness almost ruined Sam, an' I was glad ater all dat de cops put a end ter it, er he would a been a dead beggar, sure. He kin thank Cripple Charlie fer de cure. I ain't seen no trade yit, no matter how humble, dat a swelled head won't ruin. How about yer line, Mr. Anterpolergist?

VII.

DE WORLD TRIES TER GIT EVEN

.. Provin' dat every time de world turns 'round some must git on top an' some must fall under.

NOTHIN' happened perticuler wid meh dat summer, 'cept dat I almost got blowed inter pieces an' took a little trip inter de countree at de freight cars' expinse. "Yeagers" likes de countree in summer, 'cause most ef 'em has got de wanderin' foot anyways, an' cause yer kin ginerally pick up enuff ter eat ez yer goes along, an' 'cause it don't cost nothin' ter sleep in de woods. Oh, woods, beautiful woods, de only true friend ef de poor, de honist, an' de oprised!

Dere was a feller named Loony Louis what wint wid meh inter de countree dat summer, an' it was his perticular line ter make niter-glycerine, which is done by lettin' dynamite drip down thru alcohol an'

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glycerine. A bottle ef it kin blow a piece out ef de moon, ef yer kin git de stuff up dat high. Louis called de stuff "soup," an' it used ter skeer de life out ef meh ter see de way he'd go around keerless wid a bottle ef it in his hind pocket. Oncet it fell out an' I hollered, seein' mehself fly inter ninety-seven thousand little Mollbuzzers. Sam ketched him oncet makin' dat "soup" in de house an' he t'reatened ter fire Louis out, but Louis swore ef he tried ter throw him out he'd break de bottle on de floor an' put a end ter King Samuel an' his reign, an' Sam cooled down suddint an' give Louis a dollar fer de bottle, an' he poured it out in a hole in de ground.

Louis learned how ter make de "soup" from a gang ef "yeagers" dat used ter blow de doors orff country banks, an' it seemed dat it got on his mind same ez J. Pierpont Morgan got on Sam's. De funniest men in de world is dose whose heads 'ill only carry

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one idee at a time fer a whole year. An' Loony was allus sayin', "Mollbuzzer, wid dis little glass bottle I kin blow up de world; t'ink of it! Who would ever berlieve dat a plain lookin' hobo like meh could have sich power?" an' den he would let out a whoop! an' yell, "Up yer goes, Mollbuzzer!" an' reach fer his hind pocket, which skeered meh so dat I almost had heart's disease afore de summer was over.

We got inter a little town in Michigan one day, tired an' hungry an' hot, an' Louis says ter meh, "We needn't worry none, Mollbuzzer, 'cause I got dis little bottle, an' I kin git a million fer it!" which made meh mighty afreerd dat de heat had crept under his skull an' turned his mind.

Along eight o'clock, when de town was openin' up, Loony says ter meh, "I knows a easy mark here, Mollbuzzer; come ahead," an' meh not suspectin' nothin' went wid him. He goes inter a bank an' walks

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up to de cashier an' takes out dat bottle ef "soup" an' says:

"Dis is niter-glycerine in meh hand an' ef yer don't give meh a thousand dollars fer it quick I'm goin' ter crack it on de floor an' it's good-by bank an' you an' meh!"

I don't think dat cashier was more skeered en meh. I turned de color ef de "soup" in de bottle an' meh knees shook, an' I couldn't even call Loony a fool, so skeered I was. But dat cashier he keeps cool ez de glass ef de bottle, an' he smiles a green smile an' he says, "Meh friends, a thousand dollars is little enuff. I'll git it fer yer in less en a second," an' he ducks an' crawls out afore Loony knowed what happened, an' I says:

"Loony, I'm goin'. Dere's goin' ter be most terribul trouble."

"No, dere ain't, Mollbuzzer," he says; "yer jist wait right here till dat cashier comes back wid de thousand, er I'll break de bottle right now!" An' I had ter wait,

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makin' up meh mind dat dis was de last day dat Loony Louis an' meh travels tergither.

De cashier comes back in a second er two, but 'stead ef bringin' de thousand he brung de town marshal, an' Loony Louis an' meh seed his star an' I runned fer all I was wuth, an' Louis right at meh side, so skeered dat he fergot ter explode his bottle, fer which I was glad, I kin tell yer.

"Mollbuzzer," pants Louis, runnin' along Main street like a deer, "de marshal an' de cashier an' de whole blame town is at our heels; I guess it's all up wid us!"

"Keep away from meh wid dat blamed bottle, fer de love ef Mike, Louis," I yells. "Ef yer falls down both ef us is goin' up. Lay it on de ground soft." I was more skeered ef him den ef de marshal an' de others.

"I guess not," he answers; "I keep de little bottle until de end. Ef dey touches meh I flings it!"

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“Let’s split, Louis,” I says, watchin’ his pocket where de bottle was; “yer run one way an’ meh de other!”

“No, yer don’t,” he says, tearin’ along; “we sticks tergither!”

“Be careful an’ don’t fall on a stone,” I says, mighty nervous.

“Yer gettin’ considerate,” he growls.

An’ de road kep’ growin’ stonier an’ stonier, an’ oncet Louis stumbled an’ I raised a awful yell, but he got his balance agin, which made meh mighty happy fer a minute.

I managed ter dodge, slip inter de open fields orff de road an’ flip a fence, at which I’m quick, ef I do say so mehself; an’ Louis tries ter foller meh, swearin’ hard at meh fer tryin’ ter give him de slip; but I never turned ter see what happened, yellin’ hard, “Hold de bottle wid yer hand, Louis.”

Den der comes a bing an’ a bang an’ a roar an’ a noise like ef de world was a-comin’ ter an end. An’ Loony Louis went

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over de fence on both sides, part ef him one way an' part anuder. I don't think de marshal found a finger-nail when he got enuff courage ter come an' look. Louis didn't die; I can't say he was killed; he jist natcherally went inter pieces.

Maybe de marshal t'ought I carried a bottle ef dat "soup" too, fer he didn't seem so anxious ter git meh as he had been afore Louis got away from him by goin' up inter de air; anyways, he kind ef slowed down an' I got away. Dere was a awful noise in meh ears fer a whole week, an' I kin hear it now widout listenin'.

VIII

LIFE GITS LIVELY

In which yer kin see fer yerself dat human natcher in de countree is de same ez human natcher in de city; a hundred cents makin' one dollar everywheres.

WELL, Mr. Anterpolergist, it seems ter meh dat I have wrote most twenty-five dollars' wuth ef meh autobiographee already, an' I ain't anywheres near de grave yit. No man knows how much he's lived until he comes ter write it out, an' ef I knowed when I started I would have raised de price. S'posen' yer stops a-readin' here, wipes de tears out ef yer eyes, reaches down in yer blue-jeans, an' pays meh twelve dollars an' a half in advance? While yer thinkin' 'bout it I don't mind tellin' yer a bit ef a adventure in de countree what brung meh a foot nearer de grave. Here goes!

A word 'bout farmers fust. Farmers, like

Life Gits Lively

other peepul ginerally speakin', is mighty uncertain, an' a feller never kin tell what he's a-goin' ter git, fer jist ez likely ez not yer'll git a handful ef cold victuals er a mouthful ef bulldorg's teeth, an' it's a toss-up which, de odds allus bein' in favor ef bulldorgs. Yer see in de countree de wimens is left alone more, which makes de farmers afeered ef strangers an' hobos, 'specially ef strange hobos. It's allus best ter walk up ter a house kind ef slow an' ter leave de gate open, so ez yer kin run back quick. Good clothes is never agin a man eny, an' yer kin say all yer wants 'bout clothes not makin' de man, but I knows what rags does ter a bulldorg. Ef yer ever should decide ater readin' meh life, ter change from anterpolergist ter hobo, de best piece ef advice I kin give yer is ter start out wid yer best suit.

So I kin tell yer I was mighty happy de day I struck orff de main road, an' found a

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gent in swimmin' an' his clothes in a lonely pile on shore. I takes 'em out ef pity an' leaves meh own rags an' a note sayin':

Dese clothes has seen better days. So will yourn.

Yourn fer clothes,

MOLLBUZZER.

I looks so respectable, de clothes fittin' ez ef dey was jist waitin' dere fer meh, dat I goes ter de first farmhouse I sees an' tells how I missed meh train an' lost meh purse, an' axes ter be trusted fer a meal an' a bed.

“All right,” says de farmer; “yer looks strong.”

“I am strong,” answers I, “most de time, only now an' den on hot days I'm subjoined ter heart disease.”

“Nothin' like work fer heart trouble,” says he, pattin' his bulldorg on de back, “an' it's cool ter-day. Ever work on ter a farm?” he axes.

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“ Oh, yes,” I answers, like a fool.

“ What doin’? ” axes he.

“ Plowin’, milkin’ cows, an’ plantin’,” I says.

“ Take yer coat right orff,” says he, “ an’ yer kin start milkin’ meh cow.”

“ You’ve got meh ter home,” says I, a-puttin’ on a bold face; an’ he goes inter de house, leavin’ de bulldorg by meh side, an’ soon he comes out wid a tin pail.

“ Dat’s a nice clean pail,” I says; “ what’s it fer? ”

“ Fer de milk, ef course,” says he.

“ Sure, Mr. Farmer,” says I, “ only I prefers a barrul.”

“ Why fer a barrul? ” says he.

“ Take a barrul an’ a small hose,” I says, “ an’ it saves time when yer has a flock ef cows.”

“ Dere’s only one in de barn now,” he says, laffin’.

Dere was no way outen ef it, an’ I puts de

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pail down an' takes orff meh coat. An' de farmer goes away, leavin' de dorg an' meh alone, ez ef us was brothers not wantin' ter be seperated; an' it makes meh mad, 'cause I has no intenshuns ef stealin' his cow. I tries an' tries, an' jerks an' jerks, but de milk don't come. Dat cow has it in fer meh, I guess, er else en de dorg put bad luck on ter meh.

"Somethin's de matter," says I when de farmer comes back, "fer de cow won't give up. It's funny, but I has allus noticed dat brown cows would never give meh deir milk. Red cows an' meh was allus good friends."

De farmer laffs an' sits down on de stool, but de milk don't come.

"Moses an' Aaron!" says he, "but dis is strange. I can't make it out."

"Maybe de dorg put bad luck on ter him," I says.

"No," he laffs, "de cow must be dry."

"Sure," I says, "it bein' so hot ter day.

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Fill dat can wid beer an' it 'll fix him all right."

An' de farmer laffs so I t'ought he'd die; meh not seein' de joke, but knowin' as something was wrong.

"Well," says he, "s'posen' we leaves dis an' yer kin saw wood fer yer supper an' yer lodgin'."

I looks at de pile ef wood an' turns pale, an' I says, "Mr. Farmer, dat pile looks like six suppers an' a breakfast an' lodgin' ter match, so s'posen yer gives meh t'ree dollars down an'——"

"Yer a cool one," says he.

"Well," I says, "yer needn't ef yer don't like. But I'll bet yer de cow an' de dorg an' a supper an' lodgin' agin ten dollars dat I kin saw all ef de wood en thirty-four minutes by de clock."

"Impossible!" says he.

I takes orff meh coat an' vest an' throws 'em on de ground an' shouts, "Ef I ain't

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done in thirty-four minutes by de clock yer kin keep meh coat an' vest."

"How kin yer do it?" he axes. "Moses an' Aaron! it ain't possible!"

"I kin do it," I says, "by a continuerous flow of 'lectric fluid dat pours from meh right skyeratiker nerve inter de steel ef de saw an' forms a congloumerous cirkit wid de hypnertized wood."

"I never heard ef dat afore," says he; "it must be new."

"It is," I says. "I'm de inwentor." An' I rubs meh right arm, pickin' up de saw an' droppin' it lightin' quick.

"Meh Lord!" I screams, "I got a 'lectric shock."

He looks at meh an' t'inks an' scratches his head.

"Come," says I, "I'll bet the ten dollars agin de dorg an' de cow an' supper an' lodgin' fer ter-night an' breakfust in de mornin'."

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“ You put up the ten first,” says he.

“ I jist told yer, Mr. Farmer,” says I,
“ dat I lost meh purse.”

“ Den how kin yer pay meh eff yer loses?”
he axes.

“ I’ll work it out,” says I.

“ But what fer does yer want de cow an’
de dorg?” he axes, pullin’ his long white
whiskers an’ lookin’ serspicious, like farmers
allus is.

“ I kin ride home on de cow,” I says, “ an’
keep de dorg busy a-keepin’ de cow on de
jump. Er maybe I kin sell ’em both back
ter you.”

“ Go ahead,” says he, laffin’; “ I sees yer
workin’ a week fer meh.”

“ Will yer throw de house in, too?” I
axes.

“ Does yer want meh ter put de farm an’
de barn in too agin yer ten dollars’ work?”
axes he.

“ It might be a good idee,” says I.

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“Yer a cool one,” says he. “Go on an’ saw.”

Den I grabs de saw an’ I sawed wid all meh might an’ main fer five minutes, an’ I kin tell yer dat I makes de fur fly. When de farmer seen what I done in dose four minutes he quits his grinnin’ an’ looks skeered. I was glad on it, fer I couldn’t a-kep it up t’ree minutes longer. Den de blade ef de saw cracks agin a nail in de wood, an’ I stops an’ yells:

“Did yer see dat?”

“I did,” says he; “what was it?”

“It was de ’lectric fluid,” I says, “dat pours from meh right skyeratiker nerve inter de steel ef de saw an’ forms a congloumerous cirkit wid de hypnertized wood. It’s beginnin’ agin; I feels it comin’ on full force. Maybe yer’d better stand back a piece.”

“Hold on,” he says; “maybe us had better call de bet orff; ’cause come ter think on it



*“De ’lectric fluid dat pours from
meb right skyeraticker nerve.”*

THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MUSEUM OF
ART AND HISTORY
OF THE
CITY OF
NEW YORK

Life Gits Lively

I don't need no help aroun' here, an' yer ain't got de ten dollars, an' de cow might kill yer, an' de dorg wouldn't go away from here anyways!"

"Yer ought ter have told meh," I says, "afore I went to de pain an' de trouble ef workin' up de 'lectric fluid."

"Well," says he, "yer kin have yer supper an' breakfust an' lodgin' free."

"I am goin' ter law," I says, "fer de cow an' de dorg, 'cause I'd have won de bet. An' I'm goin' ter print a piece in de papers dat——"

"Moses an' Aaron!" shouts he, "keep it out ef de papers. "I'll give yer four dollars an' den yer kin ride home on de cars, 'stead ef on de cow, which is quicker an' safer."

"Good," says I, a-shakin' hands; "we'll call her square."

"Don't tell meh wife," he says, givin' meh de four.

"I won't," I says, takin' it an' goin' inter

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de house fer supper. An' I eats enough fer a week, not takin' no chances on breakfast.

"Does yer eat by de 'lectric fluid?" he whispers.

"Yes," says I, a-pilin' in; "it takes some time fer it ter git disconnected."

An' he don't say no more, only a-lookin' an' pullin' his long white beard. After supper he took meh inter de room where I was ter sleep, an' I was glad ter see dat it was on de ground floor an' handy in case ef trouble. I looks aroun', an' der bein' nothin' ter take but de bed I starts ter get ready fer meh snooze. Den I hears someone a-knockin' on de door, an' I sticks meh head outer de winder an' I hears someone say ter de farmer:

"I was in swimmin' ter-day an' a hobo comes along an' grabs meh clothes from de beach an'——"

Dat was all I wants ter hear, knowin' de end ef de same old story; so afore gettin'

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ready ter make meh leap fer life an' liburty
I writes in big letters on a brown piece ef
paper what I finds in de room an' pins to de
door dese lines ef po'try:

MR. FARMER:

*Just tell de cove yer saw meh, but
De cove he didn't seen me saw.*

Yourn,

MOLLBUZZER.

IX

A DARK LADY CROSSES MEH PATH

Bein' de story ef how I went inter de circus bizness an' why I give it up ter try an' earn a honest livin'.

HAVIN' good clothes, de next thing I done was ter foller de circus fer a time, 'cause de circus is a mighty good thing fer hobos an' children. In de fust place, it kind ef makes peepul good-natchered, an' in de second place, it takes de familiees away from home, which gives us a chanct ter take away from home what dey leaves dere, an' in de third place dere's usually somethin' doin' 'bout de circus itself; so figurin' it all up, a "yeager" kin do somethin' wuss den ter foller in a elerphunt's footprints. It's been my obserwation, Mr. Anterpolergist, dat dere's two sides ter everything in dis world, 'cept ter water, an' one side is yourn an' de other side is mine.

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

Ater joinin' de circus, de first foolish thing I done was ter pay a dime ter see de Honoluler Queen, which I was allus anxious ter see; but I allus got ketched slippin' under de tent ef de side-show an' licked most terribul. De pictshures showed de dusky queen dancin' on top ef waves ef real water, singin' an' actin' an' swallowin' swords, all ef which I was dyin' ter peep at, 'specially de sword swallowin'.

It hurt me must terribul when I got inside de tent ter find dat beautiful queen not accordin' ter de pictshures, but only a fat old nigger woman; an' when it come ter swallowin' a sword she only slipped a tin knife up her sleeve, which it don't need no queen ter do. It made meh mad ter be cheated out ef meh dime, an' I yelled out, "She ain't no queen, an' she didn't swaller no sword!" a'count ef yellin' which dey kicked meh outside ef de tent an' stamped on meh.

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Sich is de world; ef a beggar gits caught playin' a trick he gits wallerped most awful, but ef he ketches another feller playin' tricks de other feller wallerps him. It made meh mad agin de Honoluler Queen anyways, an' it made meh still madder agin de boss ef de side-show. What kind ef a game is dat ter promise de publick ter see a nigger swaller a tin knife fer a dime, an' den ter have 'em slip de knives up deir sleeves, niggers an' knives bein' so cheap, anyways?

De loss ef meh good dime rankled in meh bosom so I couldn't sleep, an' de next day I went aroun' an' axed de man fer it back agin; at which he only laffed, which made meh madder still. Wouldn't it you, dear reader? An' so when I seed de Honoluler Queen a-shakin' her spear outside de tent fer ter coax de poor harmless farmers inside ef it, I called her a name, an' she thrung dat spear at meh head an' it hit meh a awful whack, which I didn't think she could do,

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an' which made meh ter berlieve she was a real queen an' not a black nigger ater all.

It was dat same night dat I met four hobos near de circus tents, all ef which I knowed in de city, an' I was ez glad ter see 'em ez ef dey all had milk an' honey in deir pockets. Dey was Crutch McAllister, an' Foxy Basket (de one an' only, like de circus says), an' Squint-eye, an' One-armed Jake. Dey hardly knowed meh 'count ef de new clothes what I wore an' 'count ef de swelled head which de Honoluler Queen give meh wid her spear.

Dey took meh across de bridge, jist over de river from where de circus was playin', an' we went a piece in de woods where dey had a tent. I guess dey stole it from de gypsies, which was fair enuff, de gypsies havin' stole it from somebody else, maybe from de Injuns. Almost everything had ter be stoled oncet, I guess, fer ter start things goin'.

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It was Foxy's idee ter open a little circus ef our own, 'count ef us havin' de tent, an' he said we could push it along near de road what de farmers had ter take ter cross de bridge ter go over ter de circus in Williamstown.

It was meh ez said ter call our show De Five Jolly Beggars, er Real Life Among de Hobos, but Foxy says dat would be no good fer a circus, 'count ef de farmers all knowin' what beggars an' hobos was, an' peepul only go'n' ter a circus ter see what didn't grow ter home—like elerphunts er tigers, fer instunce.

“Now,” says Foxy, “ef yer could only ketch a lion er a elerphunt.”

“Bulldorgs is all de wild animals what ever I wants ter know,” says Squint-eye.

An' den Foxy says, “Ef yer can't ketch a wild animul we might ketch a wild man in de woods, an' a wild man is jist ez good fer a circus ez a wild animal.”

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“Dere ain’t no more wild men, Foxy,” I says. “I read it in de histree books in de public libraree.”

“Dat shows all de histree books knows,” says Foxy, “fer wild animuls allus draws ’em ’round, an’ de circus bein’ near dese woods, I’ll bet dere’s wild men hidin’ ’round.”

An’ sure enuff, while Foxy was a-sayin’ dis what should come along but a nigger tramp, a great big feller, lookin’ pretty wild an’ dodgin’ round like ez ef he was a Zuler. Foxy was mighty skeered an’ he says, “What did I tell yer, Mollbuzzer?” An’ de others was fer gittin’ up an’ runnin’, but I toled ’em quick it was only a nigger tramp what I knowed, havin’ runned agin him in de countree.

So I called de nigger tramp an’ I axed him ef he wouldn’t stop an’ have a bite ter eat an’ a drop ter drink, which he said he would. Sure dat didn’t look much like bein’ wild,

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an' I calls Foxy out ef de tent an' í says ter him :

“Foxy, dat would be de scheme, ter dress up dis nigger tramp an' coax him inter playin' de Honoluler King. De Honoluler Queen is drawin' immense in de side-show ef de circus, an' dere ain't nothin' she does de Honoluler King can't do in a hour.”

“It sounds mighty good, Mollbuzzer,” says Foxy, an' we goes back in de tent an' tells de others what our scheme was an' dey all was fer it in a minute. So we showed de coon our tent inside an' axed him ef he would like ter join our gang an' work along wid us, an' de coon said ez he would fust-rate, only he couldn't stay 'round dis part ef de countree fer long; an' when we axed him why dat was he wouldn't give us no reasons. I guessed he had runned out ef jail er stoled somethin' near where we was, which I toled Foxy.

“Dat's nothin' agin bein' a Honoluler

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King, Mollbuzzer," says Foxy; "a king what won't steal an' kill ain't born fer his job."

De next mornin' we got up early an' tied de big coon up wid ropes so he couldn't git loose, an' Crutch McAllister went ter town fer ter buy a pail ef red an' blue paint, an' also ter steal a rooster fer its feathers, which we wished ter stick in a ring 'round de nigger's head, 'count ef de Honoluler Queen havin' one.

We took orff dat poor coon's clothes fust an' we begun ter brush him wid de red paint like ez ef he was a wall ef a house. He was most awful mad when he waked up an' seen what we was a-doin' ter him. An' I toled him dere was no use ter git mad, 'cause we was a-goin' ter make him a Honoluler King fer his own good.

"I don't want ter be no king er nothin'," he says; "all I wants is fer yer ter untie meh ropes an' let meh git 'way from here."

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“You’ll be disguised, anyways,” I says, “which is ez good ez gettin’ away from here,” which seemed ter make him feel some better.

But he made a most awful roar about puttin’ de red paint on so thick, sayin’ it made his skin crack; an’ den we tries ter put de rooster feathers ’round his head, but dey won’t stay on; an’ Foxy Baskit says: “Dere ain’t much time fer ter lose; it ’ll be time fer de show ter commence soon; yer better jist stick dose feathers right in his head, it won’t hurt him none;” but dat coon hollered like mad when he seed meh take out meh knife fer ter make little holes ’round his head ter put de feathers in. He said he didn’t mind de holes much, but he was afeered dat de feathers might grow in an’ not come out. So we let dat go an’ tied ’em on wid a wire an’ some string. We fixed him up a skirt out ef pink tissher paper, an’ we made him a string ef shells ter wind ’round his neck, de

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shells havin' been stoled by Crutch from a fount'in in a front yard.

Dat coon was too pertickler fer a nigger altergither, anyways, an' when he seen meh cut orff his pants at de knees he swore he'd kill meh sure when de ropes was orff him, but I explained it was de fashun fer Honoluler Kings ter wear deir pants short, but it didn't make de coon feel none better until I toled him we cut 'em orff in sich a way dat he could sew 'em on agin easy.

What troubled us most was how ter make him a long pig-tail like de one which I seen on de head ef de Honoluler Queen, but Foxy said ater a while dat he knowed it was de style fer kings ter go baldheaded when queens wore deir hair long. "'Sides," says Foxy, "ef we shaved de coon's head ez bald ez a billiard ball de feathers 'll look better an' more kingy."

An' we took de razor out ef de coon's pocket an' Foxy shaved his head, only not

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havin' eny soap an' Foxy not bein' a barber by trade dat nigger set up sich a yell dat we was erbliged ter let one half ef his head go, which was still more odd an' kingy. Next we made de coon a spear out ef a stick an' a shield out ef a barrul-top, an' we toled him ef he yelled an' danced all de time an' played de king like he orter we'd give him three per cent. ef all dat was left over from de profits an' de expinses, 'sides a yaller shirt an' a plug hat, an' I don't know what else. We left Crutch an' Squint-eye an' One-armed Jake inside de tent ter stick a pin in de coon if he should git sleepy an' fergit ter dance lively, an' meh an' Foxy went outside an' hung up de sign, which read :

COUGH UP A DIME
AN' SEE DE HONOLULER KING,
BLACK WATKINS.
DE STRONGEST MAN IN DE WURLD!
DE LOUDEST SINGER!
DE WILDEST DANCER!
EATS SPEARS FER HIS DINNER.

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DE ONLY HONOLULER KING AWAY FROM HIS
HOME IN DE WHOLE WURLD.

Price one dime. Children one cent. De King will give each lady a handsome presint free—sewvenirs which he brung wid him from his own Honoluler land.

“What fer a presint kin King Watkins give de ladies, Foxy?” I axed him.

“A kiss,” says Foxy; “a handsome Honoluler kiss from his own kingy lips;” an’ Foxy begins ter yell ’round an’ hit de sign wid his stick, an’ Squint-eye an’ Crutch stirred de coon up inside, an’ de show commenced. It skeered meh cold ter see de way de dimes begins ter tumble in. An’ we was mad ’cause we didn’t build a bigger tent, an’ Squint-eye comin’ runnin’ out an’ yellin’ dat it might be a good idee ter pull de tent down an’ charge de peepul a dime fer steppin’ inside ef a rope, fer which Foxy called him a fool.

“An’ de coon seemed ter like bein’ a king

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ater he got used ter it, fer de peepul was all lookin' at him an' wonderin' at him, which is agreerbul ter coons somehow, de same ez ter white men. An' he made lots ef fun by wantin' ter kiss de ladies in earnest fer a presint ter hissself, dey not wantin' it at all, an' him wantin' it mighty bad, which is human natcher, too.

But late in de aternoon King Watkins got tired ef singin' an' dancin', him sayin' his legs an' lungs was givin' out an' wantin' ter take a nap; but we had ter keep de show up while de dimes was rollin' in, so Crutch stuck pins inter his kingy legs, an' de blame coon got mad, which he had no right ter do, an' he hit Crutch on de head wid de barrul-top, an' Crutch grabbed him an' got hissself all covered over wid red an' blue paint, an' de king's feathers comes orff an' de crowd laffs an' howls, an' anuder nigger what jist give a dime ter see de Honoluler King yells out:

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Dat ain’t no Honoluler King. He ain’t no more a king en meh. Dat’s Abraham Linkin Smith—jist a plain, every-day, no-account nigger what lived over here in Rock Haven an’ runned away from his wife an’ chil’ren last year.”

An’ when de Honoluler King heard dat he gave a most awful yell, an’ he turned white under his blue an’ red paint an’ his black skin, an’ he thrung his spear an’ his shield on de floor an’ tore orff his paper skirt an’ made a leap for the door, but I grabbed him wid Squint-eye an’ we thrung him down, an’ Crutch McAllister hit de udder nigger what made all de trouble an’ chased him out ef de tent.

“I’m a-goin’ ter tell his wife at Rock Haven ater I see de circus,” says de nigger. “She’ll Honoluler King Abraham Linkin Smith, she will. I’ll git even wid yose fellers fer hittin’ meh an’ cheatin’ meh out ef a dime.”

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An' when de Honoluler King heard dat nigger carry on 'bout tellin' his wife he jist laid down an' cried an' begged us ter let him go, sayin' his wife was a most terribul woman, an' dat she would kill every one ef us sure ez could be. But we was willin' ter take chancetes. An' King Watkins wouldn't act no more, spite ef de fact dat Crutch kep' a-shovin' de pins inter him; but when I seed dat argimints was no good I tried kind words on him an' I guv him two dimes an' half a plug ef chewin' terbacker, an' I told him I would watch out at de door fer his wife an' dat I would let him know in time, an' dat I wouldn't let no nigger woman inside de tent, which cheered him up more en de pins, an' he started de Honoluler King circus agin. I kin tell yer right here it was de best bizness ever five hobos struck at one time, fer long afore five o'clock we had twenty dollars an' de crowd still pilin' aroun' 'count ef de fun ef watchin'

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de Honoluler King tryin' ter kiss de wimens.

An' when things was goin' so nice Foxy was sayin' outside ter meh dat it would be a good investment ter buy a wagon ter haul de coon 'round from place ter place, so he couldn't run away, an' ter give performances; an' he was a-goin' on ter say we could save de money we made fer a time an' buy a tiger er a elerphunt, an' dat we could coax de coon an' de tiger ter sleepin' in de same wagon an' actin' tergither; an' den ater a little more while we could buy a clown an' a monkey er two an' so on an' so on until we had a whole circus; an' while he was givin' meh his dream ef bein' P. T. Barnum oncet agin, I looked up an' seen a big crowd runnin' double quick acrost de bridge.

"What's up, Foxy?" I axed, pointin' at de crowd.

"I don't know," says he; "maybe de tiger

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got out ef his cage. It would be a fine chanct ter swipe it an' put it in de tent wid our coon."

"Don't talk like a fool," I says, worried; "a tiger ain't no muskeeter what yer kin lead 'round wid a string! An' look at dat crowd! I never see sich a crowd in de coun-tree afore! An' see what dey're follerin'. It's de Honoluler Queen, her a-shakin' her spear an' dancin' de war dance. What 'll we do?"

"What 'll we do?" says Foxy. "Let 'em chase de Honoluler Queen till she gits tired er dey is tired. What's it ter us?"

"She's headed dis way," I says, "an' de circus man is tryin' ter throw a rope aroun' her head. Maybe she went mad."

"Maybe she grabbed de box ef coin at de door an' runned orff wid it," said Foxy.

"It ain't no box ef coin she's got in her hand," I says, "but a spear."

An' dat great big Honoluler Queen comes



“ De Honoluler Queen a-pouandini de
Honoluler King wiid ber spear.”

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

on toward our tent a-swingin' her spear, de circus man still tryin' ter ketch her 'round de neck wid a rope, an' de crowd behint her laughin' an' howlin' an' screamin', an' more peepul leavin' de circus concert an' chasin' de mob all de time.

"Foxy," I whispers, gettin' skeered, "I knows what's up now. De Honoluler Queen is jealous ef de Honoluler King, him not bein' genuine, an' she's comin' ter kill us."

"She certainly does look mad," says Foxy. "Mollbuzzer, yer kin watch de tent a bit an'——"

"No, Foxy," I says, "we dies er we thrives tergither."

"All right," says Foxy, "but we orter let dat poor nigger know she's comin', so's he kin run away afore he gits kilt fer bein' a king."

"No," I says, "we kin keep de Honoluler Queen outside, an' bizness 'll be better a'count ef de crowd."

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An' afore we knows what is up, er who, er what, er when, dat Honoluler Queen runs up wid her club fer our tent.

“Even de Honoluler Queen herself,” yells Foxy out loud an' quick ez kin be, “is payin' ten cents er one dime ter see de real an' only lively Watkins, King ef Honoluler.”

But she didn't pay no dime, I'm a-tellin' yer; she jist reached out an' grabbed Foxy by de ear an' throwed him on de ground, an' runned inside de tent ez ef she was de owner ef de Honoluler King an' all de rest. An' de circus man wid de rope wanted ter foller her, but I grabs him an' he yells:

“Let meh go! De Honoluler Queen is runnin' away an' she'll bust meh bizness. She's de only attractshun what I got.”

“One dime,” I says, “ter step in an' see de Honoluler King.” An' he forks over de same dime what I give him ter see de Honoluler Queen.

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

An' den meh an' Foxy hears dat Honoluler King a-yellin' louder en ef Crutch an' Squint-eye was a-makin' him inter a paper fer pins, an' we hears de Honoluler Queen a-screamin', "Yer lazy, good-fer-nothin' Abraham Linkin Smith, I got yer at last. I'm goin' ter show yer how ter lazy orff away from yer wife ter play king an' let meh play Honoluler Queen ter feed yer kids," an' I hears him a-beggin' her ter let him go, an' I raises meh voice an' yells:

"Ladies an' Gents, fer de oncet an' only time de Honoluler King an' Queen tergither under one tent! Price of admission twinty cents, er a dime fer each! Up an' be quick, fer it 'll only last fer a little while! De Honoluler King an' de Honoluler Queen in deir most touchin' act, De Happy Honoluler Fireside at Night!"

An' de crowd, bein' curious ter see what was up, comes along so quick wid deir twenty-cent pieces dat we didn't even have

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time ter make change, an' some ef 'em got in fer a dollar an' some ef 'em got in fer nothin'.

Den Squint-eye an' Crutch McAllister an' One-armed Jake comes runnin' out ef de tent fer help, Crutch yellin':

“ De Honoluler Queen is got de Honoluler King on de floor an' she'll club him ter death ez sure ez kin be. We can't do nothin'. Come quick.”

“ An' leave all dis good money here,” I says. “ Not meh. Let her club. Only I hope she ain't in no hurry.”

An' when de crowd heard what was up dey pushes an' shoves so dat dey knocks de tent down an' den der was de awfulest mix-up ever I seen, us tryin' ter fling out de peepul what hadn't paid ter see de King an' Queen, an' de peepul refusin' ter git out, an' de Honoluler Queen a-poundin' de Honoluler King wid her spear, an' de circus man a-tryin' ter jerk de Honoluler Queen back

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

ter her tent by de arm, an' de Honoluler King gettin' mad at him fer takin' liburties wid his wife an' Queen, which was worser, an' he hitted de circus man acrost de head, which made de Honoluler Queen proud ef her warrior husband, an' she says, "Dat's right, Abraham Linkin Smith, stand by yer wife an' she'll stand by yer." An' both ef 'em goes fer de circus man right an' left, ef which I was glad 'cause he was de feller what beated meh out ef de dime ter see de Honoluler Queen.

"Git someone ter raise up de tent an' charge a dollar," yells Foxy, dreadful excited. "Git 'er up!"

"It can't be done," yells Crutch McAllister.

"Dat rascal ef a circus man spiled our bizness," yells One-armed Jake, "him bein' jealous ef us an' sickin' de Honoluler Queen on de Honoluler King." An' Jake cracks de circus man one wid his good arm an' one

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wid his wood arm, an' de crowd pitches in ter pull 'em apart, an' I don't know what would 'a' happened only a crowd ef de circus peepul comes over de bridge ter help deir side out, fer it was gettin' most terribul. But Crutch an' Squint-eye dey keeps deir heads an' keeps goin' aroun' tryin' ter collect twenty cints from evirybody what was standin' where de tent ought ter 'a' been, fer which dey got kicked an' cuffed.

All I kin rimimber now is dat when someone got orff meh chest an' quit poundin' meh head I looked up an' seen de Honoluler King an' de Honoluler Queen a-goin' home arm in arm, de best friends in all de world, de same ez ef dey had niver been king er queen at all but jist plain husband an' wife all deir lives. Maybe she scolded him fer cuttin' orff his pants so short, which did look peculiar, but dat wasn't de poor coon's fault.

An' I hollers ter Foxy quick an' tells him

A Dark Lady Crosses Meh Path

what I seen, an' he says, "Ater 'em quick, Mollbuzzer. Ater 'em! We kin git both ef 'em ter travel aroun' wid us under one tent, an' we kin have de best show in de countree. De Honoluler Queen is better en a tiger er a elerphunt. 'Stead ef dancin' we kin let 'em fight. Ater 'em quick, Mollbuzzer."

An' I scoots ater 'em, Foxy jist a little bit ahint meh yellin', "Coax him, Mollbuzzer, coax him; promise him a red silk tent an' a yaller banjo, an' her a diamond bracelet an' a yaller handkerchief."

An' in meh excitemint I didn't notice dat Foxy kep care ter keep ahint an' coax meh ter coax dem, fer when I ketched de Honoluler King he jist grabs meh by de neck an' he says, "Dere's de man what cut meh pants orff ter de knees an' painted meh red an' cut holes inter meh head ter put feathers in!"

"Dat de man, is it!" yells de Honoluler Queen, a-lookin' at meh sharp, "dat's de same man what called meh names yisterday."

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“I got a diamond tent an’ a yaller diamond,” I started fer ter explain, but dey wouldn’t even wait ter hear what I had ter give ’em, but bein’ in a hurry he jist took all de coin what I had away from meh, sayin’ it was his’n anyway, an’ fat Mrs. Honoluler Smith kep’ whackin’ dat spear aroun’ meh ribs an’ back an’ askin’ meh ef I was ticklish, which I was.

De more I thinks ef de circus bizness, Mr. Anterpolergist, de more I thinks ef Mr. P. T. Barnum, fer how he could keep elerphunts an’ tigers an’ Honoluler Queens a-goin’ roun’ de same ring an’ not git hurt hissself is a mysteree ter meh. Maybe he wore Injee-rubber clothes an’ had a peculiar kind ef skin.

P.S.—Mr. Anterpolergist, a circus might be a good place fer yer ter study de science ef man. Yer could work yer way from eddicated pigs up.



*“ De same ez ef dey had niver been
King er Queen at all.”*

X

WIMENS PERSUE MEH ONCET AGIN

Tellin' how a interruptin' woman made meh ter believe dat all we knows 'bout wimens is dat dey is wimens.

I LEFT de countree sooner en usual dat year 'count ef meh hard luck wid de Honoluler Queen an' I steered back ter de city late in de fall 'stead ef early in de winter. Winter an' summer is sure ter come along jist when yer don't want 'em, de same ez de cops. It seems ter meh, too, which I wish yer could explain, dat cops an' winter jines hands jist fer ter bother hobos an' fer nothin' else.

I went over ter de Star Ef Hope ez soon ez de freight car brung meh ter town, but Sam de Scribe ner none ef meh old friends was in yet, an' I was lonesome an' hungry. De night was rainy an' dark an' cold, an' I didn't feel much like huntin' 'round fer

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work, but dere was no way out ef it, an' a hungry stomick don't ask advice ef yer feelings, anyways. I s'pose a stomick was give us ter keep us movin', same ez four legs was give ter a horse, eh? I walked over north a bit an' picked meh out a corner fer ter stand on an' watch fer pickings, but nothin' come along, not even a cove wid a dime, an' I was gettin' so tired dat I t'ought ef huntin' meh out a place ter sleep in a alley, when a big, fat lady marched up wid a satchul in her hand, a-puffin' an' a-blowin' like ez ef de satchul was fatter en her.

She gives meh a slip ef paper ter read which says, "Mr. P. G. Martin, 1009 Fernwood Place," an' she axes meh does I know where dat place is. I didn't know, never havin' heard ef it, but I says, "Sure, mum, I knows. Yer walks eight blocks east an' den yer turns two south, an' den——"

"Eight blocks," hollers she; "dey tole meh it was jist a step er two from here."

Wimens Pursue Meh Oncet Agin

“Ef dat’s so,” I says, “den take two steps an’ see ef yer kin see it. I ought ter know. ’cause meh father lived an’ died here, an’ meh grandfather has a street named ater him, an’ meh grandmother——”

“I don’t care ter know yer family his-tree,” interrupts she; “but where Fernwood Place is.”

“I jist was tellin’ yer,” I says; “yer walks eight blocks east an’——”

“I can’t carry dis big satchul dat far,” she interrupts agin, “an’——”

“Satchul,” I says, interruptin’ dis time mehself; “it looks more like a trunk.”

“I didn’t call fer no commints,” says she, “but fer de price yer would ax ter carry it fer meh ter Fernwood Place.”

“What’s in de satchul?” I axes.

“Dat’s none ef yer bizness,” she says, “an’ it don’t make no differunce, any-ways.

“I jist wanted ter know,” says I, “’cause

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ef it was glass an' it broke I'd be responsible ter de law."

"I niver heard ef sich a thing," says she, a-lookin' aroun' ter see ef she could find someone else, which she couldn't.

"Stranger here?" I axes.

"What else does yer want ter know?" axes she. An' she takes up de satchul an' turns east, like I told her, which might 'a' been right an' might 'a' been wrong, an' she puffs an' blows, an' den she hollers fer meh ter come along.

"How much will yer charge?" she axes agin.

"Has yer a pencil?" I axes.

"What fer a pencil?" axes she.

"I wants ter kalkerlate, mum," says I.

"Yer don't need no kalkerlation—it ain't no kontrakt," she snaps.

"Don't git angry, mum," I says perlately, her bein' a woman, "but ater eight o'clock we charges ten cents a mile."

Wimens Pursue Meh Oncet Agin

“An’ how many miles is it?”

“It’s t’ree miles goin’,” says I, “an’ four miles comin’ back, ’cause——”

“I niver heard de like,” interrupts she, “niver; yer don’t need ter take de satchul back, an’ de charge is terribul. I’ll get a cab; it’s cheaper.”

“I’ll call a cab, mum,” says I; “meh Cousin Mike——”

“I don’t want nothin’ ter do wid anybody in yer fam’ly,” she cries.

“Yer unreasonuble, mum,” says I; “is Mike ter blame ef——”

“Yer kin go,” she interrupts agin, her bein’ speshul on interruptions; “I wants no more ef yer an’ yer impudince.”

“It ain’t meh ez is impudint, mum,” says I, “it’s——”

“Ef yer don’t go I’ll call a perlice,” she interrupts meh agin.

“Let meh call a perlice fer yer, mum; meh Cousin Handy——”

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“Ought ter put his fam’ly in jail first,” interrupts dis terribul interrupter oncet more.

An’ I walks away cursin’ mehself fer bein’ so foolish an’ axin’ so much an’ losin sich an easy job, when she hollers out agin:

“Say, how much will yer take ter carry de satchul dere only?”

“Ten cents de whole ways,” I says, “an’ nothin’ fer comin’ back.”

“Yer changes yer charges mighty quick,” says she.

“Well,” says I, “wider ladies is half price.”

“I ain’t no wider lady,” she yells.

“But yer’s dressed in black,” I says.

“Dat’s meh own bizness,” she hollers; “I didn’t want yer fer ter marry meh, but ter carry de satchul.”

“Which is easier,” I says; “but wider ladies an ladies dressed in black—it’s all one—half price.”

Wimens Persue Meh Oncet Agin

“Take de satchul,” she says, “an’ march ahead; I’ll foller behint.”

“What fer behint?” axes I. “I ain’t pertickler; yer kin go ahead if yer likes. I won’t charge no more.”

“Hurry on,” says she; “yer talks more en ef it was a law-suit. An’ I’m late now, an’ ef de lady is out——”

“Ain’t yer de lady?” I axes.

“Hurry ’long,” says she.

So I hurries on fast ez I could fer a block, her a-blowin’ an’ a-puffin’ behint meh.

“Don’t go so quick,” she pants; “I can’t keep up wid yer.”

“Yer told meh ter hurry on,” I says.

“But not ter run,” says she.

So I walks on slower en a musketeer in winter, an’ her gettin’ madder en madder, but not darin’ ter say a word fer fear I’d run agin, but finally she pipes out:

“I wished I was thru wid yer, I do.”

“I wish yer was, mum,” says I, “fer it ’ll

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be past ten afore I gets home an' meh wife an' de chil'ren 'll worry. An' I'll have ter stop ter buy bread, an——”

“Yer fam'ly ain't nothin' ter meh,” says she. “Hurry on. But yer needn't run, an' yer needn't creep along like cold merlasses!”

“Merlasses!” I shouts. “Good, mum; I'm glad yer said it; I almost fergot dat meh wife wanted——”

“Go on!” she screams, “fer de love ef Heaven, go on. Yer kin write meh de histree ef yer family aterwards.”

“But I can't write, mum,” I says, startin' ahead, meedjum quick. An' I goes on a block er so, an' den I stops ter mop meh brow.

“What's wrong now?” axes she.

“It weighs like iron,” I says, “an' I'm goin' ter open it ter see what's inside ef it afore I goes on.”

“Don't yer dare!” she hollers. “I niver



“ ‘Don’t go so quick,’ she pants.”

Wimens Persue Meh Oncet Agin

heard de like ef yer in all meh life. I'll call fer a perlice."

"All right," I laffs; "I was only a-foolin'."

"Well, don't fool no more," she groans; "dis is bizness."

"Awful bizness, too," I says, "a-carryin' a iron satchul eight blocks fer ten cents an' nothin' goin' back."

"I'll give yer fifteen ef yer hurries," says she.

"I'll hurry," I says. An' I drops de satchul agin.

"What be yer droppin' it fer now?" she axes.

"Ter change hands," I answers.

"But yer kin be gentle," she says; "you'll smash everything an'——"

"But yer said dere was no glass in it," I says.

"How kin yer wife an' yer chil'ren live wid yer?" she says; "I don't——"

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“Well,” I says, “dey changes orff, my wife goin’ ter her sister’s some weeks an’ de chil’ren——”

“I ought ter have known better,” she groans, “en ter start yer on yer fam’ly his-tree agin. What a man you is!”

“Meh wife oncet tole meh Cousin Moses——” I says.

“I don’t care what yer wife told yer Cousin Moses,” she interrupts agin.

“Moses is de relig’us one ef de fam’ly,” I says; “it’s him prays an’——”

“Go on; fer de luv ef Heaven, go!” she screams, “er I’ll carry de satchul meh-self.”

So I trots on a piece, not wantin’ ter lose de job, an’ den I stops an’ laffs.

“At what is yer laffin’?” axes she, bein’ curious an’ a woman, which I knowed.

“At Moses,” I says, “a-prayin’ so hard he lost his voice, an’ now he hires meh fer ter sing ’salms an’ ter say prayers; but he

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lost his hearin' an' don't know a 'salm from a song, an'——”

“I wish ter Heaven we was dere,” she says.

“Summer in Christmus, an' winter in Fourth ef July!” I screams.

“What's wrong now?” she axes.

“We're here now,” I says, a-readin' de name Fernwood Place on de lamp-post, luck bein' wid meh fer oncet; “maybe ez Moses heared yer prayer, mum, an'——”

“Yer rascal!” she screams. “Yer didn't know where it was an' yer'd a lost meh, yer would.”

“I did know where it was, mum,” I insists, “only, as yer knows, de world keeps a-turnin' an' a-turnin', an' Fernwood Place is here now an' ter-morrow it 'll be where Chineese is, an' the next day it 'll be in——”

“Go 'long, yer rascal,” she says; an' she gives meh de fifteen cents.

“Don't I get anudder nickel?” I says.

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“What fer, I’d like ter know?” axes she.

“Fer savin’ car-fare,” I says.

“No cars runs here,” she says.

“Dey does,” I says, “but I fergot.”

“An’ yer has de impudince,” she hollers, “ter put meh to de trouble an’ worry ef walkin’ an’ den ter ax fer five cents asides?”

“But I saved yer ten,” I says, “an’ yer kin keep five ef it.”

“Yer villain! yer hoodlum! yer rascal!” shouts she, “go ’long, er I’ll call de per-lice.”

“Yer no lady at all,” I answers back, “callin’ meh all dose names, an’ cheatin’ meh outen ef meh five cents. An’ asides, yer interrupted meh five times when I was talkin’ ter yer, which——”

An’ she walks away, not answerin’ meh, knowin’ she was in de wrong an’ meh in de right; an’ I watches her goin’ inter P. G. Martin’s house, meh gettin’ madder an’ madder dat she called meh de names an’ cheated

Wimens Persue Meh Oncet Agin

meh outen ef de five cents. An' I waits a while an' den goes to de house an' rings de bell, an' I axes de man what comes to de door:

“Please kin I see meh sister, de fat lady what jist come in wid de satchul?”

An' de man looks at meh sharp, an' he says, “Come in,” an' he lets meh in de vestibool, an' he sings out:

“Jane, tell de new cook her brother is here ter see her.”

An' de lady whose satchul I carries shouts, “Dat's funny; de only brother what I got is in de English army.” An' when she comes down de stairs an' sees meh, she says:

“Yer villian, yer here agin?”

“Ashamed ter recognize yer relatives,” I says, “cause dey's poor.”

“Go 'long!” she screams; “I'll have de man call fer de patrol.”

“An' arrest yer brother?” I says.

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“I niver seen dat hoodlum afore ter-night,” says she, “when I——”

“Den yer jist give meh back dat quart bottle ef whisky what I put in yer satchul, fer a prisint, afore yer left home,” says I.

“It’s a lie,” hollers she, a-gettin’ red in de face; “I ain’t got no whisky. I never drinks.”

“Oh, no,” I says, “our poor old mother never cried her eyes out a’count ef——”

“Call de perlice!” she says.

“Open her satchul an’ see fer yerself, Mr. P. G. Martin,” I says.

“How did yer learn meh name?” axes he.

“She tole meh,” says I, “when she axed meh ter write her riferences.”

“It’s a villianermous lie!” howls she.

“I guess yer emptied dat bottle already,” says I; “yer needn’t mind gettin’ it.”

“I don’t want ter keep no cook in meh

Wimens Persue Meh Oncet Agin

house what has sich relatives," says de lady what Mr. P. G. Martin calls Jane.

"Yer pirfectly right, mum," I says. "Asides, as yer kin see fer yerself, she in-terrupts all de time."

"I don't need ter stay here," says de satchul lady; "dere's other places, plinty ef 'em what I kin go ter. But I wants dat rascal arrested. An' I wish yer'd call a perlice."

"I'll save yer de trouble," I says. "I'll call one mehself. Our cousins Handy an' Will is on dis beat."

"Yer kin go an' git yer satchul," says de lady Jane to de cook lady. "I won't have no cook wid two perlicemen cousins comin' here night an' day."

"It's a lie!" she howls, "a most villian-ermous lie!"

"Don't git excited," I says, "I'll carry yer satchul back. We kin take de cars dis time."

"Perlice!" yells she.

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“I’ll go fer Handy an’ Will,” I says; “Mr. P. G. Martin, I’ll be back in a minute.” An’ I starts away.

An’ dat was de last time what ever I seen dat fat interruptin’ lady an’ it’s de last time what I ever wants ter see her; but I’ll bet dat she wishes dat she didn’t cheat a poor man outen ef his hard-earned money.

Say, Mr. Anterpolergist, why don’t yer study de science ef wimens ’stead ef de science ef man? Git wimens down ter a science, write a book on her, an’ de peepul will stand on deir heads ter buy ’em. I’ll trade yer de little Hebrew book on Moses fer de fust copy.

XI

A TALE EF A PIGTAIL

Bein' de account ef how I went ter Chinee in one night an' how I come home de next mornin'; which is quick.

IT was de same night, Mr. Anterpolergist, ater I left de interruptin' lady dat I went up ter Sam Lung's Chinee restaurint fer a bowl ef chop-suey ter cheer up meh cold an' lonely heart. I goes dere often 'count ef it's bein' cheap, an' 'count ef de Chineses bein' interestin' 'count ef deir ways, an' cause de oder "yeagers" is dere often. An de fust feller I seen was meh old friend "Crutch" McAllister. He was ez glad ter see meh ez ef he never knowed meh afore, an' we was new friends fer de fust time, which, I guess, is de best kind ef friends, ater all.

An' Crutch an' meh sits down at de table an' orders a cup ef hot tea an' a bowl ef

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chop-suey, an' Crutch axes meh, "Mollbuzzer, why is it dat niggers is black, an' us white, an' Chinesees yaller?"

"A sailor tole meh, Crutch," says I, "dat in Afrikee de air is black, an' in Chinee, which is middle atween Afrikee an' here, de air is natcherally yaller."

"But why is deir speakin' so differunt en ourn?" axes Crutch. "A Chinee can't understand a white man ner us can't understand him."

An' I says, "Crutch, de sailor man tole meh dat we learns our langwidges from animuls, an' animuls bein' differunt in differunt places de langwidges is differunt. In Chinee de animuls is mostly pigs an' rats, which 'counts fer de squeaks in deir langwidge."

"But where did de animuls learn it in de fust place?" axes he.

"It comes natcherally ter animuls," I says.

"I guess it's so," says he, thinkin', "but

A Tale ef a Pigtail

why does Chinesees wear deir hair in pig-tails?"

"De sailor tole me, Crutch," says I, "dat in Chinee dere ain't no houses like here, an' dey all sleeps on de ground, an' in de night a terribul wind comes along an' dey ties demselves ter trees by deir pigtails so dey won't blow inter de sea, which in Chinee is close ter de land everywheres."

"A feller tole meh oncet, Mollbuzzer," he says, "dat ef yer sticks a pin er a horse-shoe nail inter a Chinee it don't hurt him none, 'count ef his skin bein' yaller, but ef yer pulls his pigtail it hurts him more den ef yer kills a white man, which is de reason Chinesees don't git deir hair cut, not bein' able ter stand de pain."

"I'd like ter try it an' see, Crutch," says I, "fer I don't berlieve it."

"Ner I don't berlieve what de sailor tole yer," says he, which made meh mad, him braggin' he guessed he knowed more about

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Chineses en meh, 'count ef his eatin' more chop-suey, an' so finerly we agrees ter ax a real Chinees an' find out which ef us was right.

Dere was a Chinees kid what worked in de restaurint what was half white an' half Chinees, his mother bein' Amerikin an' his father ownin' de restaurint afore he died. Crutch he calls de kid an' he gives him a cent an' axes which was right. De kid says us was both right, so I gives him a cent, too. Den I axes him why it was Chineses names has allus a lung in it, like Hop Lung an' Sam Lung, an' Charlie Lung; an' de Chinees kid says dat Lung is de Chinees fer Smith.

Den de kid goes orff an' tells de Chineses in de room what we says, 'cause dey laffs an' laffs an' squeaks, which makes meh an' Crutch mad, seein' ez a Chinees ain't got no right ter laugh at a white man, us bein' white an' dey bein' Chineses.

An' I says ter Crutch, " I'm goin' ter yank

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de pigtail ef de big feller sittin' on de end ef de table afore I goes out."

"Don't do it," says he; "dey'll kill us ter death ef yer does."

So I said ez I wouldn't 'count ef him bein' afeered, but all de time I sits dere meh fingers itches fer ter grab de Chinese's pigtail an' yank it ter hear an' see what he would do. An' all de while we sits dere more an' more Chinesees comes in de restau-rint until all de chairs was taken wid Chinesees. An' de pigtail ef de big feller sittin' on de end ef de table hangs down an' seems ter say ter meh, "Come an' yank meh, come an' yank meh"; like ez ef it spoke Chineese itself.

An' I says ter Crutch, "I got ter do it, Crutch; I got ter do it."

"Don't do no sich thing," he begs, a-turn-in' pale, an' he gits up ter leave de place, when he sees de big Chineese arguin' wid de kid an' callin' him names an' de kid call-

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in' him names back agin, like kids will, an' de big Chinee hits de kid a hit on de ear, an' de kid goes away a-cryin' an' a-sayin' something ter hisself.

An' Crutch he bends over an' says ter meh, "Maybe, Mollbuzzer, yer could git de kid ter pull de Chinese's pigtail fer ter git even."

"Maybe I could," says I; an' I calls de kid agin, an' I gives him a cent an' axes him what fer de big Chinee hit him.

"He's a uncle ef mine," says de kid, "an' he hits meh all de time jist fer nothin'. He hit meh ter-night 'cause bizness was bad an' he hitted meh last night 'cause bizness was good, I guess. An' I ain't a-goin' ter stand it no longer; I'm goin' ter run away."

"Dat's right," I says; "meh an' dis gent here 'll help yer ter git away."

"How kin yer do it?" axes dat kid, him bein' Chinee an' Amerikin an' bein' twict ez smart ez any other kid.

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“ I’ll throw yer out ef de winder,” I says, “ an’ dis gent ’ll stand on de street an’ ketch yer.”

“ Not much,” says de kid, an’ he goes away, de Chinee uncler a-callin’ him; but ater a while he comes back agin, an’ I says ter de kid, “ I’ll tell yer how yer kin git away from here easy. Yer pulls de big Chinese’s pigtail an’ meh an’ him——”

“ Not much, I don’t,” says de kid, turnin’ white.

“ I’ll do it, den,” I says, “ an’ yer kin run out ef de winder an’ climb down de fire-escape.”

“ Yer kin pull it first an’ den we’ll see aterwards,” says de kid.

So I goes ter de winder an’ flings it wide open an’ yells at de top ef meh lungs, an’ all de Chinesees ’cept de big feller, what was too fat an’ too lazy, runs to de winder ter see what is wrong, an’ I runs back an’ pulls dat fat Chinese’s pigtail wid all meh might

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an' meh main, an' he screamed out like a parrot in a fire.

“Who's right now, Crutch!” I yelled out, “who's right now!”

An' de other Chineses runs back from de winder ter see what went wrong wid de fat Chinee, an' de kid crawls along fer de fire-escape, an' Crutch yells out, “Go it, kid Chinee, go it; I got meh money on de Amerikin part ef yer!”

An' den Mr. Crutch he climbed down de fire-escape ater de kid like ez ef he wanted ter ketch him an' bring him back, an' de Chineses, which ain't fools even ef deir skin is yaller, seen what was up an' dey lightnings out ef de doors an' winders ater de kid.

An' I seen it was time fer meh ter be a-movin', too, but like a fool I stops ter give de fat feller's pigtail one more jerk an' he yells holy fire and Jerusalem, an' two Chineses runs back an' grabs meh, an' afore I

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knows what happened de whole room was filled wid Chinesees what come up from Chi-neetown on de run ter see what de trouble was, fer it kind ef seems dat ef one man has trouble de rest ef de world comes ter look at him ez ef he berlonged ter a circus. I seen all dose Chinesees an' I said meh prayers.

“What fer does yer pull his pigtail?” axes one Chinee dat speaks English.

“'Count ef him helpin' de kid ter git away,” I says.

An' de Chinee translated what I said ter de other Chinesees an' dey jabbers an' yells at de fat Chinee, an' he yells an' jabbers back agin till I seen dere was trouble atween 'em an' dat luck had put meh on de right track ez I learned aterwards; for de fat Chinee an' de others had a fuss in de Chinee restaurint bizness an' de fat feller said he was goin' ter take de kid away; fer why I don't know, ner never learned. An'

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what's de use ef learnin', anyways, ef yer don't care?

"I seen dat fat feller, Sam Lung," I says, "give meh pardner a half ef a dollar ter open de winder an' let de kid out."

An' dey jabbers some more an' de fat Chinee whines an' jabbers back agin, an' a dozen ef 'em grabs hold ef meh, an' I t'ought dey was a-goin' ter turn meh inter a bowl ef chop-suey when a cop come along—which was one ef de first times in meh life dat I was glad ter see a cop.

"What's all dis trouble about?" he axes.

"Only 'count ef a little Chinee kid," I says.

"I didn't ax you," he says.

"But dose Chinesees can't speak English," I says.

"Yer kin keep still," he says.

"Now, you, what's up?" he axes ef de Chinee what speaks English.

"Dis feller here," he says, "pulled Sam

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Lung's pigtail, an' his pardner runned orff wid our Chinee kid."

"Why fer did yer come in here an' pull dis Chinee gent's pigtail an' raise a disturb-ince, I'd like fer ter know?" axes de cop.

An' I didn't answer an' he axes meh agin.

"Yer tole meh ter keep still," I says.

"I'll keep yer still fer a month," he says, swingin' his club.

"Well," I says, "I pulled his pigtail fer two reasons, de first bein' 'count ef a dispute twixt meh pardner an' meh dat ef yer pulls a Chinese's pigtail he turns green, an' I wanted ter see how a green Chinee looks, an' de second reason bein' dat de fat Chinee give meh pardner a dollar fer ter open de winder an' ter let de kid run away."

"Does yer expict meh ter berlieve dat?" axes de cop.

"I'll pull his pigtail an' yer kin see fer yerself dat he turns green," I says, reachin' out fer de fat feller's hair, an' he yells an'

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squeaks, an' de cop gives meh a crack wid de club.

“ I don't want no more ef yer nonsense,” he says. “ Where did dat Chinee kid go? ”

“ Down de fire-escape,” I says.

“ An' where did he go ater dat? ” axes he.

“ You'll have ter ax de kid,” I says.

“ I'm goin' ter run yer in fer tryin' ter be too fresh,” says de cop, grabbin' meh.

“ I ain't tryin' ter be fresh,” I says, “ but I can't tell yer what I don't know.”

“ Where did yer pardner go? ” he axes.

“ He runned ater de Chinee kid ter bring him back here,” I says.

“ Don't tell meh none ef yer lies,” says de cop, rappin' meh wid de club. “ What fer did yer an' him kidnap de Chinee kid fer? ”

“ We didn't kidnap no Chinee kid,” I says. “ What fer would we do dat? ”

“ To git a riward,” he says.

“ Does Chineses give riwards de same ez

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white folks?" I axes, a-prayin' dat Crutch would have enuff sense ter think ef dat.

An' de cop raps meh agin wid de club an' says, "None ef yer blarney, now; tell meh where de kid an' yer pardner went?"

"Here dey is right now," I says, hearin' de Chineses yellin' an' squeakin' on de stairs, an' Crutch McAllister a-howlin' an' a-yowlin'. "I tole yer he runned away fer ter bring de kid back."

An' dose Chineses comes in de restaurint shovin' an' draggin' Crutch in, an' he looked most awful tired ef life, but he keeps up his nerve an' he yells out ter de fat Chinee:

"Sam Lung, set up de chop-suey an' de hot tea; I brung yer Chinee kid back."

An' de cop he laffs an' de Chineses dey grunts an' dey squeaks, an' sure enuff a big Chinee feller wid a long pigtail has de little Chinee kid by de arm; an' I feels sorry ter see de kid cryin' an' lookin' so white an' skeered, an' I knowed he would git it most

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awful from Mr. Sam Lung when us an' de cop was gone.

De cop grabs Crutch by de arm, lettin' meh go an' he says, "Yer de one what kid-napped de Chinee kid, eh?"

"Not meh," says Crutch, "I runned ater him ter bring him back. Ax de kid hisself ef yer don't berlieve meh."

"I'm goin' ter run yer in," says de cop, "fer——"

"I don't care fer what yer runs meh in," says Crutch, "only run meh out ef de way ef dese Chinesees, fer dey pinches most awful. I heard oncet ez Chinesees has finger-nails like——"

"I don't care what yer heard," says de cop; "keep still."

An' while de cop an' Crutch was a-havin' de argument about de finger-nails ef Chinesees, I leans down an' whispers ter de poor little Chinee kid fer which I feels sorry:

"Kid, de door is open; git ready fer ter

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run;" an' I up an' yanks de pigtail ef de Chinee what had de kid by de arm an' he yells an' lets de kid go, thinkin' ez it was him dat done de pullin', an' de kid he flies down de stairs like a yaller streak, an' I stands in de doorway so ez de Chinesees can't git by an' I yells, " Mr. Cop, see fer yerself ef a Chinee don't turn green when his pigtail is pulled."

An' de cop he laffs fust an' den he makes a grab fer meh aterwards, but de Chinesees blocks de way, pushin' an' shovin' atween him an' meh, a-tryin' ter git out ater de Chinee kid.

An' Crutch he seed his chanct an' he makes a break fer de dear old fire-escape oncet more, an' de cop runs fer him, an' I kited down de stairs ater de kid wid all dem Chinesees runnin' ater meh ez ef de Chinee wind what blows at night was a-carryin' 'em along. An' I didn't even stop ter blow meh nose; I'm a-tellin' yose I jist did plain

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runnin' an' nothin' more. An' de best Chinee runner was no more'n a foot behint meh, an' de other Chinesees only a foot behint him, an' so on down to de one what was de poorest runner in de lot. It must 'a' looked like a Chinee pigtail behint meh, but I didn't turn aroun' ter see.

An' de prize Chinee runner was a-gettin' so near meh I could feel his yaller breath on meh back, an' I was a-sayin' ter mehself, "Good-night an' good-by," when I seed a hall door ef a buildin' open, an' I ducked an' turned in lickety-split an' slammed de door an' turned de key, an' den I tore up de stairs to de first floor, an' dere was a winder open an' I jumped thru it on ter a shed berlow an' from dere on ter de ground. An' when I gits down inter de yard I'll be blowed ef I didn't see de little Chinee kid a-sittin' on a old broken chair an' smokin' a cigarette!

"How come yer here?" I hollered.

"Over de alley fence," he says.



*“An’ de best Chineer runner was
only a foot behint me.”*

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“An’ I come thru de winder,” I says.

“De fence is easier,” he says, puffin’ his cigarette.

“I didn’t have no time ter choose,” I says. “An’ yer must have a lot ef time ter spare sittin’ dere so easy an’ smokin’. Dem Chinesees ’ll be here in a minute.”

“Which way?” he axes, standin’ up an’ throwin’ de cigarette down. I picks it up an’ takes a smoke mehself an’ answers:

“Same way ez I come—thru de winder. Look! dere’s one ef ’em a-peekin’ now!”

An’ I lifted de kid on de fence an’ we jumps inter de alley, him runnin’ one way an’ meh anudder, an’ both ef us gettin’ away. Only poor Crutch he got nabbed by de cop an’ sent over fer a month. I feels sorry fer Crutch, but he had de right ter pull de fat Chinese’s pigtail like I toled him, an’ not ter dispute meh word ’bout de Chinesees an’ deir ways, meh havin’ read de his-tree books.

XII

DE CHINEE KIDAN' DE HAND-ORGAN

Which proves dat ef yer gits yer pay ter-day yer won't have ter sue fer it ter-morrow.

DE mornin' ater meh trouble along wid de Chinee kid I went over to de Star ef Hope agin, thinkin' ez maybe I could meet Sam de Scribe an' git his advice about de Chinee kid, an' sure enuf meh t'ought come true. Sam was glad ter see meh, fer he borrowed a dime in his kingy way, an' he shook meh by de hand an' called meh his old dear friend.

"I ain't a beggar no more, Mollbuzzer," he says ter meh ater a while. "I'm jist a plain substantial man ef bizness," an' he hands meh a card which reads:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| SAMUEL SAM SAMUELS, ESQ., | |
| <i>Streetmen's Supplies,</i> | |
| Room 15. | 1412 Canal Street. |

De Chinee Kid an' de Hand-Organ

"I'm dealin' in hand-organs, letter-writin', beggar signs, crutches, locations, addresses, pencils, sign-writin', shoe-strings, an' chewin'-gum," he says.

"Want a partner?" I axes.

"I do," he says; "how much money yer got?"

"A dollar an' fifteen cents," I says, countin'.

"Meh office boy is got dat much," says he.

"Den why didn't yer borrow de dime from him?" I axes.

"'Cause I didn't have de heart ter leave him wid only five cents," he says.

"Hm!" I purrs sarkastic, an' den I says, "Sam, I kin put a Chinee kid inter de bizness, too; which orter be wuth thousands ef dollars." An' I tells Sam de story ef de Chinee kid.

"None ef dat in meh bizness," says Sam; "dis kidnappin' may be honest enuf, but it's too blamed risky fer me; ef yer hap-

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pened ter git ketched it means hard work fer life!"

"I know," I says, "but dis kid is only half Chineese——"

"Which don't make no diffrence," he says; "an what kin yer do wid a Chineese kid anyways, Mollbuzzer?"

"I don't know exactly," I says, "but maybe de Chineese govermint would give us a perlitical job."

"Yer crazy," says Sam. "But maybe we kin put de kid ter good use ater all. I knows a Dago beggar here by de name ef Punchabelly what has a monkey an' a hand-organ which he is anxious ter sell, 'count ef him goin' inter de saloon bizness, and p'raps we kin make a trade wid him."

"But I don't want dat kid licked er hurt," I says, "fer he's de smartest kid dat ever dere was."

"He kin run away ef he likes," says Sam, "ater we gits de monkey an' de organ."

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“Come ter t'ink ef it,” I says, “we might sell de kid ter J. Pierpont Morgan!”

“Shut up,” says Sam. “Mr. J. P. Morgan has somethin' else on his head 'sides Chinee kids.”

“I know,” I says; “but J. P. Morgan wantin' ter build a railroad in Chinee, he might——”

“Yer don't know no more 'bout bizness,” says Sam, “den a Dago's hand-organ.”

Well, accordin' ter Sam's directions, I went an' got de kid where I left him, an' I brung him up ter Sam's place ef bizness, an' I finds de Dago Punchabelly an' de monkey an' de hand-organ a waitin'. An' de Dago showed us what de monkey could do in tricks, which went one ahead ef California Cox's dorg Mike, which yer might have seed on de street. He could dance on his hind legs, an' count money, an' turn sammersets. I guess he could shove queer, too.

An' Sam he tried ter put up de good pints

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ef de Chinee kid agin de good pints ef de monkey, fer ter show de Dago what a fine trade it was, which de Dago couldn't see, him wantin' cash down an' no kid fer his money.

So finerally Sam says, "I'll tell yer, Mr. Dago, yer kin rint us de monkey fer five dollars a week, an' we kin send him an' de Chinee kid an' Mollbuzzer out on de street wid de organ an' divide what we gits, fer it stands ter reason dat a Chinee kid an' a monkey, all in one, will pull in more coin den each ef us separately considered." Which de Dago said was right.

"But where do I come in?" I axes.

"Yer kin dress up like a Dago," says Sam, "an' carry de organ!"

"I guess not," I says; "I don't want ter be no Dago; I'm an Amerikin an' I'm proud ef it," which made de Dago mad, an' Sam mad, too.

"Y'er a fool, Mollbuzzer," says Sam.

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“Yer kin train de monkey ter draw de organ in a little wagon, an' de kid ter drive de monkey, an' all yer got ter do is ter turn de handle, which ain't no work,” an' Sam winks, so I knowed he had somethin' up his sleeve an' I didn't say no more.

Den Punchabelly signs de receipt fer de monkey an' de contract fer de rent, both ef which Sam writes out, an' he goes orff grinnin'.

“Somethin' is wrong, Sam,” I says; “dat Dago is too easy an' too quick wid his money.”

“Don't try ter learn meh my bizness,” says Sam. “I know he stole de monkey from two other Dagos, but yer stoled de Chinee kid. I know de law ef stolen goods, but what's de law ef it can't find de goods? I'm goin' ter put de Chinee kid an' de monkey in a big box an' freight 'em on ter a friend ef mine in New York, an'——”

“I ain't a-goin' in no box wid a monkey,”

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says de Chinee kid, which I didn't know was a listenin'.

“It 'ill be very nice an' warm,” says Sam.

“It's warm enuf outside,” says de kid, which was cute.

“Yer won't be axed anyways,” says Sam. “Ef yer don't behave yerself, I'll take yer back ter yer Chinee uncle,” which skeered de kid, an' he didn't say no more.

“Where do I come in on de deal?” I axed.

“Oh,” says Sam, “dat's you speakin', is it, Mollbuzzer? I t'ought maybe yer lost yer voice. Allus afreered someone might cheat yer, ain't yer? Well, yer needn't have no fears ef meh; I'm goin' ter New York mehself ater de kid an' de monkey gits dere an' I'll send yer de money regular.”

“But why don't yer take de kid wid yer on de train den, an' ship de monkey in a box?”

“Y'er a fool,” says Sam. “Serposing

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someone sees meh at de depot wid de kid an' I get pinched? An' it's cheaper an' it's safer ter send him by freight in a box."

An' I says all right, but I didn't like de idee all de same ef Sam an' de coin an' de monkey an' de kid bein' in New York an' meh all alone in Chicago.

Den Sam he goes out ter git de box an' he leaves meh an' de kid an' de monkey alone, an' I tole de kid not ter be afreered, fer I would git him out ef de box on de way ter de depot, er maybe afore den. An' I warned him not ter make no fuss, 'cause Sam was most terribul when he was crossed, an' he might tell his Chinee uncle an' git meh pinched fer kid-nappin' an' have meh stuck in jail. An' we waited fer Sam ter git back, amusin' ourselves by feedin' de monkey Sam's shoe-strings an' chewin'-gum.

In about a hour Sam he comes back wid a man carryin' a box ez big ez a coffin, an' Sam wants ter make de man take de price ef

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de box out in chewin'-gum an' shoe-strings, which he wouldn't do, an' which made Sam mad. "Peepul is all alike," he says, swearin' when de man was gone, "all ef 'em lookin' fer de best ef it, an' only carin' fer de money what dey kin cheat yer out ef. It makes meh sick. But it's a nice box anyways, Mollbuzzer; yer kin see it's got little holes fer de monkey an' de kid ter blow deir breath thru, an' dere's one place fer de monkey an' anuder fer de kid, an' a place ter put in a loaf ef bread an' a bottle ef water an' two nails on de bottom ter stick candles in so de kid kin see when it's dark."

"I know," I says, "but de kid might roll on de nails ef de car bumps."

"He'll roll orff quick enuff," says Sam. "I knows what I'm about."

So he coaxes de kid ter git inside ef de box ter see ef he fits, an' he lifts de monkey in. De monkey fits nice an' tight, but de place fer de kid was a inch er two too short.

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“ I t'ought yer knowed yer bizness, Sam,”
I says.

“ Can't yer keep still,” says Sam. “ De kid kin pull one leg under him ; it's only fer a day er two.”

“ When are yer goin' ter put 'em in? ” I axes.

“ Right away,” he says, “ in time fer de next train.”

An' he gits de cover an' starts ter nail it on when de Chinee kid sets up a awful yell, an' Sam rips orff de cover ter see what was wrong. “ De monkey gits out ef his place an' scratched meh,” says de kid.

“ All dat fuss over a scratch,” grumbles Sam. “ Why don't yer scratch him back? Yer musn't make no noise er de railroad peepul 'ill put yer in jail.”

“ Ship de kid an' carry de monkey wid yer,” I says.

“ I don't travel aroun' wid no monkeys,” says Sam.

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“Gettin’ toney in yer old age,” I says.

“Don’t bother meh,” he says. “Jist git hold ef dat monkey an’ tie up his hind legs.”

“You ketch hold ef de monkey,” I says, “an’ I’ll tie up de hind legs.”

“You coward, you,” he yells, grabbin’ de monkey an’ lettin’ go in a hurry.

“Why didn’t yer scratch him back?” I axed.

“I ain’t got time ter bother ’round,” he says, tyin’ a rag on his hand.

An’ finerly we grabs de monkey all ter-gither, each takin’ one leg an’ meh takin’ two, an’ we got him so twisted up in rope dat dere was more rope en monkey. Den we tries ter git him back in his place in de box, but he wouldn’t fit ’count ef de rope. “Shove him in anyways,” says Sam; “he’ll fit ater a while;” an’ we jammed him in.

“Better git a cocoanut ter feed de monkey on,” I says.

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“He'll feed on what he gits,” says Sam; “he ain't in Texas where de cocoanuts grow.”

“Cocoanuts don't grow in Texas,” I says, “but in Chinee.”

“Shut up,” hollers Sam; “dis ain't no class in histree.”

Den he gits his hammer an' he nails de cover on tight, an' I axed him, “Serposin' a nail went inter de kid er de monkey?”

“Dey can tell us ef it did when dey gits ter New York,” he says; “dat's time enuf.”

Den Sam he takes his brush an' paints on de box in big letters: “Glass. Right side up. With care.”

“It ain't glass; it's Chinee,” I says fer a joke, but Sam he didn't see de joke, an' he tells meh ter mind meh own bizness, which I done; but he orter seen de joke anyways, eh?

Den Sam he says, “Mollbuzzer, yer kin stay here a bit. I got ter go an' see ter some

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bizness an' git a expressman ter haul de box ter de depot."

"De monkey could carry it over an' save de coin," I says.

"Y'er a fool," says Sam, goin' orff.

An' I locked de door when Sam was gone, an' I yanked de cover orff de box wid a hammer an' a chisel, an' I pulled de kid an' de monkey out, both ef 'em more dead en alive; so I shook de Chinee kid by de shoulders ter bring his blood ter his brain an' wake him up, an' I put de monkey in a pail ef cold water, which made him jump ter git out agin, so he was all right agin. Dere's nothin' like knowin' a bit ef medicine, fer yer never knows when it's comin' in handy. Boilin' hot water is still better, but dere was none handy, so I had ter take de cold, but it done ez well anyways.

An' I tied de rope ter de collar on de monkey's neck, an' I says ter de kid, "Take dat monkey an' run fer yer life ter de fisher-

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man's hut by de lake, where I toled yer, an' don't stop ter play none, er Sam er de Chineses 'ill git yer sure."

"I don't know," says de Chinee kid, "but it's nicer in de box; I'm tired ef runnin'."

"Dat's all de thanks I git," I says. "Ef yer don't so ez I say I'll learn yer de what ef de what."

So de kid an' de monkey runned out an' I put de door-weight an' a lot ef old iron in de box an' stuffed newspaper in, an' hammered de cover on agin. Den I lighted meh pipe an' waited fer Sam ter git back.

Sam come back soon wid de expressman, which he wanted ter take his pay wid a second-hand organ fer carryin' de box, but which de expressman wouldn't take, him sayin' de organ was no good ter him, an' Sam sayin' he was a fool not ter know a bargain. He had ter give de expressman a dollar, which he done wid de deepest an' de longest sigh ever I heard.

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“Somethin’ hurtin’ yer, Sam?” I axed.

“Somethin’ ’ill hurt you in a minute,” he says, “unless yer grab hold ef de box an’ help us carry it out ter de wagon.”

“Might roll it down de stairs,” I says.

“An’ yer ater it,” he says, bendin’ down an’ grabbin’ his end. A puzzled look come over his face, an’ he whispers ter meh, “Mollbuzzer, somethin’ is wrong; de box weighs too heavy, it seems ter meh.”

“Maybe de monkey an’ de kid swelled up,” I says real loud, so ez de expressman could hear.

“Yer foolish inside yer head,” yells Sam, turnin’ red wid madness.

An’ when we got inter de street an’ was a-shovin’ de box onter de wagon, Sam he turns white an’ he yells, “Where’s de letters gone?”

“Dere was no letters inside de box,” I says, “but only de mon——”

“I’ll hammer yer,” he says. “Who ever

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heard ef letters on de inside ef a box? I mean de letters I put on de outside—' Right side up. Han——' ”

It was meh turned pale dis time, fer I seed dat in meh hurry dat I nailed de cover back de wrong way.

“ Y'er been up teryer tricks,” hollers Sam.

“ Maybe de kid,” I says, “ knowin' Chinee magic, changed——”

“ I got enuf ef yer,” screams Sam, reachin' out fer meh collar-button, an' I dodged an' runned, fer I didn't like ter be seen fightin' on de street. Sam toled meh hisself aterwards dat he had a most terribul time tryin' ter git his good, round, beautiful dollar back from de expressman, which was a lesson he said ter allus git yer pay in advance an' never ter pay in advance yerself. Sich is de selfishness ef man.

I runned a whole block, doubled down a alley, an' den turned mehself around twict fer luck an' come out on de street agin. An'

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I was makin' fer de fisherman's hut, hopin' ter find de Chinee kid an' de monkey dere, when I seen a crowd on de corner an' I stopped ter see what was up. What was up was de Chinee kid pullin' on de rope an' de monkey up on his hind legs doin' a Dago highland fling. I pushed meh way thru de crowd an' jerked de kid by de ear.

“Didn't I tell yer ter run on ter de fisherman's hut an' not ter stop an' play 'round none?” I axes.

An' a big feller in de crowd hit meh a crack an' says, “What fer is yer troublin' dat kid? Why don't yer hit someone yer size?”

“You grow down a bit an' I will,” I says.

An' while I was a-arguin' wid de man an' tryin' ter git hold ef de Chinee kid, an' while he was tryin' ter git hold ef de monkey, which got away when I pulled his ear, a whole crowd of Dagos comes along, an' two

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ef 'em yells an' jabbers, " Dere's our monkey dat was stolen from us," an' dey tries ter grab de monkey away from de kid. An' I held one ef 'em back, de biggest, fer which I'm still sorry 'count ef de long scar over meh right eye, but de same feller what wanted ter hit meh fer hittin' de Chinee kid yells out:

" I ain't a-goin' ter stand by an' see a monkey taken away from a kid by a Dago; no, I ain't," fer which de other Dagos licked him, which served him right fer lickin' meh. Den' accordin' ter de rules ef luck, ter make bad things worsen, t'ree Chinesees comes along an' seein' de kid dey squeaks in Chineese an' tries ter grab him; an' de Dagos, t'inkin' de Chinesees wanted ter take deir monkey an' de Chinesees thinkin' de Dagos wanted ter take deir kid, dey goes fer each other mighty lively, but de Chinesees gits de worst ef it 'count ef deir pigtails bein' in de way; an' de monkey gits away an' climbs up

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a telergraph pole an' sits still on de top an' laffs.

An' de crowd hollers an' laffs ez ef it was a fire an' deir relatives' money was a-burn-in' up, an' a couple ef cops comes along, an' one ef 'em ketches de Chineses an' de other one ketches de Dagos, an' I ketches de Chinese kid, him tryin' ter pull de monkey orff de telergraph pole by de rope, which might 'a' broke his neck. Den Samuel S. Samuels, Esq., comes along wid de Dago Punchabelly from which we rinted de monkey an' de organ, an' Sam puffs out his chest an' puts his nose in de air like when he was king, an' he says:

“ Arrist 'em all, orficer, arrist every one ef 'em; dey stole meh monkey an' Chinese kid.”

An' when de two Dagos seen Sam's friend, Punchabelly, dey gits away from de cop ter pay deir humble respects ter him fer stealin' deir monkey, an' de Chineses grunts an' squeaks, t'inking de fuss was



V. K. ...

“ ‘How come yer here?’ I bollerred.”

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De Chinee Kid an' de Hand-Organ

over de kid. Sich a mix-up I never seen in all meh life. An' dose cops lets deir clubs fly like ez ef de two ef 'em was twenty, an' one ef 'em hit meh rudely on de head, de reason fer which is a puzzle ter meh even ter-day. An' de Dagos an' de Chineses an' meh an' Sam all starts ter explain at oncet, but de cops say dat dey don't speak all lang-widges, an' dey calls de patrol an' puts us all in de wagon. Sam got a extree whack fer bein' too perticuler an' objectin' ter sittin' next ter de Chineses. De monkey was de only one what seen de joke, fer it laffed all de way ter jail.

XIII

LAW AN' LIES

Showin' why a lie is a sin in court, ef de lawyer fer de other side knows his bizness.

IT must have been a kind ef a circus fer de jidge in de perlice court de next mornin' when de cops brung meh an' Sam an' de Chineses an' de kid an' de monkey an' de Dagos an' de two interpetators inter his presence. An' de fat Chinee uncle comes in ter look on. De interpetators, one ef which speaks Eytalian an' English an' de other speakin' Chinee an' English, was fer ter mix de poor jidge up an' fer nothin' else ez I could see.

De jidge calls one ef de Dagos on de stand fust, wantin' ter save de hardest part fer de last, I s'pose; an' dat Dago talks fer most a hour, shakin' his head an' throwin' his hands over his breast an' standin' up an' stampin' his foot, jist like a actor.

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“ He’s talked enuf now,” says de jidge ter de interpetator, “ most a hour. Tell him ter stop. An’ yer kin transerlate what he said.”

“ Please, yer honor,” says de interpetator, “ all he says was dat de monkey was hisn.”

“ Is dat all ! ” yells de jedge ; “ I s’pose de other Dagos will take a other hour ter say de monkey is deirs. I ain’t a-goin’ ter have no more ef dis ; it’s a contimpt ef court wastin’ meh time dis way. Dere’s too much monkey bizness ’bout it,” he says.

Den he calls Sam de Scribe on ter de stand an’ he axes him, “ Yer speaks English, don’t yer ? ”

“ Yer kin bet,” says Sam, “ like a native ef England. ’Sides I kin understand Eyetalian an’ Chinee, even ef I can’t speak neither ef ’em. Chinee ain’t so hard ter learn ef yer has lived in Chinee an’——”

“ Never mind ’bout dat,” says his honorables, “ go on ! ”

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“Please yer honor,” says Sam, “de Dago interpetator lied, fer de Dago said ez de monkey wasn’t hisn an’ he hoped ez dis court would be easy on him fer breakin’ de law an’ tryin’ ter steal de animul from meh friend Mr. Punchabelly.”

“It’s a lie,” yells out de Dago interpetator.

“I’ll fine yer twinty dollars’ wuth ef con-timpt ef court,” says de jedge ter de interpetator, “an’ we’ll have no more ef dis. I t’ought it didn’t take de Dago no hour ter say only dat de monkey wasn’t hisn. Now go on wid yer story,” he says ter Sam, “yer seems ter be de only intellegint gent here.”

“I’m here too, yer honor,” I yells, not wantin’ Sam ter git de swell head; an’ everybody laffs ’cept Sam, who was mad.

“Well,” says Sam, “I kin tell yer de whole story in a few words. Meh Eytalian friend Mr. Punchabelly——”

“Ponchielli! Meh name no Puncha-

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belly," yells out de Dago, him bein' ez per-ticuler ez a white man 'bout his name.

"Yer kin keep still," says his honorables. "Ponchielli er Punchabelly is all one to de law."

"Anyways," goes on Sam, "he buys de monkey from dose two other Dagos an' pays 'em fifty dollars ef good Yankee Doodle money, an' den dese other two Dagos goes orff an' fixes it atween 'em ter steal de monkey back an' ter git another fifty dollars fer sellin' 'em over oncet agin."

"How does yer know it," axes de jedge, "ef yer wasn't dere ter hear it?"

"I knows it," says Sam, "'cause dese two Dagos comes ter meh an' axes meh would I take ten dollars ter swear in court dat Punchabelly——"

"Ponchielli," yells de Dago.

"Shut up," yells de jedge.

"Well," continuoos Sam, "ter swear dat he stoled de monkey."

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I'd like ter see anybody in dis world beat Sam ez a witness fer hisself; I was mighty proud ter know him den an' I yells out: "Good fer yer, Sam! dat's de way ter tell 'em."

"Orficer," yells his honorables, poundin' on his desk, "keep dose rascals quiet."

"Now," axes de jidge ter Sam, "how comes it den dat yer claims de monkey an' de Chinee kid fer yer own?"

"'Cause," says Sam, "Mr. Punch—Mr. Puncha—well, Mr. Punch—he sold de monkey ter meh aterwards fer twinty dollars, him wantin' ter go in de saloon bizness an' quit de monkey bizness. Yer knows, yer honor, how dese fureigners is, dey gits de swell-head ater a while an'——"

"Never mind 'bout dat," says his honorables. "What I want ter know is what relation is de Chinee kid ter de monkey? What has dey got ter do wid each other in dis case?"

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“A whole lot,” says Sam, clearin’ his throat fer a real big one, “de Chinee kid is half Eytalian an’ half Chinee, an’ Mr. Punch—Punch bein’ fer short—Mr. Punch-abelly here is his father, an’ he wanted meh ter take de kid wid de monkey, ’count ef dem two bein’ so fond ef each other dat dey would die ef dey was seperated.”

“It sounds kind ef funny,” says de jidge.

“Don’t it tho’?” says Sam, mighty proud ef hisself.

An’ den Mr. Punchabelly, havin’ whispered ter de interpetator, yells out, “It ain’t so; I ain’t de father ef no Chinee kid, an’ I ain’t a-goin’ ter be.”

“What did I tell yer, yer honor?” says Sam quick, “dese fureigners all gits de swell head.”

Den de jidge raps his desk hard an’ says we was de worst lot ever he seen, an’ dat he was a-gettin’ so mixed up he didn’t know de Chinee kid from de monkey, er who was de

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father ef de kid er who was de father ef de monkey, an' I feels like tellin' him Sam was de father ef de monkey, but I didn't dare, more 'count ef de jedge den Sam.

Den his honorables calls meh onter de stand an' tells meh ter say all I knows 'bout de case an' say it quick.

“Please, yer honor,” I says, “what's de hurry 'bout?”

“I'm a-runnin' dis court,” says he, “an' ef I gits eny more ef yer impudence I'll sind yer ter de bridewell fer a year,” which remark made me ter be careful what I said.

“Now den,” says de jedge ter meh, “seein' yer claims de Chinee kid an' de monkey fer yer own, yer kin tell de court how yer come by 'em?”

“Let meh t'ink a minute,” I says, wantin' ter tell a bigger one en Sam.

“I'll send yer where yer kin do nothin' but t'ink fer a year,” says de jedge.

“I know now,” I says: “dis gent here,

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Mr. Sammy S. Samuels, Esq., brung de monkey an' de Chinee kid inter meh an' says, ' Mr. Mollbuzzer, ef yer put dis Chinee kid an' de monkey in a box an' freights 'em ter New York, I'll give 'em both ter yer when I reaches New York an' gets 'em fer mehself.' See? "

" See! I should say I don't see," says his honorables, a-holdin' ef his head.

" I didn't see either," I says, " so I took de kid an' de monkey out ef de box, when Mr. Sammy went out fer de express man, an' I puts some lumps ef iron in deir stead. An' I kin prove it by bringin' de box an' de express man here."

" Yer can't," yells Sam, " it's a lie !"

" Yer did too put meh in a box," yells de kid.

" Good fer yer, kid," I yells, " allus speak de truth."

" Silence!" hollers de jedge, " er I'll go crazy an' have de whole gang ef youse put in jail," which remark shows what justice is.

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Ef de jedge goes crazy he wants ter sind de prisoners ter jail. What kind ef a world is dis, eh?

“ I kin stand goin’ ter jail ef Sammy S. Samuels kin,” I says.

An’ de jedge seems terribul mad, lookin’ all ef fifty dollars’ wuth ef contimpt ef court, which skeered meh, an’ den he kind ef laffs ter hisself.

Den his honorables tells de kid ter tell what he knows, an’ de kid says ez I was his father an’ dat he berlongs ter meh an’ ter no one else, which makes de jedge feel ef his head agin, an’ de Chineses grunts an’ squeals, ’specially de old fat Chinee uncle; an’ den de Chinee interpetator yells out fer a hearin’, an’ de jedge yells out fer silence, an’ when it was still agin I pipes out:

“ Keep quiet all ef youse an’ don’t mix de jedge up,” fer sayin’ which de jedge scolds meh hard, which was all de thanks I got fer tryin’ ter help.

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Den his honorables axes a Chinee ter git on de stand, tellin' de Chinee interpetator ter warn him not ter take ten hours ef Chinee time fer an Amerikin minute. An' de Chinee goes onter de stand an' I leans over an' whispers ter de interpetator, "Tell him ter give us none ef his Chinee lies."

An' when de Chinee was thru de interpetator says dat de kid berlongs ter de Chinee restaurint company on Clark street, understandin' which de fat old uncle sets up a howl an' a squeak an' bergins ter cry an' de jedge axes what de matter was, an' den anuder Chinee what speaks English goes onter de stand an' says it was all a lie, claimin' dat de kid was kidnaped from his home on Clark street, an' dat I was de man what done it, an' dat his father bein' dead dat de kid was de lergitimate son ef his fat uncle an' not no son ef a restaurint; all ef which makes de poor old jedge hold his head tight wid both hands an' ax:

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“What has all dis got ter do wid de monkey?”

“Dat’s what I’d like ter know,” I says, but dere was so much noise in de room dat de judge didn’t hear meh, which maybe was lucky. Dere orter be more quiet in our Amerikin court-rooms, an’ not so free an’ easy, eh?

“I can’t make head ner tails out ef dis case,” says his honorables, “an’ de more ef youse I hears de more I gets mixed up in meh head. Dis is de most mixed up case dat was ever brung afore dis court; an’ de best thing I kin do, so far ez I kin see, is ter send de Chinee kid ter De Home Fer Orphuns, where he will be in good infloenze, an’ ter give de monkey ter de Linkin park manageree, where he will be proper fed an’ clothed. ‘An’ ef any ef youse riots on de street agin er has any more quarrels atween yersilves I’ll learn yer what fer, I will. Case dismissed. Next!” he yells, ez ef he was a barber an’

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not a jidge, which ain't digneefied, like it orter be.

An' I says good-by ter de Chinee kid an' gives him a cent by which ter rimember meh by, an' tells him not ter feel bad 'cause de orphun asylum ain't near so bad ez de jail, an' dat it wasn't no disgrace ter be sent dere ef yer didn't happen ter have a father an' a mother alive. An de kid axes meh ter coax de jidge ter let him take de monkey along fer companee, but I toled de kid de Orphun's Home wasn't fer animuls, but fer humans, an' I didn't dare ter ax de jidge fer nothin' else, havin' said plenty fer a little while.

An' when we was out in de street I says ter Sam, "We was lucky, wasn't we?"

"Lucky!" he says. "Mollbuzzer, I got de notion ter punch yer stupid head orff. I don't see where no luck comes in. We're out de kid an' de monkey. Ef yer had eny sense an' a-minded meh, de kid an' de

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monkey would be in New York ter-day, half yourn an' half mine. Now none ef us gits nothin'," he howls.

"Which is lucky anyways," I says, "'cause we might each 'a' got a couple ef years apiece."

XIV

I TAKES A TRY AT POLERTICS

In which I says, "Now, dear reader, fare-well; be good an' live happy ever aterwards."

WELL, Mr. Anterpolergist, yer kin foller meh on a piece an' git wise, an' de further yer follers meh de wiser will yer git. I'm goin' ter let yer inter de secret ef Amerikin polertics, an' yer kin learn more about 'em from what I'm a-writin' down here den out ef dat little Hebrew book 'bout Moses, which I wanted ter sell yer an' which yer wouldn't buy from meh.

I was only in polertics oncet fer a few weeks, an' it happened by accident, which, dey say, is de same way prisidents ef dis United States happens, an' maybe ef I kep on I might have been prisident. Who knows? However, I don't know ez ef I would take de job ef it was offered meh, 'cause ef I did Sam de Scribe would worry

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de life out ef meh ter be de secretary ef de treasury, an' yer knows very well den where I would come in—I would come in a empty vault. An' den I s'pose Foxy Basket would come aroun' an' bother de life out ef meh ter be Chief Justice ef de Supreme court, an' he wouldn't sleep until he had Sam in jail an' him ahead ef de govermint's safe, an' den, oncet more, where would I come in? I wouldn't git enuf fer a decent breakfast, an' how would de Amerikin peepul feel ef dey knowed deir president wasn't gettin' enuf ter eat, eh?

Well, but de White House ain't got nothin' ter do wid what I begun ter say, fer what I started out ter tell was dat I happened ter meet Mr. O'Brien on de street one day, an' he says ter meh:

“Mollbuzzer, kin yer git meh t'ree thousand hobos fer thirty days? I knows yer is de king ef de hobos an' what yer says goes wid de gang.”

I Takes a Try at Polertics

“What fer t’ree thousand hobos?” axes I.

“Fer votes,” says he. “I’m runnin’ agin Hogan fer alderman ef de ward, an’ I’m afeerd it’s goin’ ter be close.”

“Hobos is gettin’ scarce,” says I slow, a-thinkin’. “I ain’t seen many of ’em aroun’ dis spring. De perlice is drivin’ ’em out.”

“I kin fix de perlice,” he says, “ef yer kin fix de hobos. Yer see, Mollbuzzer, accordin’ ter de ’lection law dey must live in de ward fer thirty days afore dey kin regis-ture an’ vote. I’ll feed ’em an’ beer ’em an’ lodge ’em in meh lodgin’ house, De Star Ef Hope. I kin pack ’em in like flies,” he says. “Yer knows hobos, Mollbuzzer, dey kin sleep a-standin’ up, er a-holdin’ on ter a table by deir elbows er deir teeth.”

“What does I get,” axes I, “fer de t’ree thousand.”

“Twinty cints apiece,” he says.

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“Hogan hisself,” says I, a-lyin’, “has offered meh thirty.”

“But Hogan he ain’t a-goin’ ter git elicited,” he says.

“He will ef I brings him de t’ree thousand’, each ef ’em trained ter vote t’ree times,” I says.

O’Brien t’inks a minute an’ he says, “Well, Mollbuzzer, I’ll git yer a perlitical job ter boot.”

“Doin’ what?” axes I.

“Garbage inspictor ef de ward,” said he.

“Don’t want it,” says I. “It ain’t good enuf fer me. I wants ter wear a star an’ be a detective.”

“De Rifomers ’ll howl,” says he, “yer ricord is too black.”

“It’s no blacker en yourn,” says I.

“Well,” says he, “bring de hobos ’round an’ maybe I kin fix it up.”

“I’ll have ’em ’round in a day er two,” says I, an’ I calls on Hogan.

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“Hogan,” says I, “O’Brien has yer beat ter a finish.”

“How kin dat be?” axes he.

“I’m gettin’ him t’ree thousand hobos fer him ter vote t’ree times.”

“An’ what is yer gettin’?” axes he.

“I gits twinty cints apiece, de garbage contract, an’ a detective star asides,” says I.

“Yer knows what a lyin’ skinflint O’Brien is, Mollbuzzer,” says he. “Promises is easy.”

“Pay in advance,” says I.

“Bring yer hobos ter meh, Mollbuzzer,” says he, “an’ I kin feed ’em like kings an’ lodge ’em like queens in meh place, De Home Ef De Peepul, fer a month. I’ll give yer tin cents a vote, which means thirty cents a piece at de least—an’ ater de iliction yer kin be perlice sergeant ef de ward fer all I cares.”

“Done,” says I.

An’ I hustles aroun’ day an’ night an’

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gets dose t'ree thousan' hobos from everywheres, Sam de Scribe an' Foxy Basket a-helpin' meh.

An' Sam an' Foxy says ter meh, "Moll-buzzer, git yer hobos in line. Give 'em a speech an' make em understand dat yer de boss ef de ward an' not Hogan ner O'Brien, neither. Don't be a-sendin' em down one by one, er two by two; but bring 'em yerself in a bunch, er Hogan 'ill cheat yer an' give yer a merry ha! ha!"

So I seen Sam an' Foxy was right, an' I gits dem hobos in a line down a long alley an' I tells 'em ef dey don't do ez I says an' votes ez I wants dey kin starve next iliction, an' dat I would run dem out ef town, meh bein' boss ef de ward.

"An' Sam de Scribe makes t'ree signs, which I gives to de biggest fellers ter carry. An' one of dose signs reads: "VOTE FOR HOGAN AN' RIFORM"; an' anuder: "VOTE FOR HOGAN AN' CLEAN

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POLERTICS"; an' anuder "VOTE FOR HOGAN AN' HONESTY."

An' I puts de signs at de head, right be-hint two beggars what plays de fiddle, an-uder what plays de accordion an' anuder what plays de jew-harp, an' we pushes 'em all in line, an' turns inter de street, an' de crowd watches on de streets an' howls an' laffs, sich a crowd ef hobos niver bein' seen afore, an' dey wonders what it means.

An' who should come along ez we wuz marchin' on but O'Brien, an' he runs fer meh an' he says:

"What does dis mean, Mollbuzzer?"

"It means Hogan," I says. "Can't yer read? Hogan an' Honesty. Hogan an' Ri-form. Hogan an' Clean Polertics."

"I'm goin' ter have de perlice stop dis," says he; "it's a menunce agin public order an' decency—dese hobos marchin' thru de streets an' interferin' wid de bizness ef de peepul ef meh ward. An' I'll see yer in

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jail afore noon fer disturbin' de peace. Y'er a lyin' scoundrel, a blackguard, an' a word-breaker." An' he shakes his big fist an' runs orff.

An' meh seein' trouble starts de line on de double quick fer Hogan's. An' Hogan, someone a-tellin' him what was up, comes runnin' out ef De Home Ef De Peepul, an' he makes fer meh, marchin' proud ez kin be at de head ef de line, an' he says:

"Mollbuzzer, y'er an idjit, y'er crazy. Y'er a-killin' meh chanctes. De papers 'ill howl about dis, an' de riformers 'ill jine hands wid O'Brien an' lay meh low in de dust. Fer de love ef Gawd, break dem signs an' let dem hobos come inter meh place, one by one, thru de alley."

"Are them hobos yourn er mine?" axes I.

"It don't make no diffrence," he says, "you do what I says."

"I'm perlitical boss," I says, "an' I wants dese hobos ter know who is who an'

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what is what in dis ward, an' who it is dat's feedin' an' a-carin' fer 'em."

"Yer does, does yer?" he howls; an' him bein' a hot-headed fool, he lands one fer meh jaw, an' I dodges an' runs. An' Sam de Scribe an' Foxy Basket, seein' what was up, dey orders de musicians ter turn an' make fer O'Brien's; an' we gives de big hobos t'ree new signs ter carry, one readin', "VOTE FOR O'BRIEN, DE HOBO'S FRIEND." An' anuder readin', "O'BRIEN AN' CLEAN STREETS." An' anuder one ef 'em readin', "VOTE FOR NO-CAR-FARE O'BRIEN."

An' de crowd seein' us march thru de streets agin wid dem new signs, an' not knowin' what was up, dey laughs an' howls an' calls us names, but we goes on a-mindin' our own bizness, an' a-makin' fer De Star Ef Hope.

An' O'Brien he comes drivin' along wid a petrol wagon full ef perlice jist afore we

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reaches his lodgin' house. He jumps out an' shakes hands an' says, "So yer changed yer mind, has yer, Mollbuzzer?"

"I has," I says, "it's O'Brien an' riform now."

"Well, de first thing ter do," he says, "is ter tear dem fool signs down; dey looks ez ef Hogan ordered 'em."

"Look a-here," I says, "I guess I knows what I'm about. I'm bossin' dose hobos, an' dem signs stays up an'——"

"Orfficers," says Hogan, "do your duty," an' afore I knows whats a-happened two cops grabs meh, pounds meh inter jelly, an' throws meh inter de petrol wagon by meh ear afore I has time ter tell O'Brien I'd git even, er afore I tells Sam an' Foxy what ter do.

An' O'Brien he tells dem hobos what he'll do fer 'em an' how nice it 'll be in De Star Ef Hope, where dey kin stay free fer a month, no work, only drinkin', eatin', an'

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sleepin'; an' dey bein' tired ef marchin' up an' down an' afreerd ef de cops, dey breaks ranks, sells meh out, an' marches one by one through de alley an' inter O'Brien's lodgin' house.

But Foxy Basket an' Sam de Scribe dey runs fer Hogan's an' tells him what has a-happened, an' Hogan he turns red an' he says:

“I was a fool ter lose meh temper. O'Brien, he's smooth, he is; but if youse kin git dem hobos back agin an' fix it wid Mollbuzzer, I'll bail him out ef jail.”

So Hogan comes down ter de jail an' pays meh fine, which was twinty dollars fer breakin' de peace, an' ten more fer bein' a vagabond an' ten more, which was fer resistin' an officer ef de law.

An' Hogan says, “It 'll be a lesson ter yer, Mollbuzzer, fer de rest ef yer life ter stand by yer friends. Now yer kin git dem hobos in meh place, De Home Ef De Peepul. An'

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dere ain't no time ter lose, de day fer regesterin' comin' on fast."

Well, meh an' Sam an' Foxy fixes up a scheme, meh layin' low; an' Sam an' Foxy, O'Brien not knowin' either ef 'em, 'tendin' ter business an' goin' ter O'Brien's ter board an' lodge fer deir votes.

An' de fust night at one o'clock, Sam he jumps out ef his place under de table, an' he yells, "Fire! Fire!" wid all his lungs. An' dem hobos rolls out ef every corner ef de place, orff de tables an' from under de chairs, an' de floors, an' de bunks, orff everywhere but de ceilin'. An' dey pours inter de street, O'Brien a-runnin' up an' down, pullin' his hair an' a-cussin' an' a-screamin'.

An' when dey gets outside an' stands 'round, watchin' fer de fun ef seein' De Star Ef Hope goin' up in smoke an' flame, Sam says as maybe dere was no fire an' he might 'a' made a mistake, but he guessed de place would burn down anyways, an' maybe dey

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better go back ter Hogan's, his place bein' safer an' de grub better.

But O'Brien, smellin' a rat, follered Sam an' he kep' an eye on him, an' when he heard Sam a-sayin' dey better go ter Hogan's, he makes a spring fer his neck, but Sam he runs fer his life, an' O'Brien ater him lickety-spin; an' all de hobos ater Sam an' O'Brien, a-yellin' an' a-screamin' ter see de fun. De whole street was awake from one end ter de other wid heads, a-lookin' out everywheres, an' peepul askin' what de matter was, an' ef de world was a-comin ter a end.

Sam gits away, bein' thinner an' quicker on de run, an' O'Brien says, "Come on back, boys, an' I'll stand treat, yer kin have what yer wants," an' dey all goes back, bein' mad at Sam fer disturbin' deir sweet slumber an' gentle dreams.

But Foxy Basket sticks his head in de flower barrul de next night, er he paints it

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wid chalk—I don't know what he done, but he looked white ez water, an' he sits aroun' de stove, keepin' an eye open fer O'Brien, a-mumblin' an' a-groanin' ter hisself.

“What's de matter, Foxy?” axes dey, “ain't yer a-feelin' well?”

“I ain't a-feelin' so bad,” says he, “but Im afreerd—I hate ter scare youse gents—I'm afreerd I got de small-pox. I seen one man wid it an'——”

Dey never waited fer ter hear him finish, dey jist went a-rollin' an' tumblin' an' a-jumpin' out ef De Star Ef Hope, hustlin' thru de doors an' de winders an' a-yellin' all de time, “Smallpox! Smallpox!” Sam's cry ef fire wasn't in it fer a chaser.

An' Foxy he jist waits till de last one was gone an' den he takes a rag an' wipes de white orff his face, an' he grins an' he laffs. O'Brien, who was out a-talkin' polertics ter a neighbor, ketches wind ef what was up, an' he jist gits back in time

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ter see de last ef de hobos makin' fer de door an' ter hear 'em yell "Smallpox!" An' he comes inside in time ter see Foxy rubbin' his face an' laffin' an' grinnin'.

"Yer de guy wid de small-pox, eh?" yells he. "Hogan's brand ef it, I reckon," says he.

An' Foxy, he bein' smart an' quick ez O'Brien any day, jest rubs de white on agin an' looks up an' says, "I guess I be."

An' O'Brien stands a-lookin' like ez if he didn't want ter believe it, an' yet don't dare not ter believe it, an' he says, "Well, git, an' git quick."

An' de next day dere was a long piece in de Republikin papers sayin' ez a smallpox case was found in De Star Ef Hope an' it was bein' fumigumigated, an' at least t'ree thousand votes was lost fer O'Brien. An' de funny cove has a pictshure in, a-showin' de hobos a-jumpin' fer deir lives—a pictshure what would make even de little dorg in de

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corner ef it laugh. But O'Brien, he don't laff none, yer kin bet. He goes aroun' sayin' it was a perlitical trick ef Hogan's, puttin' de smallpox onter him.

De nixt day I goes ter Hogan's an' I says, "Well, Hogan, I brung de hobos back."

"You brung 'em back!" screams he. "You brung 'em back!"

"Sam de Scribe an' Foxy Basket an' meh," says I. "It's all one."

"Git out!" says he. "It was de smallpox done it."

"See here, Hogan," says I, gettin' mad, "is yer goin' ter do de square thing? Ef yer don't I marches de hobos back ter O'Brien's afore two days is over."

"Blow yerself out," says he, "it was you as took 'em away in de fust place. Ef yer comes 'round here agin, I'll send yer where I found yer."

I was sore on Hogan, I kin tell youse, an' I makes up meh mind fer ter git even wid

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him an' square de deal wid O'Brien ef I didn't make a copper er git meh detective star. So I talks it over wid Foxy an' Sam, an' Sam writes a note ter O'Brien sayin' ez we hadn't done de square thing puttin' de smallpox on de Star Ef Hope, an' dat we was sorry an' ready ter bring de hobos back agin, Hogan bein' a welcher an' goin' back on his perlitical word, an' sayin' also ez we would be glad ter meet him at McQuinn's saloon an' make arrangemints fer handin' back dose nine thousand votes.

But O'Brien—so I hears aterwards from someone ez heard it den—goes over ter Hogan an' shows him de letter an' says, “Yer sees how it is, Hogan, wid dose beggars, we don't know neither ef us where we're standin'; afore dey gits thru dey will ruin us perlitically an' in de lodgin' house bizness too. Dey put a fire an' de smallpox onter meh, an' Gawd knows what dey will do ter De Home Ef De Peepul.

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'Sides dat, Hogan," he says, "de riformers is growin' stronger in de ward an' dis hobo rigisterin' bizness is raisin' a row an' a rumpus."

"Well," says Hogan, "what's yer offer?"

"I offers," says O'Brien, "ter cut de hobos clean out ef yer will, an ter fight it out along party lines strict an' square."

"It's easy talkin'," says Hogan, "meh havin t'ree thousand hobos ready ter line up at de poles a month from ter-day."

"But yer kin see," says O'Brien, "dat accordin' ter dis letter dat we won't have 'em long."

"Well," says Hogan, thi'kin' a bit, "it's done"; an' him an' O'Brien shakes hands.

"But," says O'Brien, "yer an' meh will go ter McQuinn's, take a cop er two along, an' put dem t'ree skinflints where dey berlongs."

An' one ef de hobos, a good friend ef mine, hears what's goin' on an' he hustles over

I Takes a Try at Polertics

ter McQuinn's an' tells meh. An' I kin tell youse meh an' Sam an' Foxy was skeered green, fer dem t'ree thousand hobos would have tied us onter a lamp-post—an' maybe done worse—ef dey lost deir free keep an' drinkin' an' eatin' fer thirty days, ater learnin' de joys ef it.

An' Foxy he t'inks' an' he t'inks, an' jist when I gives mehself up fer lost, he says, "Mollbuzzer, what's de matter wid seein' Billy Rooney, de Riform canderdate, an' deliverin' dem nine thousand votes ter him."

"Good! Elegant!" says I, slapping him on de back.

"But will he take 'em?" axes Sam.

"What!" shouts I, "a riformer rifuse nine thousand votes, an' him our old friend Billy Rooney! Git yer signs ready, Sam; an' Foxy 'll be down de alley by Hogan's ter git de hobos 'bout de time dey is turned loose, an' he kin explain how Rooney's place is de best ef all, an' I'll run up ter see

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Rooney an' have him rint a loft er an empty barn er two."

An' Sam paints t'ree signs lightnin' quick. One which was "ROONEY AN' NOBUL RIFORM." An' anuder which reads, "ROONEY CLOSES DE SALOONS AT MIDNIGHT," an' a third, which is "ROONEY, DE FRIEND EF DE OP-PRISSED."

An' Foxy an' Sam gits dere jist in time when de first line ef hobos was a-huntin' fer us t'ree an' he explains how things was a-standin', an' dey seen de signs an' calls, "Hurray fer Rooney!"

An' oncet agin dat noble line ef hobos goes a-marchin' down de street, wid de accordion an' de two fiddlers an' de jew-harp ahead, an' de peepul pushin' up ter de curbs laffin' an' howlin'.

'An' Hogan an' O'Brien happened ter still be talkin' polertics ez we come marchin' down de street, an' I tell youse when dey

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seen dem signs deir four eyes stands out larger en six pawnbroker balls.

An' afore O'Brien has time ter say, "Look!" Hogan, bein' a man ef quick temper, yells out, "Yer a-lyin' scoundrel, O'Brien, yer sold meh out. Yer an' Rooney is playin' kerhoots." An' he hits him acrost de jaw, an' O'Brien hits him back. An' Foxy runs up an' says:

"Dat's right, O'Brien, hit him one fer meh."

An' Sam runs up an' says, "Dat's right, Hogan, dat's right, hit him one fer meh, an' a good one."

An' den Hogan an' O'Brien seen how it was an' dey shakes hands an' goes orff arm in arm, a-swearin' dey would git even wid us.

Meantime I finds Rooney in his hat-store an' I says ter him, "Rooney, I've riformed."

"What does dat mean, Mollbuzzer?" he axes.

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“I’m fer you an’ riform, Rooney, nine thousan’ strong,” I says.

“Kin yer deliver ’em, Mollbuzzer?” he axes.

“De’r on deir way now,” says I.

“Come back in meh office,” says he, “an’ we’ll talk bizness.”

“I ain’t got much time, Rooney,” I says; “I’ll have ter see Hogan an’ O’Brien afore de mornin’ is over.”

“Not at all; not at all,” he says.

An we fixes de deal quick, he agreein’ ter board an’ lodge de army fer registerin’, ter give meh tin cents a vote in case he wins, an’ ter riform polertics by givin’ Sam an’ Foxy an’ meh jobs in de ward.

So I runs out ahead an’ meets Foxy an’ Sam, an’ we stops de music an’ hauls dem signs down lightnin’ quick, havin’ learned a bit about polertics by expeerience, an’ we marches de line ter de loft where Rooney tole meh ter go.

I Takes a Try at Polertics

It was mighty easy sailin' fer de nixt thirty days, dem hobos an' us—'specially us—livin' on honey an' clover; but de trouble was dat Hogan an' O'Brien, seein' it was all over wid dem ef dey don't play roly polley tergither, dey jines hands an' fixes up a deal an' O'Brien was ilycted. Maybe, ef it wasn't fer dat, I'd be oil-inspector now in dis ward.

De way it seems ter meh, Mr. Anterpolergist, is dat riform is all right de day afore ilection, but it ain't much de day ater. How does she strike you, eh?

Say, Mr. Anterpolergist, meh autobiographe is close on ter de grave now, an' I wants de twenty-five dollars yer promised meh afore I writes down de account ef meh funeral, else yer will say I'm dead an' yer can't pay a dead man no money. Please don't come no science ef man games on meh, an' don't do no anterpolergizin', but hand

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over de coin in smilin' nickels an' laffin'
dimes. MOLLBUZZER.

P. S. How about buyin' back de little
Hebrew book on Moses, which I finds has de
science ef wimens in it, too?

THE END

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