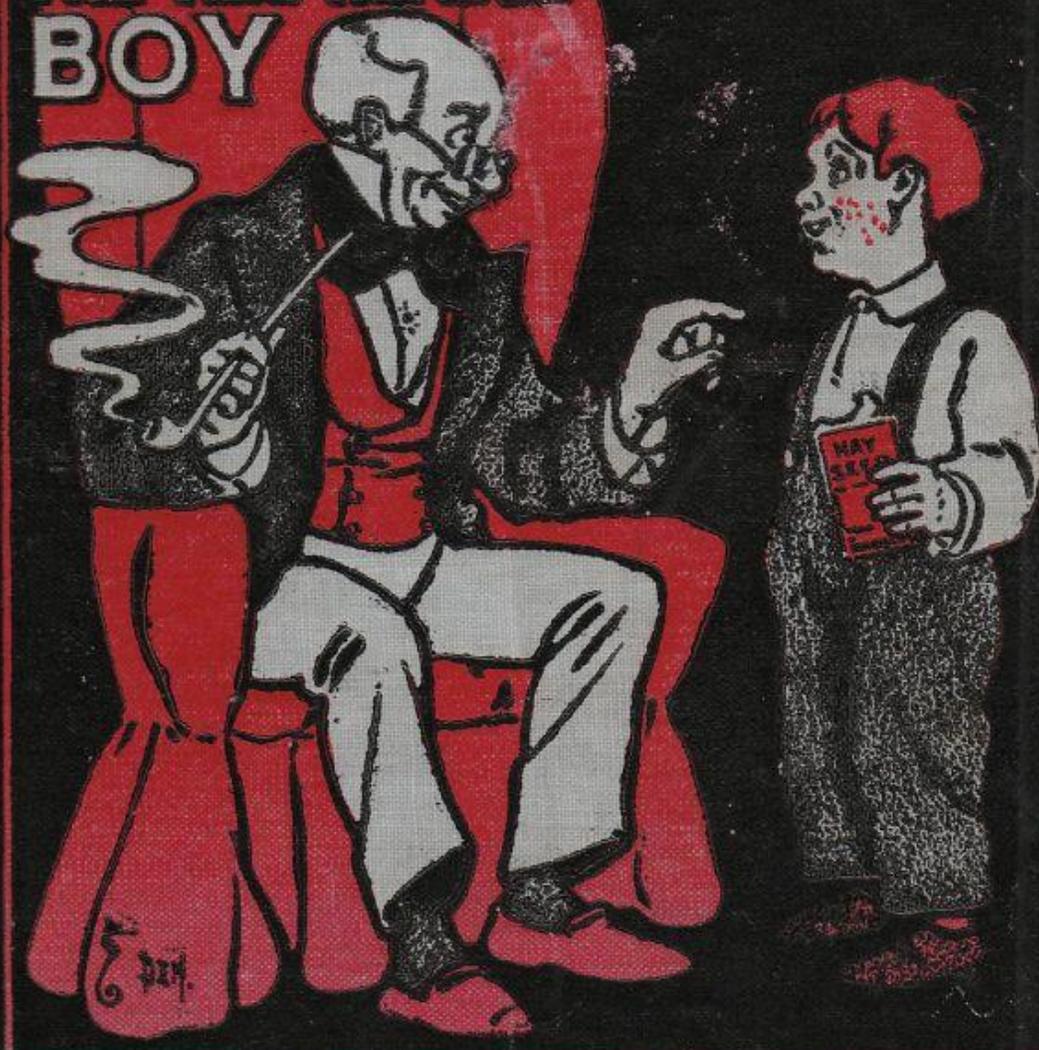
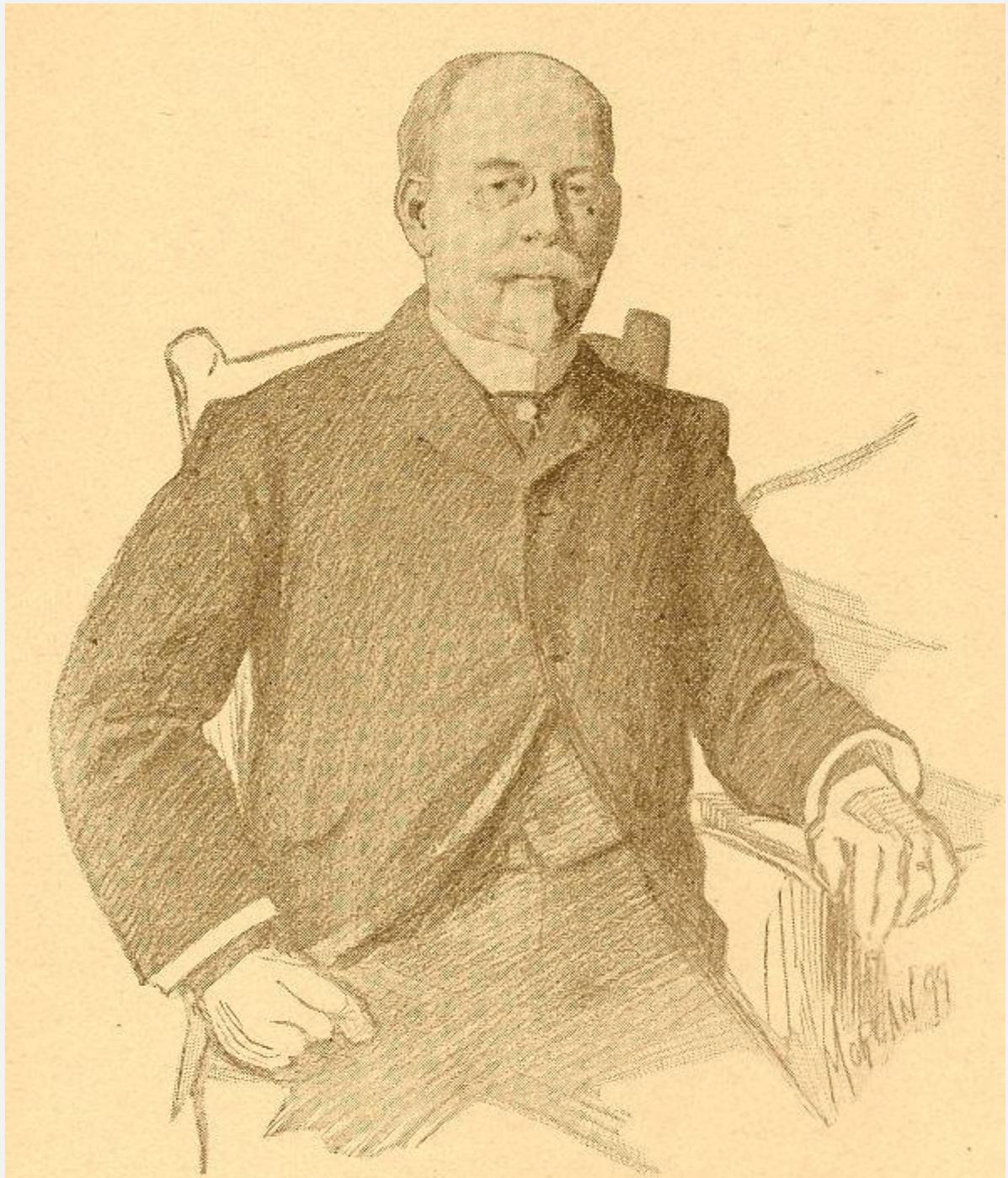


PECK'S UNCLE AND THE RED HEADED BOY



BY THE AUTHOR OF
"PECK'S BAD BOY AND HIS PA"



Ernest Peck

Peck's Uncle Ike

AND THE

Red Headed Boy

By George W. Peck

Author of "Peck's Bad Boy and His Pa," "Peck's Fun,"
"Peck's Sunshine," Etc.

Illustrated

CHICAGO
ALEXANDER BELFORD & CO.

1899

**PECK'S
UNCLE IKE
AND THE
RED HEADED
BOY**

By George W. Peck

*Alexander Belford & Co. -
1899*

To the Typical American Boy,

The boy who is not so awfully good, along at first, but just good enough; the boy who does not cry when he gets hurt, and goes into all the dangerous games there are going, and goes in to win; the boy who loves his girl with the same earnestness that he plays football, and who takes the hard knocks of work and play until he becomes hardened to anything that may come to him in after life; the boy who will investigate everything in the way of machinery, even if he gets his fingers pinched, and learns how to make the machine that pinched him; the boy who, by study, experience, and mixing up with the world, knows a little about everything that he will have to deal with when he grows up—the all-around boy, that makes the all-around man, ready for anything, from praying for his country's prosperity to fighting for its honor; the boy who grows up qualified to lead anything, from the german at a dance to an army in battle; the boy who can take up a collection in church, or take up an artery on a man injured in a railroad accident, without losing his nerve; the boy who can ask a blessing if called upon to do so, or ask a girl's ugly father for the hand of his daughter in marriage, without choking up; the boy who grows up to be a man whom all men respect, all women love, and whom everybody wants to see President of the United States, this book is respectfully dedicated by

The Author.

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CHAPTER I.

“Here, Uncle Ike, let me give you a nice piece of paper, twisted up beautifully, to light your pipe,” said the red-headed boy, as Uncle Ike, with his long clay pipe, filled with ill-smelling tobacco, was feeling in his vest pocket for a match. “I should think nice white paper would be sweeter to light a pipe with than a greasy old match scratched on your pants,” and the boy lighted a taper and handed it to the old man.

“No, don't try any new tricks on me,” said Uncle Ike, as he brought out a match, from his vest pocket, picked off the shoddy that had collected on it in the bottom of his pocket, and hitched his leg around so he could scratch it on his trousers leg. “I have tried lighting my pipe with paper, and the odor of the paper kills the flavor of this 10-cent tobacco. Now, the brimstone on a match, added to the friction of the trousers leg, helps the flavor of the tobacco,” and he drew the match across his trousers, and lighted his pipe, and as the smoke began to fill the room his good old face lighted up as though he had partaken of a rich wine. “I like to get a little accustomed to brimstone here on this earth, so, if I get on the wrong road when I die, and go where brimstone is the only fuel, I won't appear to the neighbors down there as though I was a tenderfoot. Wherever I go, I always want to appear as though it wasn't my first trip away from home. Ah, children,” said the old man, as he blew smoke enough out of his mouth to call out a fire department, and laughed till the windows rattled, “there is lots of fun in this old world, if your pipe don't go out. Don't miss any fun, because when you die you don't know whether there is any fun going on or not.”

“I believe, Uncle Ike, that you would have fun anywhere,” said the boy, as he thought of the funny stories the old man had told him for many years, and listened to the laugh that acted as punctuation marks to all of Uncle Ike's remarks. “I would hate to trust you at a funeral. Did you ever laugh at a funeral, Uncle?”

“I came mighty near it once,” said the old man, as he put his little finger in the pipe and pressed down the ashes, and let the smoke out again like the chimney of a factory.

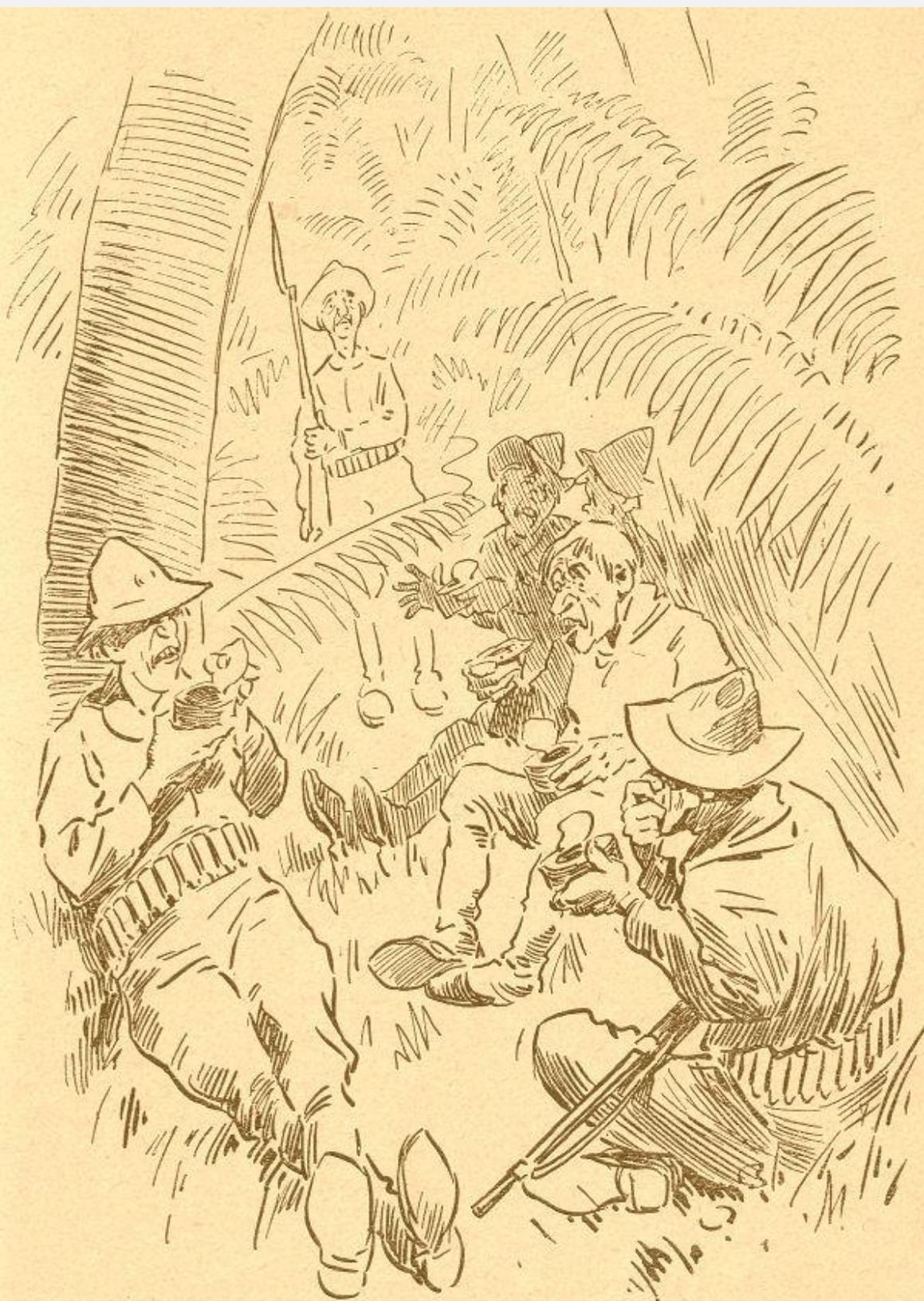
“O, my! why don't they make you use a smoke consumer on that pipe, or cause you to use smokeless tobacco?” said the boy, as he coughed till the tears came to his eyes. “It looks in this room like burning a tar barrel when Dewey sunk the Spanish fleet. But tell us about your funny funeral.”

“O, it wasn't so funny,” said the old man, as he stroked the stubble on his chin, and a twinkle came all around his eyes. “It was only my thoughts that come near breaking up the funeral. There was an old friend of mine years ago, a newspaper man, who was the most genial and loving soul I ever knew, but he stuttered so you couldn't help laughing to hear him. He could write the most beautiful things without stuttering, but when he began to talk, and the talk would not come, and he stammered, and puckered up his dear face, and finally got the words out, chewed up into little pieces, with hyphens between the syllables, you had to laugh or die. We were great friends, and used to smoke and

tell stories together, and pass evenings that I can now recall as the sweetest of my life. There were many things in which we were alike. We smoked the same kind of tobacco, in clay pipes, and lived on the same street, and, after an evening of pleasure, whichever of us was the least wearied with the day's work and night of enjoyment walked home with the other. We used to talk about the hereafter, and promised each other to see that the one that died first should not have a funeral sermon that would give us taffy. It was my friend's idea that, if the minister spread it on too thick, he would raise up in the coffin and protest. He was not what you would call a good Christian, as the world goes, but I would trust him to argue with St. Peter about getting inside the gate, because, if his stutter ever got St. Peter to laughing, my friend would surely get in. Well, he died, and I was one of the bearers at the funeral, with seven others of his old friends; and when the minister was picturing the virtues of the deceased which he never possessed, one of the bouquets on the coffin rolled off on the floor, and I thought of what my friend had said about calling the minister down, and in my imagination I could see the old fellow raising up in the coffin and stuttering, and puckering up his face there on that solemn occasion, and for about ten seconds it seemed as though I would split with laughter; but I held it in, and we got the good old genius buried all right, but it was a terrible strain on my vest buttons," and the old smoker lighted another match on his trousers and started the pipe, which had grown cold as he talked of the stuttering remains.

"O, say, Uncle Ike," said the boy, as he shuddered a little at the idea of a stuttering corpse talking back at a minister, "speaking of heaven, do you think the men that furnished embalmed beef to the soldiers and made them sick in Cuba will get to heaven when they die?"

"That depends a good deal on whether a political pull is any good over there," said Uncle Ike, as he reached for the yellow paper of tobacco and filled up the clay pipe again. "*I think a soldier is the noblest work of God.* A young man who has got everything just as he wants it at home, parents who love him, and perhaps a girl who believes he is the dearest man that ever wore a choker collar; who hears that his country needs help, and gives up his spring mattress, his happy home, his evenings with the dearest girl in the world, gives up baking powder biscuits and strawberry shortcake, and enlists to go to Cuba, and sleeps on the ground in the mud, gets malaria, and fights on his knees when he is too weak to stand up, deserves something better than decayed meat, and I believe the people who furnished that stuff for the boys are going right straight to hell when they die," and a look of revenge and horror and indignation came over the old man's face that the boy had not seen before in all the years he had known his uncle. "No, sir," said he; "the smell of that canned beef will stick to the garments of those who prepared it and those who furnished it to those boys; and if one of them got into heaven by crawling under the canvas, every angel there would hold her nose and make up a face, and they would send for the devil with his pitchfork to' throw him out. The verdict of no board of investigation is going to be received as a passport to heaven."



“Why, a dog biscuit would have been mince pie to the soldiers in comparison.”

“Why, a dog biscuit would have been mince pie to the soldiers in comparison to the stuff the rich beef packers furnished to those young noblemen with the kyack uniforms on. To make a little more money, men who have millions of dollars to burn, bilked a weak and overworked set of officials with incipient paresis and locomotor ataxia in their walk and conversation, and sawed on to them stuff that self-respecting pigs could not have digested without taking pepsin tablets; and with that embalmed and canned outrage on humanity in their stomachs those brave men charged in the face of an enemy, and were hungry heroes, loaded with decayed beef from a country that produces the finest food in the world. Tramps, begging at the back gates of American homes, were living on the fat of the land; dogs could gnaw fresh and sweet meat off of bones thrown away, and laugh at our soldiers carrying Old Glory to victory up hills shelled and bulleted and barbed-wire fenced. A bullet from a Spanish gun, entering the stomach of an American soldier, turned black when it came in contact with the embalmed beef there, and poisoned the brave soldier, and made him die, with thoughts of home, and mother, and sweetheart, and his lips closed for the last time, silent as to his wrongs, uncomplaining as to the murder committed by the millionaires at home. The business of packing meat ought to be combined with the undertaking business, so you could order your meat and your coffin from the same man. By cracky! Boy, I am so mad when I think of it, that I don't want to go to heaven if those people go there. Go out, dears, for a minute, for I want to use language that you can't find in the school books!” and Uncle Ike got up out of his chair, pale with anger, and smashed his pipe on the stone hearth, and a tear rolled down his cheek. “Why, Uncle Ike, I didn't mean to make you cry,” said the red-headed boy, as he backed out of the room, frightened at the old man.

“Well, never mind, boy; don't worry about your Uncle Ike, because at my age, when a man gets mad clear through, he has to have vent, or bust,” and the old fellow laughed as hearty as though he had never been mad in his life. “But I have a tender spot for soldiers who go to fight for their country, and when they are abused I feel that somebody is guilty of treason. I was a soldier in the war between the North and South, and have seen soldiers hungry, so hungry that they would take raw corn out of the nosebags of mules that were eating it, until a mule would begin to kick seven ways for Sunday when he saw a soldier coming; but it couldn't be helped, because the government couldn't keep up with the soldiers with rations, when they were on the jump night and day. But, do you know we had fun all the time we were hungry? There were Irish soldiers in my regiment who would keep you good natured when you were ready to die. The Irish soldier is so funny and so cheerful that he should have good pay. If I was going to raise a regiment, I would have one Irish soldier, at least, to every seven other soldiers, and my Irish boy would keep them all laughing by his wit, so they would stand any hardship. I have seen an Irish boy parch his corn that he had stolen from a mule, spread it out on a saddle blanket in four piles, go and ask three officers to dine with him, and, when they sat down on the ground to eat the parched corn, he wouldn't let them begin the meal until he made a welcoming speech, and had the chaplain ask a blessing over the corn;

and then he would go without his share, and tell funny stories until the guests would laugh until they almost choked. The Irish soldier is worth his weight in gold in any army, boy, and he is in all armies, on one side or the other, and generally on both sides. The only objection I have to an Irishman is that he smokes one of these short pipes,” and the old man lit up his long clay pipe, and let the boy go out to think over the lesson of the morning.

CHAPTER II.

Uncle Ike sat and smoked his pipe in silence for a few minutes, blew the smoke out in clouds, and looked at it as though searching for something, and there was a serious look on his face, as though he was trying to fathom some mystery, while the redheaded boy was looking at himself in a hand mirror to see if the freckles on his nose were any smaller since he had been using some of his mother's toilet powder to remove them. Finally Uncle Ike put the bowl of the pipe to his nose and smelled of the burning tobacco, turned up his nose and snuffed, and said:



“There is something the matter with this 'ere terbacker.”

“There is something the matter with this 'ere terbacker. I suppose the terbacker makers have got into a trust, and they don't care how the stuff smells. Condemned if I ain't half a mind to quit smoking and break up the trust.”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you,” said the red-headed boy, “that I fixed your tobacco for you so it would not smell so bad. I put some cinnamon bark and wiener skins in it.”

“Well, of all things!” said Uncle Ike, as he emptied the tobacco out of the pipe by rapping it on the heel of his boot, and looked sick. “What in the name of heaven is wiener skins?”

“Why, it is the envelope that goes around a wiener sausage. Us boys were smoking cigarettes one day made of paper and dried dandelion leaves, and the boy at the butcher shop said if we would dry some wiener skin and cut it up and put it in the cigarette and smoke it, it would make the finest flavor, and make us strong. I tried it, and the cigarette smelled just like camping out and cooking over a camp-fire, and the next day I was so strong ma noticed it. I thought you were getting old, and I would make you strong and young again. Don't you notice how different the smoke smells since I fixed the tobacco? I was going to put in some red pepper pods, but——”

“Here, hold on!” said Uncle Ike. “The butcher has got you mixed up. He was giving you a recipe for a Mexican pudding. But don't you ever try any experiments on your Uncle Ike any more. I don't want to be made strong any more on sausage skins. A gymnasium is good enough for me, and it don't smell like burning a negro at the stake. I know anything would help the flavor of this terbacker, but I have got used to it, after about sixty years burning it under my nose, and, if the trust will not water the stock with baled hay or cut cabbage, I will try and pull through as it is. So you experiment on yourself, condemn you! I knew it was you that had disturbed my terbacker. I can tell by the freckles on your face when you have done anything wrong. A boy that is freckled has got to be square, or I am right on to him. When you are guilty, the freckles on your nose are changeable; one will be yellow, like saffron, and another freckle seems pale, and little drops of perspiration appear between the freckles; and then several small freckles will combine into one, like a trust, and you are given completely away. So remember, as long as you wear freckles, if you do anything crooked, there is a sign right on your face that tells the tale.”

“Say, Uncle Ike, what is a trust?” asked the redheaded boy, anxious to turn the subject away from wiener skins and freckles. “What good does a trust do?”

“Well, a trust is one of these things,” said Uncle Ike, as he opened a new paper of tobacco, and threw the old paper, that had been treated with foreign substances, into the fire, “one of these things that are for the benefit of the dear people. You have heard of selling a gold brick, haven't you? The man who sells a gold brick has a brass brick made with a hole in it, in which he puts some gold, and he lets the jay who wants to invest in raw gold test it by putting acid on the place where the gold is filled in, and the jay finds that the brick is solid gold, and he buys it, after mortgaging his farm to raise the money.

The man sells the gold brick cheap, because the jay is his friend, and when he has got out of the country the jay tries to sell his gold brick for eight hundred dollars, and he gets two dollars and eighty cents for it. That is one kind of a trust. The trust you mean is a combination of several factories, for instance. The promoter gets all the factories in one line of business to combine. They pay each factory proprietor more than his business is worth, and he is tickled, but they only pay him part money, and give him stock in the combine for the balance, and let him run his old business, now owned by others, at a good salary, and he gets the big head and buys a rubber-tired carriage, and sends his family to Europe. Then the trust closes down his factory and throws his men out of employment, lowers the price of goods to run out others who have not entered the trust, and the people who get goods cheap say a trust is the noblest work of God. After the outsiders have been ruined, and the man who entered the trust in good faith has spent the money they gave him, and tries to sell the stock he received, it has gone down to seven cents on a dollar, and the trust buys it in, and he cables his family to come home in the steerage of a cattle ship. His old employees have gone to the poorhouse or to selling bananas with a cart, and the former manufacturer who was happy and prosperous has become poor and shabby, and he looks at his closed factory, with its broken windows, and he tries to get a position pushing a scraper on the asphalt pavement, and if he fails he either jumps off the pier into the lake, or takes a gun and goes gunning for the trust promoter who ruined him. And after the factory man is drowned, or sent to the penitentiary for murder, the stock in the trust takes a bound and is away above par, and he hasn't got any of it, and the poor competitors of the trust having been ruined and closed up, prices of the goods go up kiting, and the dear people who said a trust was the noblest work of God say it is the dumbdest work of man, and they pass resolutions to down the trust, while the owners of the good stock in the trust stick out their fat stomachs, full of champagne and canvasback and terrapin, and laugh at the people till they nearly die of apoplexy, and drive bob-tailed horses that live better than the people, and carry blanketed dogs on velvet-cushioned carriages, that would turn up their noses at good wiener skins worse than I did when you loaded my tobacco, you little red-headed rascal," and Uncle Ike drew a long breath, and brought his fist down on the table in anger, as he got worked up over the wrongs of the people at the hands of the gold brick trusts.

"Gosh," said the red-headed boy, as his eyes kept opening wider and wider when he took in all Uncle Ike had said, "I should think the people would have the trusts arrested for breach of promise."

"What do you know about breach of promise?" said Uncle Ike, coloring up and looking foolish. "Who has been telling you about my being arrested once for breach of promise? If your mother has told you about that old trouble I had, I'll leave this house and go board at a tavern."

"I never heard anything about it, Uncle Ike, so help me. I never heard that you was ever in love."

“I never was in love,” said the old man, as he loaded up the pipe again, “except with my pipe. That affair was a clear case of a dog getting stuck on a man, and the owner of the dog thinking she was being loved. You see I went to a summer resort years ago, and got acquainted with a widow. She was a sweet creature, but I never said a word to her about marriage. She had a pug dog, and I petted the dog, and called it to me, and, do you know, that dog got so he would follow me, and set on my lap, and come to my room, and whine, until I got scared. I talked with the widow some, and once I took her and the dog out boat riding, but I never gave her any cause to think that I was in love with her. But you ought to have seen that dog. He just doted on me. I encouraged it till all the guests at the hotel began to notice that I was very dear to the dog, and the widow looked on smilingly and encouraged the intimacy. Then I tried to drive the dog away from me, but he would curl up at my feet and look up at me in such a loving manner that I weakened. Then the widow began to hint at her desire to have someone that the dog could look up to and love, and it was getting too warm, and I left the summer resort, and was sued for breach of promise. Of course I didn't know what the woman or the dog would swear to, so I settled for a thousand dollars. The next year I called at the summer resort, and found the dog stuck on another man, and I know just as well as can be that the widow paid her expenses each summer by that dog getting in love with men, and I have never looked at a woman twice since.”

“Served them right,” said the boy, who had an idea that Uncle Ike was right about everything. “I don't take much stock in girls myself. I am mighty glad I haven't got any sister. The boys that have got sisters are in hot water all the time, and have to go home with them from parties, and carry their rubbers to school when it rains, and fight for them if the other boys call them tomboys. Sisters are no good,” and the red-headed boy looked smart, as though he had said something Uncle Ike would applaud.

“There, that will do,” said Uncle Ike, as he put his hand in the boy's hair to warm it. “Don't let me ever hear you say a word against sisters again. You don't know anything about sisters. They are great. Let me tell you a story. I know a man who is away up in public affairs, at the head of his profession in his county, and one the world will hear more about some of these days. He was just such a little shrimp as you are, when he was a boy. He got out of the high school, and was going to clerk in a feed store, when his sister took him one side, one Sunday, and told him she wanted him to go to college. He almost fainted away at the idea. There wasn't much money in the family to burn on a boy's education, and he knew it, and he asked where the money was to come from. This little sister of the poor boy said she would furnish the money. She knew that he would be one of the great men of the country, if he had a college education, and it was arranged for him to go to college, this little sister being his backer financially. She had a musical education, and began to look for chances to make money. She took scholars in music, and was so anxious to make money for this brother to blow in on an education that she fairly forced music into all her pupils, working night and day, often with her head ready to split open with pain, but every week she rounded up money enough to

send to that brother at college, and for four years there never was a Monday morning that he did not get a postoffice order from that sweet girl, and every day a letter of encouragement, and advice, and when he graduated a pale girl stood below the platform with bright eyes and a feverish cheek, and when he came down off the platform with his diploma he grasped her in his arms and said, 'Sister, darling,' and kissed her in the presence of five thousand people, and she fainted. She had worked as no man works, for four years, and the result was a brother, a lawyer, a grand man, who loves that sister as though she was an angel from heaven. So, confound you, if I ever hear you say a word against sisters again, I will take you across my knee and you will think the millennium has come and struck you right on the pants," and Uncle Ike patted the boy on the cheek, and said they had better go out and catch a mess of fish.

CHAPTER III.

"Uncle Ike, did you ever take many degrees in secret societies?" asked the red-headed boy, as he saw the old gentleman reading an account of a man who was killed during initiation into a lodge, by being spanked with a clapboard on which cartridges had been placed.

"About a hundred degrees, I should think, without counting up," said Uncle Ike, as he thought over the different lodges he had belonged to in the past fifty years. "What set you to thinking about secret societies?"

"Oh, I thought I would join a few, and have some fun. I read every little while about some one being killed while being initiated, and it seems to me the death rate is about as great as it is in Cuba or the Philippines. Is there much fun in killing a man, Uncle Ike?"

"Well, not much for the man who is killed," said the old man, as he gave the grand hailing sign of distress for the boy to bring him his pipe and tobacco. "Accidents will happen, you know. It isn't one man in ten thousand that gets killed being initiated."

"What do people join lodges for, anyway, when they are liable to croak?" said the boy, as he passed the ingredients for a fumigation to the uncle. "Don't you think there ought to be laws against initiating, the same as clipping horses and cutting their tails off, or cutting off clogs' tails and ears? What do the lodges have those funny ceremonies for?"

"Well, a fool boy can ask more questions than the oldest man can answer," said Uncle Ike, as he hitched around in his chair, and looked mysterious, as he thought of the grips and passwords he once knew. "No, there is no occasion for laws against men going up against any game. Most men join lodges because they think it is a good thing, and after

they have taken a few degrees they want all there are, and after awhile the degrees keep getting harder, and they think of more to come, and by and by they get enough. In most lodges all men are on an equal footing, the prince and the pauper are all alike. Occasionally there is a man who thinks because he is rich or prominent in some way, that he is smarter than the ordinary man in a lodge. Then is the time that the rest try to teach him humility, and show him that he is only a poor mortal. It does some men good to have their diamonds removed, their good clothes replaced by the tattered garments of the tramp, and then let them look at themselves and see how little they amount to. In some lodges a man is taught a useful lesson by stripping him to the buff and taking a clapboard and letting a common laborer maul him until he finds out that he is not the whole business. If that were done occasionally by society you wouldn't find so many men looking over the common people. It would take the starch out of some people to feel that if they put on too many airs they would be liable to have a boot hit them any time. Lodges sometimes make good men out of the worst material. In some lodges the Prince of Wales would have to walk turkey right beside a well-digger, and it would do the prince good and not hurt the well-digger. But if I was in your place I would not join a lodge yet. Try the Salvation Army first," and Uncle Ike got up and went to the window, and listened to the bugle and bass drum and tambourine of the army as it passed on its nightly round.

"That Salvation army makes me tired," said the red-headed boy, as he reached for his putty blower. "Going around the streets palming that noise off on the public for music, and scaring horses, and taking up a collection, and singing out of tune. Say, I'll bet I can blow a chunk of putty into that girl's bonnet and make her jump like a box car in a collision," and the boy opened the window and was taking aim at the tambourine girl's bonnet when Uncle Ike reached out and took the putty blower away from him and said:



“It does not take opera music to get people to heaven.”

“Don't ever worry those poor people, or let any other boy bother them when you are around. They are entitled to the respect of all good people. It does not take opera music to get people to heaven. Even that wretched music they give so freely, may turn some poor wretch from the wrong to the right way, and a poor devil who becomes a follower of Christ from practicing following the Salvation army is just as welcome in heaven as though he went to church with a four-in-hand and listened to a heavenly choir that is

paid a hundred dollars per. It does not seem possible to some rich people that St. Peter is going to extend the glad hand to a dockwolloper, and let the rich man stand out in the cold until he tells how he used his money on earth, whether to oppress the poor or to make them glad. Lots of men are going to be fooled thinking they are going to get inside the pearly gates on the strength of their money, but some of them may have to be vouched for by a Salvation army lassie. So, boy, if you love your old uncle, always respect the religion of every soul on earth, and don't fire putty at any girl's bonnet. You hear me?" and the old man patted the boy on the back, and his old face looked angelic, through the tobacco smoke cloud.

"Well, Uncle Ike, you are the queerest man I ever saw," said the red-headed boy, as he wiped a tear out of his eye with his shirt sleeve. "There is nothing I can do to agree with you, until you have talked to me a little. When I feel funny, and want to laugh, you make me cry; and when I get serious about something, and get you to talking, you get me to laughing. I never agree with you until you have had your say. But I agree with you on one thing; you said the other day, when we were talking about breach of promise, that you were never in love. That's where you and I are alike. It makes me weary to see some boys in love with girls, and run around after them, and make themselves laughing stock of everybody. If a girl should get in love with me, I would tell her to go to thunder, and I would laugh at her, and tell all the boys she was silly. There is no good in love. I thought I liked a girl once, and gave her a German silver ring that I got off an old china pipe stem; and she loved me just a week, and then she shook me because the German silver ring corroded on her finger and gave her blood poison. It wasn't true love, or she would have stuck to me if she had been obliged to have her finger amputated. Bah! I was so discouraged that I will never have anything to say to a girl again, and I will grow up to be an old bach like you, who never did love anybody but a dog. Isn't that so, Uncle Ike?" "Did I say I never loved any woman?" said Uncle Ike, as he looked away off, apparently his eyes penetrating the dim past, and a wet spot on his cheek that kept getting wetter, and spreading around his face, until he wiped it off with one end of his necktie. "Why, boy, don't you ever tell your ma, but I have been in love enough to send a man to the insane asylum. You think you will never love any girl again, on account of that blood poisoning. Why, blood poison is nowhere beside love. Some day you will have a girl pass to windward of you, and when cool air of heaven blows a breath of her presence toward you, the love microbe will enter your system with the odor of violets that comes from her, and there is no medicine on earth that will cure you. The first thing you know you will follow that girl like a poodle, and if she wants you to walk on your hands and knees, and carry her parasol in your mouth, you will do it. When she looks at you the perspiration will start out all over you, and you will think there is only one pair of eyes in the world, that all beautiful eyes have been consolidated into one pair of blue ones, and that they are as big as moons. If you touch her hand you will feel a thrill go up your arm and down your spine, as you do when a four-pound bass strikes your frog when you are fishing. She will see that your necktie is on sideways, and she will

take hold of it to fix it, and you will not breathe for fear she will go away, and when she gets you fixed so you will pass in a crowd, you will be paralyzed all over, and unable to move, until she beckons you to come along, and when you start to walk you will feel all over like your foot is asleep. Walking a block or two beside this girl will be to you better than a trip to Europe, and a look at her face will seem to you a glimpse of heaven, and angels, and you will leave her after the too short interview, and you will be glad you are alive, and then you may see her riding in a street car with another, and you will want to commit murder. When these things occur, boy, you are in love, and you have got it bad. You think you don't love anybody, but you will. I have been there, boy, and there is no escape without taking to the woods, and love will make a trail through the forest, and over glaciers, and catch you if you don't watch out. So when love gets into your system, that way, just hold up your hands as though a hold-up man had the drop on you with a revolver, and let the girl go through you. The only way I escaped was that the girl married. Now go away and let me alone, boy, or I shall have to take you across my knee," and the red-headed boy backed out of the room and left Uncle Ike, his trembling fingers rattling the yellow paper of tobacco, trying to fill his pipe, and as the boy got outdoors and blew a charge of putty from his blower at the washwoman bending over the wash-tub, he said:

"Well, Uncle Ike hasn't had a picnic all his life."

CHAPTER IV.

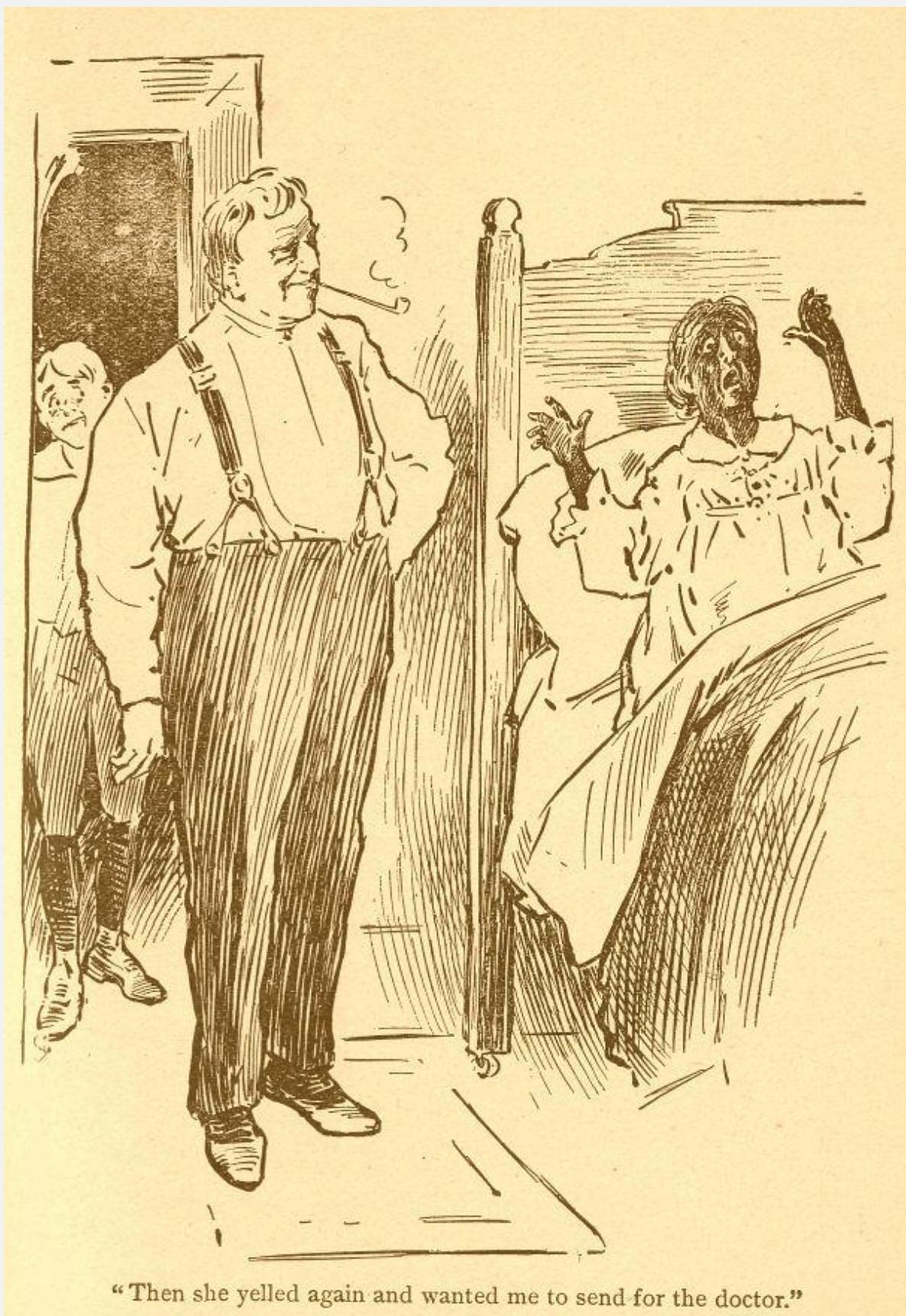
"What is the matter with your Aunt Almira this morning?" asked Uncle Ike of the red-headed boy, as he came out into the garden with a sling-shot, and began to shoot birdshot at the little cucumbers that were beginning to grow away from the pickle vine, as the boy called the cucumber tree.

"She's turned nigger," said the boy, turning his sling-shot at an Italian yelling strawberries. "Wait till I hit that dago on the side of the nose, and you will hear a noise that will remind you of Garibaldi crossing the Rubicon."

"Garibaldi never crossed the Rubicon, and you couldn't hit that Italian count on the nose in a week, and if you did he would chase you with a knife, and tree you in the cellar under the kindling wood, and if I interfered he would gash me in the stomach and claim protection from his government, and a war would only be averted between this country and Italy by an apology from the President, saluting the Italian flag by our navy, and an indemnity paid to your dago friend, enough to support him in luxury the balance of his life. So be careful with your birdshot. But, about your Aunt Almira; she was yelling for help this morning, and didn't come down to breakfast."

“Well, sir,” said the boy, respectfully, as he sheathed his trusty sling-shot in his pistol pocket, after the dago had felt a shot strike his hat, and he looked around at the boy with the whites of his eyes glassy and his earrings shaking with wrath, “It was all on account of the innocentest mistake that aunty is ill this morning. You see, every night she puts cold cream all over her face, and on her hands clear up above her wrists, to make herself soft. Last night she forgot it until she had got in bed and the light was put out, and then she yelled to me to bring the little tin box out of the bathroom, and I was busy studying my algebra and I made a mistake and got the shoe dressing, that paste that they put on patent leather shoes. Well, Aunt Almira put it on generous, and rubbed it in nice. I didn't know I had made a mistake until this morning, but I couldn't sleep a wink all night thinking how funny aunty would look in the morning.”

“Hold on,” said Uncle Ike, “don't prevaricate. You did it on purpose, and knew it all right, and let that poor lady sleep the sleep of innocence, blacker than the ace of spades. Say, if you was mine I would have a continuous performance right here now,” and Uncle Ike run his tongue a couple of times around a dry cigar a friend had given him, and licked the wrapper so it would hold in the shoddy filling. “Don't interrupt the speaker,” said the boy, as he handed Uncle Ike a match to touch off the Roman candle. “If you had seen Aunt Almira, just after she had yelled murder the third time this morning, you would not scold me. She woke up, and the first thing that attracted her attention was her hands, and she thought she had gone to bed with her long black kid party gloves on, and she tried to pull them off. When she couldn't get them off, she raised up in bed and looked at herself in a mirror, and that was the time she yelled, and I went in the room to help her. Well, sir, she hadn't missed a 'place on her face, neck and arms, and the paste shone just like patent leather. I said, aunty, you can go into the nigger show business, and she said, what is it, and I said, I give it up for I am no end man.”



“Then she yelled again and wanted me to send for the doctor.”

“Then she yelled again. Oh, dear, I was never so sorry for a high-born lady in my life, but to encourage her I told her I read of a white woman in Alabama that turned black in a single night, and the niggers would never have anything to say to her, because she was a hoodoo, and wasn't in their class, and then she yelled again and wanted me to send for a doctor, and I told her there wasn't any negro doctor in town, and what she wanted was to send for a scrubwoman, and then I showed her the box of shoe paste and told her she had got in the wrong box, and she laid it to me and shooed me out of the room like I was a hen, and she has been all the forenoon trying to wash that shoe paste off, but it will have to wear off, 'cause it is fast colors, and aunty has got to go to a heathen meeting at the church to-night, and she will have to send regrets. Don't you think women are awful careless about their toilets?” and the boy rubbed his red hair with a piece of sand-paper, because some one had told him sand-paper would take the red out of his hair.

“Do you know,” said Uncle Ike, as the cigar swelled up in the center and began to curl on the end, and he threw it to the hens, and watched a rooster pick at it and make up a face, “if I was your aunt I would skin you alive? If you were a little older, we would ship you on a naval vessel, where you couldn't get ashore once a year, and you could get punished every day.”

“I wouldn't go in the navy, unless I could be Dewey. Dewey has a snap. Every day I read how he has ordered some man thrown overboard. The other day a Filipino shoemaker brought him a pair of shoes and charged him two dollars more for them than he agreed to, and Dewey turned to a coxswain, or a belaying pin, or something, and told them to throw the man overboard. Uncle Ike, do you think Dewey throws everybody overboard that the papers say he does?”

“Well, I wouldn't like to contradict a newspaper,” said Uncle Ike, as he thought the matter over. “It has seemed to me for some time that Dewey had a habit of throwing people overboard that would be liable to get him into trouble when he gets home, if the habit sticks to him. For that reason I would suggest that the house that is to be presented to him at Washington be a one-story house, so he could throw people that did not please him out of a window and not kill them too dead. When he gets home and settled down, it is likely he will be called upon by Mark Hanna, General Alger and others, and they will be very apt to give Dewey advice as to how he ought to conduct himself, and what he ought to say; and if he had an office in the top of a ten-story building, the janitor or the policeman in the street would be finding the remains of some of those visitors flattened out on the sidewalk so they would have to be scraped up with a caseknife. Throwing people overboard in Manila bay, and in a ten-story flagship in Washington, is going to be different.”

“Well, boy,” said Uncle Ike, as the two wandered around the garden, looking at the things grow, “there is a sign that tomato cans are ripe, and you go and get one and I will hold this big, fat angleworm,” and he put his cane in front of a four-inch worm, which

shortened up and swelled out as big as a lead pencil. “I want just a quart of those worms in cold storage, and tomorrow we will go fishing. Don't you like to go out in the woods, by a stream, and hook an angleworm on to a hook, in scallops, so he will look just as though he was defying the fish, and throw it in, and wait till you get a nibble, and feel the electric current run up your arm, and then the fish yanks a little, and you can't refrain, hardly, from jerking, but you know he hasn't got hold enough yet, and you make a supreme effort to control your nerves, and by and by he takes it way down his neck, and you know he is your meat, and you pull, and the electricity just gives you a shock, and—
—”

“Yes, sir,” said the boy, interrupting the old man, “it feels just like going home with a girl from a party, and she accidentally touches you, and it goes all up and down you, and he swallows the bait, and you pull him out and have to take a jackknife and cut the hook out of his gills, and the angleworm is all chewed up, and when she looks at you as you bid her goodnight and says it was kind of you to see her home, and puts out her hand to shake you, you feel as though there was only one girl in the whole world, and when you start to go home you have to blow your fingers to keep them warm, and pry your fingers apart, but I don't like to scale 'em and clean 'em, but when they are fried in butter with bread crumbs, and you have baked potatoes, gosh, say, but you can't sleep all night from thinking maybe the next party you go to some other boy will ask her if he can't see her home, but I like bullheads better than sunfish, don't you, Uncle Ike?” and the boy went on filling his tomato can with worms.

“I have just one favor to ask,” said Uncle Ike, as he puckered up his mouth in a smile, then laughed so loud that it sounded like raking a stick along a picket fence, “and that is that you don't mix your fish up that way. When the subject is girls, stick to girls, and when it is fish, stay by the fish. I know there is a great deal of similarity in the way they bite, but when you get them well hooked the result is all the same, and they have to come into the basket, whether it is a fish or a girl. The way a girl acts reminds me a good deal of a black bass. You throw your hook, nicely baited with a fat angleworm, into the water near the bass, and you think he will make a hop, skip, and jump for it, but he looks the other way, swims around the worm, and pays no attention to it, but if he sees another bass pointing toward the worm he sticks up the top fin on his back, and turns sideways, and looks mad, and seems to say, 'I'll tend to this worm myself, and you go away,' and the bass finally goes up and snuffs at the worm, and turns up his nose, and goes away, as though it was no particular interest to him, but he turns around and keeps his eye on it, though, and after awhile you think you will pull the worm out, because the bass isn't very hungry, anyway, and just as you go to pull it up there is a disturbance in the water, and the bass that had seemed to close its eyes for a nice quiet nap, makes a six-foot jump, swallows the hook, worm, and eight inches of the line, kicks up his heels, and starts for the bottom of the river, and you think you have caught onto a yearling calf, and the reel sings and burns your fingers, and the bass jumps out of the water and tries to shake the hook out of his mouth, and you work hard, and act

carefully, for fear you will lose him, and you try to figure how much he weighs, and whether you will have him fried or baked, and whether you will invite a neighbor to dinner, who is always joking you about never catching any fish, and then you get him up near you, and he is tired out, and you think you never saw such a nice bass, and that it weighs at least six pounds, and just as you are reaching out with the landing net, to take him in, he gives one kick, chews off the line, you fall over backwards, and the bass disappears with a parting flop of the tail, and a man who is fishing a little ways off asks you what you had on your hook, and you say that it was nothing but a confounded dogfish, anyway, and you wind up your reel and go home, and you are so mad and hot that the leaves on the trees curl up and turn yellow like late in the fall. Many a girl has acted just that way, and finally chewed off the line, and let the man fall with a dull thud, and after he has got over it he says to those who have watched the angling that she was not much account, anyway, but all the time he knows by the feeling of goneness inside of him that he lies like a Spaniard,” and Uncle Ike tied a handkerchief over the tomato can to keep the worms in, and said to the boy, “Now, if you can get up at four o'clock in the morning we will go and get a fine mess.”

“Mess of bass or girls?” said the boy, as he looked up at the old man with a twinkle in his eye. “Bass, by gosh!” said Uncle Ike.

CHAPTER V.

“Here, what you up to, you young heathen?” said Uncle Ike, as a pair of small boxing gloves, about as big as goslings, struck him in the solar plexus and all the way down his stomach, and he noticed a red streak rushing about the room, side-stepping and clucking. “You are a nice looking Sunday-school scholar, you are, dancing around as though you were in the prize ring. Who taught you that foolishness, and what are you trying to do?” and the old man cornered the red-headed boy between the bookcase and the center-table, and took him across his knee, and fanned his trousers with a hand as big as a canvas ham, until he said he threw up the sponge.

“Well, I'll tell you,” said the red-headed boy, as the old man let him up and he felt of his trousers to see if they were warm, “I am going into the prize-fighting business, and Aunt Almira, who is studying for the stage, is teaching me to box. Gee, but she can give you a blow with her left across the ear that will make you think Jeffries has put on a shirt-waist, and a turquoise ring, and she and I are going to form a combination and make a barrel of money. Say, Aunt Almira has got so she can kick clear up to the gas jet, and she wants to play Juliet. I am going to play Jeffries to her Juliet.”

“Oh, you and your aunt have got things all mixed up. She does not have to kick to play Juliet. And you can't box well enough to get into the kindergarten class of prize fighters. What you want to fight for anyway? Better go and study your Sunday-school lesson.”

“I don't know,” said the boy, as he tied on a boxing glove by taking the string in his teeth, “there is more money in prize fighting than anything, and Jeffries was a nice Sunday-school boy, and his father is a preacher, and he said the Lord was on the side of Jim in the fight that knocked out Fitzsimmons. Do you believe, Uncle Ike, that the Lord was in the ring there at Coney Island, seconding Jeffries, and that the prayers of Jeffries' preacher father had anything to do with Fitzsimmons getting it right and left in the slats and on the jaw?”

“No! No! No!” said Uncle Ike, as he shuddered with disgust at the thought that the good Lord should be mixed up in such things just to make newspaper sensations. “There is not much going on that the Lord is not an eye-witness of, but when it comes to being on one side or the other of a prize fight He has got other business of more importance. He watches even a sparrow's fall, but it is mighty doubtful in my mind whether he paid any attention as to which of the two prize-fighting brutes failed to get up in ten seconds. Boxing is all right, and I believe in it, and want all boys to learn how to do it, in order that they may protect themselves, or protect a weak person from assault, but it ought to stop there. Men who fight each other for money ought to be classed with bulldogs, wear muzzles and a dog license, and be shunned by all decent people,” and the old man lit his pipe with deliberation and smoked a long time in silence.

“But they make money, don't they?” said the boy, who thought that making money was the chief end of man. “Think of making thirty thousand dollars in one night!”

“Yes, and think of the train robbers who make a hundred thousand dollars a night,” said the old man; “and what good did any money made by train robbing or prize fighting ever do anybody? The men who make money that way, blow it in for something that does them no good, and when they come to die you have to take up a collection to bury them. Don't be a prize fighter or a train robber if you can help it, boy, and don't ever get the idea that the Lord is sitting up nights holding pool tickets on a prize fight.”

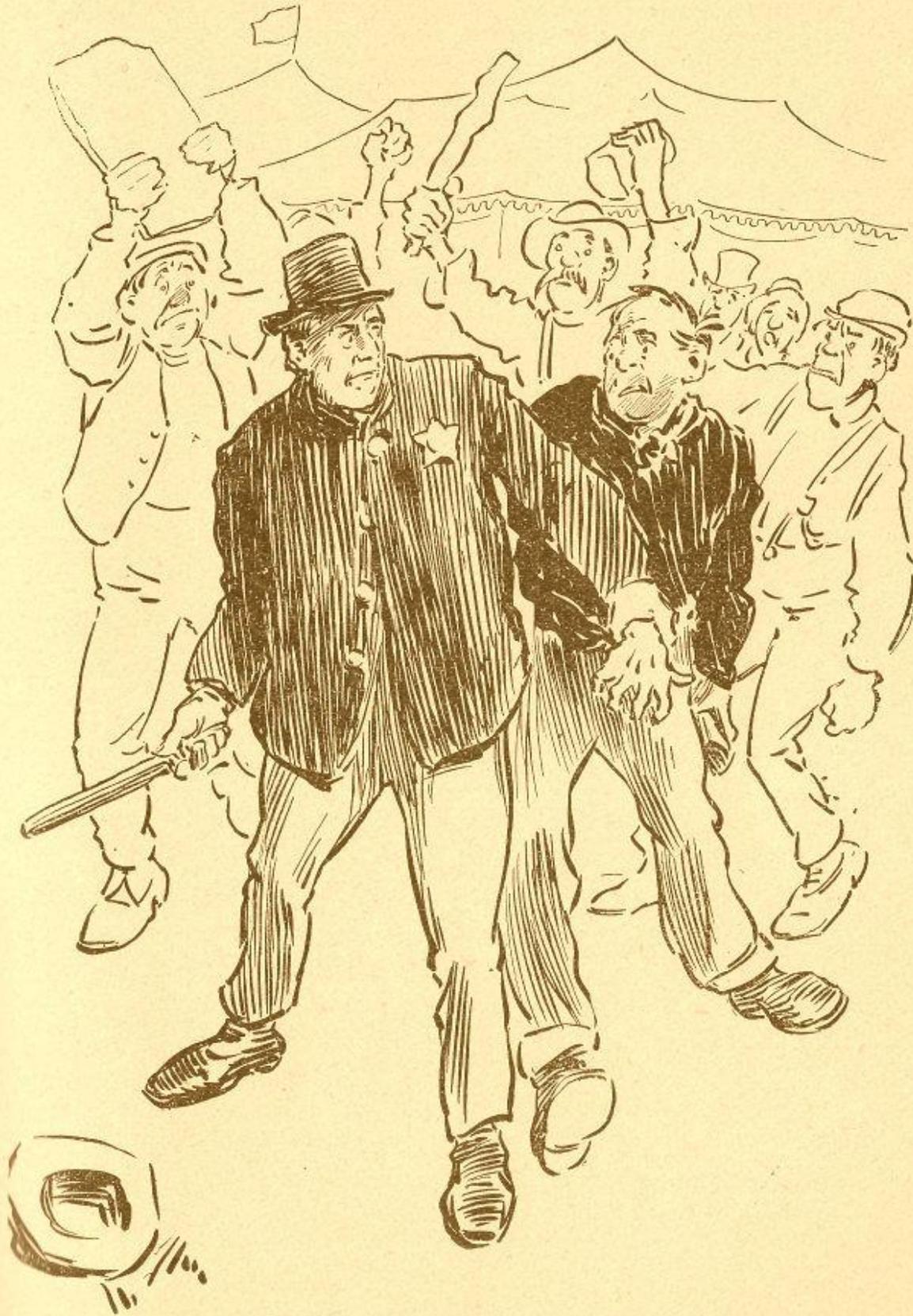
“Uncle Ike, why didn't you go to the circus the other night? We had more fun, and lemonade, and peanuts, and the clown was so funny,” said the boy; “and they had a fight, and a circus man threw a man out of the tent; and a woman rode on a horse with those great, wide skirts, and rosin on her feet and everywhere, so she would stick on, and——”

“Oh, don't tell me,” said Uncle Ike, as he ran a broom straw into his pipe stem to open up the pores; “I was brought up among circuses, and used to sit up all night and go out on the road to meet the old wagon show coming to town. Did you ever go away out five or six miles, in the night, to meet a circus, and get tired, and lay down by the road and go to sleep, and have the dew on the grass wet your bare feet and trousers clear up to

your waistband, and suddenly have the other boys wake you up, and there was a fog so you couldn't see far, and suddenly about daylight you hear a noise like a hog that gets frightened and says 'Woof!' and there coming out of the fog right on to you is the elephant, looking larger than a house, and you keep still for fear of scaring him, and he passes on and then the camels come, and the cages, and the sleepy drivers letting the six horses go as they please, and the wagons with the tents, and the performers sleeping on the bundles, and the band wagon with all the musicians asleep, and the lions and tigers don't say anything; and you never do anything except keep your eyes bulging out till they get by, and then you realize you are six miles from home, and you follow the procession into town, and when you get home your parents take you across a chair and pet you with a press board for being out all night, until you are so blistered that you cannot sit down on a seat at the circus in the afternoon. Oh, I have been there, boy, barefooted and bareheaded, with a hickory shirt on open clear down, and torn trousers opened clear up. Lemonade never tastes like it does at a circus, sawdust never smells the same anywhere else, and nothing in the whole world smells like a circus," and the old man's face lighted up as though the recollection had made him young again.

"Did you ever see a fight at a circus, Uncle Ike?" asked the red-headed boy, who seemed to have been more impressed with the fight he had seen than with the performance.

"See a circus fight?" said Uncle Ike. "Gosh, I was right in the midst of a circus fight, where several people were killed, and the whole town was a hospital for a month. See that scar on top of my head," and the old man pointed with pride to a place on his head that looked as though a mule had kicked him. "I was a deputy constable the day Levi J. North's old circus, menagerie and troupe of Indians showed in the old town where I lived."



"I grabbed a circus man by the arm."

“Some country boys got in a muss with a side-show barker and they got to fighting, and some Irish railroad graders heard the row, and they rushed in with spades and picks' and clubs, and some gentleman said, 'Hey, Rheube,' and the circus men came rushing out, and I came up with a tin star, and said, 'In the name of the state I command the peace,' and I grabbed a circus man by the arm, and an Irishman named Gibbons said, 'to hell wid 'em,' and then a box car or something struck me on the head, and I laid down, and three hundred circus men and about the same number of countrymen and railroad hands walked on me, and they fought for an hour, and when the people got me home and I woke up the circus had been gone a week, and they had buried those who died, and a whole lot were in jail, and my head didn't get down so I could get my hat on before late in the fall.”

“I grabbed a circus man by the arm.”

“Did you resign as constable?” asked the redheaded boy, and he looked at Uncle Ike with awe, as he would at a hero of a hundred battles.

“Did I? That's the first thing I did when I came to, and I have never looked at a tin star on a deputy since without a shudder, and I have never let an admiring public force any office on to me to this day. One day in a public office was enough for your Uncle Ike, but I would like to go to a circus once more and listen to those old jokes of the clown, which were so old that we boys knew them by heart sixty years ago,” and Uncle Ike lighted his pipe again, and tried to laugh at one of the old jokes.

“Uncle Ike, I've got a scheme to get rich, and I will take you into partnership with me,” said the redheaded boy, as Uncle Ike began to cool off from his circus story. “You go in with me and furnish the money, and I will buy a lot of hens, and fix up the back yard with lath, and just let the hens lay eggs and raise chickens, and we will sell them. I have figured it all up, and by starting with ten hens and two roosters, and let them go ahead and attend to business, in twenty years we would have seventeen million nine hundred and sixty-one fowls, which at 10 cents a pound about Thanksgiving time would amount to——”

“There, there, come off,” said Uncle Ike, as he lit up the old pipe again, and got his thinker a'thinking. “I know what you want. You want to get me in on the ground floor, I have been in more things on the ground floor than anybody, but there was always another fellow in the cellar. You are figuring hens the way you do compound interest, but you are away off. Life is too short to wait for compound interest on a dollar to make a fellow rich, and cutting coupons off a hen is just the same. I started a hen ranch fifty years ago, on the same theory, and went broke. There is no way to make money on hens except to turn them loose on a farm, and have a woman with an apron over her head hunt eggs, and sell them as quick as they are laid, before a hen has a chance to get the fever to set. You open a hen ranch in the back yard, and your hens will lay like thunder, when eggs are four cents a dozen, but when eggs are two shillings a dozen you might take a hen by the neck and shake her and you couldn't get an egg. When eggs are high,

hens just wander around as though they did not care whether school kept or not, and they kick up a dust and lallygag, and get some disease, and eat all the stuff you can buy for them, and they will make such a noise the neighbors will set dogs on them, and the roosters will get on strike and send walking delegates around to keep hens from laying, and then when eggs get so cheap they are not good enough to throw at jay actors, the whole poultry yard will begin to work overtime, and you have eggs to spare. If the hens increased as you predict in your prospectus to me, it would take all the money in town to buy food for them, and if you attempted to realize on your hens to keep from bankruptcy, everybody would quit eating chicken and go to eating mutton, and there you are. I decline to invest in a hen ranch right here now, and if you try to inveigle me into it I shall have you arrested as a gold-brick swindler,” and Uncle Ike patted the red-headed boy on the shoulder and ran a great hard thumb into his ribs.

CHAPTER VI.

“Say, Uncle Ike, did you see this in the paper about fifty ambulances being lost, on the way to Tampa, Florida, last year?” said the red-headed boy, as Uncle Ike sat in an armchair, with his feet on the center-table, his head down on his bosom, his pipe gone out, yet hanging sideways out of the corner of his mouth, and the ashes spilled all over his shirt bosom. “Seventeen carloads of ambulances that started all right for Tampa, never showed up, and the government is writing everywhere to have them looked up. Wouldn't that skin you?” and the boy stood up beside Uncle Ike, took his pipe out of his mouth, filled it again, brushed the ashes off his shirt, and handed him a lighted wax match that he had found somewhere. Uncle Ike put the match to his pipe, took a few whiffs, stuck up his nose, threw the match into the fireplace, and said:

“Where did you get that tallow match? Gosh, I had just as soon light my pipe with kerosene oil. Always give me a plain, old-fashioned brimstone match, if you love me, and keep out of my sight these cigarette matches, that smell like a candle that has been blown out when it needed snuffing.” And the old man began to wake up, as the tobacco smoke went searching through his hair and up to the ceiling. “And so the government lost fifty ambulances in transit, eh? Well, they will be searching the returned soldiers next, to see if the boys got away with them, and never think of looking up the contractors, who probably never shipped them at all. It must be that the boys got tired of embalmed beef, and ate the ambulances. When a man is hungry you take a slice of nice, fresh ambulance, and broil it over the coals, with plenty of seasoning, and a soldier could sustain life on it. The government must be crippled for ambulances, and I think we better get up a subscription to buy some more. An ambulance famine is a terrible

thing, and I have my opinion of a soldier who will steal an ambulance. When I was in the army, I remember that at the battle of Stone River we——”

“Oh, Uncle Ike, please don't tell me any of your terrible army experiences,” said the boy, as he remembered that he had heard his uncle tell of being in at least a hundred battles, when the history of the family showed that the old man was only south during the war for about six months, and he brought home a blacksnake whip as a souvenir, and it was believed that he had worked in the quartermaster's department, driving mules. “Let us talk about something enjoyable this beautiful day. How would you like to be out on a lake, or river, today, in a boat, drifting around, and forgetting everything, and having fun?”

“I don't want any drifting around in mine,” said Uncle Ike, as he got up from his chair, limped a little on his rheumatic leg, and went to the window and looked out, and wished he were young again. “Don't you ever drift when you are out in a boat. You just take the oars and pull, somewhere, it don't make any difference where, as long as you pull. Row against the current, and against the wind, and bend your back, and make the boat jump, but don't drift. If you get in the habit of drifting when you are a boy, you will drift when you are a man, and not pull against the stream. The drifting boy becomes a drifting business man, who sits still and lets those who row get away from him. The drifting lawyer sits and drifts, and waits, and sighs because people do not find out that he is great. He wears out pants instead of shoe leather. When you see a man the seat of whose pants are shiny and almost worn through, while his shoes are not worn, except on the heels, where he puts them on the table, and waits and dreams, you can make up your mind that he drifted instead of rowed, when he was a boy, out in a boat. The merchant who goes to his store late in the morning, and sits around awhile, and leaves early in the afternoon, and only shows enterprise in being cross to the clerk who lets a customer escape with car fare to get home, is a drifter, who stands still in his mercantile boat while his neighbors who row, and push, and paddle, are running away from him. The boy who drifts never catches the right girl. He drifts in to call on her, and drifts through the evening, and nothing has been done, and when she begins to yawn, he drifts away. She stands this drifting sort of love-making as long as she can, and by and by there comes along a boy who rows, and he keeps her awake, and they go off on a spin on their wheels, and they can't drift on wheels if they try, because they have got to keep pushing, and before he knows it the drifting boy finds that the boy who rows is miles ahead with the girl, and all the drifting boy can do is to yawn and say, 'Just my dumb luck.' Dogs that just drift and lay in the shade, and loll, never amount to anything. The dog that digs out the woodchuck does not drift; he digs and barks, and saws wood, and by and by he has the woodchuck by the pants, and shakes the daylights out of him. He might lay by the woodchuck hole and drift all day, and the woodchuck would just stay in the hole and laugh at the dog. The pointer dog that stays under the wagon never comes to a point on chickens, and the duck dog that stays on the shore and waits for the dead duck to drift in, is not worth the dog biscuit he eats.

“No, boy, whatever you do in this world, don't drift around, but row as though you were going after the doctor,” and the old man turned from the window and put his arm around the red-headed boy, and hugged him until he heard something rattle in the boy's side pocket, and the boy pulled out a box with the cover off, and a white powder scattered over his clothes. “What is that powder?” asked the old uncle.

“That is some of this foot-ease that I saw advertised in the paper. Aunt Almira likes pigs' feet, and she says they lay hard on her stomach; so I got some foot-ease and sprinkled a little on her pigs' feet for lunch, and she ate it all right. Say, don't you think it is nice to be trying to do kind acts for your auntie?”

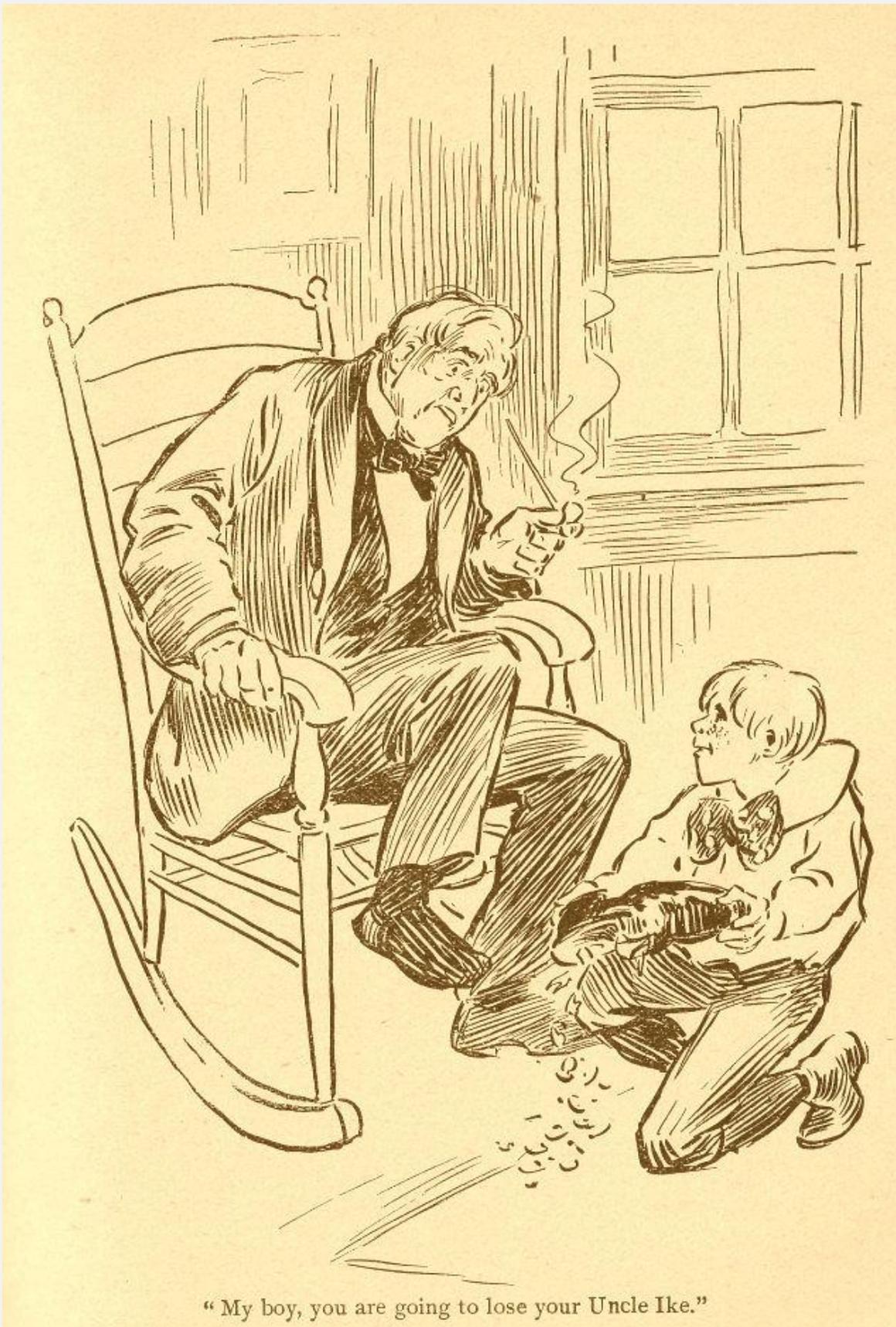
“Yes; but if she ever finds out about that pigs' foot ease, she will make you think your trousers are warmer than your hair. You strike me as being a boy that resembles a tornado. No one knows when you are going to become dangerous, or where you are going to strike. You and a tornado are a good deal like a cross-eyed man; you don't strike where you look as though you were aiming, and suddenly you strike where you are not looking, and where nobody is looking for you to strike. Nature must have been in a curious mood when she produced cross-eyed men, red-headed boys and tornadoes. What do you think ought to be done to Nature for giving me a redheaded boy to bring up, eh, you rascal?” and the old man chucked the boy under the chin, as though he wasn't half as mad at Nature as he pretended to be.

“Uncle Ike, do you think a tornado could be broken up, when it got all ready to tear a town to pieces, by shooting into it with a cannon, as the scientific people say?” said the boy, climbing up into the old man's lap, and slyly putting a handful of peanut shucks down under the waistband of his uncle's trousers.

“Well, I don't know,” said Uncle Ike, as he wiggled around a little when the first peanut shuck got down near the small of his back. “These scientific people make me weary, talking about preventing tornadoes by firing cannon into the funnel-shaped clouds. Why don't they do it? If a tornado came up, you would find these cannon sharps in a cellar somewhere. They are a passel of condemned theorists, and they want someone else to take sight over a cannon at an approaching tornado, while the sharps look through a peep-hole and see how it is going to work. You might have a million cannon loaded ready for tornadoes, and when one came up it would come so quick nobody would think of the cannon, and everybody would dig out for a place of safety. Not one artilleryman in a million could hit a tornado in a vital part. Do these people think tornadoes are going around with a target tied on them, for experts to shoot cannon balls at? A tornado is like one of these Fourth of July nigger-chasers, that you touch off and it starts somewhere and changes its mind and turns around and goes sideways, and when it finds a girl looking the other way it everlastingly makes for her and runs into her pantalets when she would swear it was pointed the other way. No, I am something of a sportsman myself, and can shoot a gun some, but if I had a cannon in each hand loaded for elephants, and I should see a tornado going the other way, I would drop both

guns and crawl into a hole, and the tornado would probably turn around and pick up the guns and fire them into the hole I was in. That's the kind of an insect a tornado is, and don't you ever fool with one. A tornado is worse than a battle. I remember when we were at the battle of Gettysburg——”

“Oh, for Heaven's sake, Uncle Ike, what have I done that you should fight that war all over again every time I try to have a quiet talk with you?” and the boy stuffed his fingers in his ears, and got up off the old man's lap, and the uncle got up and walked around, and when the peanut shells began to work down his legs, and scratch his skin, and he found his foot asleep from holding the big boy in his lap, the old man thought he was stricken with paralysis, and he sat down again, and called the boy to him and said, in a trembling voice:



“ My boy, you are going to lose your Uncle Ike.”

“My boy, you are going to lose your Uncle Ike. I feel that the end is coming, and before I go to the beautiful beyond I want to say a few serious words to you. It is coming as I had hoped. The disease begins at my feet, and will work up gradually, paralyzing my limbs, then my body, and lastly my brain will be seized by the destroyer, and then it will all be over with your Uncle Ike. Remove my shoes, my boy, and I will tell you a story. When we scaled the perpendicular wall at Lookout Mountain, in the face of the Confederate guns, and——”

“Can this be death?” said the boy, as he took off one of the old man's shoes and emptied out a handful of peanut shucks, and laughed loud and long.

“Well, by gum!” said Uncle Ike, “peanuts instead of paralysis,” and he jumped up and kicked high with the lately paralyzed legs; “now, I haven't eaten peanuts in a week, and I suppose those shucks have been in my clothes all this time. I am not going to die. Go dig some worms and I will show you the liveliest corpse that ever caught a mess of bullheads,” and the boy dropped the shoe and went out winking and laughing as though he was having plenty of fun, and Uncle Ike went to a mirror and looked at himself to see if he was really alive.

CHAPTER VII.

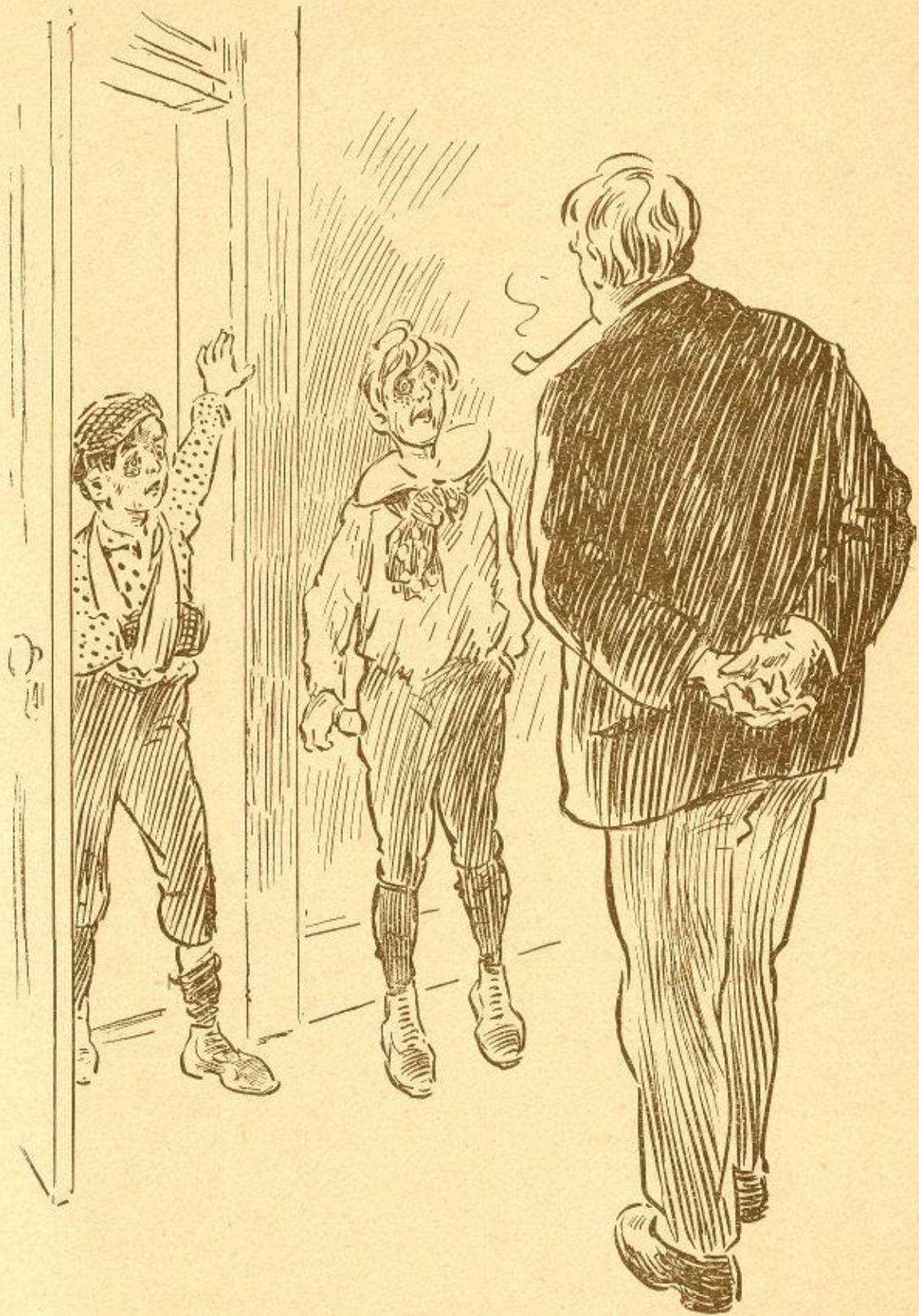
“You are a nice-looking duck,” said Uncle Ike, as the red-headed boy came into the sitting-room with a black' eye and a scratch across his nose, and one thumb tied up in a rag, but looking as well, otherwise, as could be expected. “What you been doing? Run over by a trolley car or anything?”

“Nope,” said the boy, as he looked in the mirror to see how his eye was coloring, with all the pride of a man who is coloring a meerschaum; “I just had a fight. Licked a boy, that's all,” and he put his hand to his head, where a lock of his red hair had been pulled out.

“You look as though you had licked a boy,” said the old man taking a good look at the blue spot around the boy's eye. “I suppose he is telling his folks how he licked you, too. My experience has been that in these boys' fights you can't tell which licks until you hear both stories. What was it about, anyway?”

“He lied about you, Uncle Ike, and I choked him until he said 'peunk,' and then I let him up, but he wouldn't apologize, and said he would leave it to you, if what he said was true or not, and here he comes now,” and the red-headed boy opened the door and ushered in a boy about his own size, with two black eyes and a piece peeled off his cheek, and one arm in a sling.

“Which is Jeffries?” asked Uncle Ike, as he filled his pipe, and looked over the two companions who had been scrapping.



“Which is Jeffries?” asked Uncle Ike.

“He is Jeffries,” said the visitor, “and I am Fitzsimmons, but I want to have another go at him, unless we leave it to arbitration,” and the boy looked at the red-headed boy with blood in his eye, and at Uncle Ike with a look of no particular admiration.

“Well, what was the cause of the row?” said Uncle Ike, as he took a chair between the two boys, lit his pipe, and smiled as he saw the marks of combat on their persons.

“He said you used to be a drunkard, Uncle Ike, and had been to the Keeley cure, and I called him a liar, and then we mixed up.”

“That's about the size of it,” said the other boy; “now, which was right?”

Uncle Ike smoked up and filled the room so it looked like camping out and cooking over a fire made of wet wood, and thought a long time, and looked very serious, and the red-headed boy could see they were in for a talk. Finally the old man said:

“Boys, you are both right and both wrong, and I'll tell you all about it. I never was a drunkard, and never drank much, but I have been to the cure all the same. It was this way: I had a friend who was one of the best men that ever lived, only he got a habit of drinking too much, and no one seemed able to reason with him. He wouldn't take advice from his own mother, his wife, or me, or anybody. He was just going to the devil on a gallop, and it was only a question of a year or two when he would die. I loved that man like a brother, but he would get mad the minute I spoke of his drinking, and I quit talking to him, though I wanted to save him. I have smoked dog-leg tobacco many a night till after midnight, trying to study a way to save the only man in the world that I ever actually loved, and I finally got it down fine. I began to act as though I was half drunk whenever I saw my friend, spilled whisky on my coat sleeves, and acted disreputable, and got a few good fellows to talk with him about what a confounded wreck I was getting to be; and he actually got to pitying me, and finally got disgusted with me; and one day he said to me that I was a disgrace, and was making more different kinds of a fool of myself than any drunkard he ever met. I got mad at him, and told him to attend to his own business and left him. Then the boys got to telling him that the only way to save me was to get me to go to a cure; and, do you know, that good fellow that I would have given the world to save, came to me and urged me to, take the cure; and at first I was indignant that he should interfere in my affairs, and finally he said he would go if I would. Then we struck a bargain, and went to Dwight, and took the medicine. The boys had told the doctors the story, and they only gave me one shot in the arm; but that came near killing me, because it almost broke me of using tobacco. Well, I remained there ten days, and, while they were pretending to cure me, they were curing my friend sure enough, putting the gold cure into his system with injections and drinks, while I didn't get anything but ginger ale; and when we were discharged cured, I was the happiest man in the world, except my friend, who was happier. He was not only cured himself, and an honor to his family, but he thought he had saved me from a drunkard's grave. That's the story, boys, and now you get up and shake hands, and don't fight any more over your Uncle Ike,” and the old man patted them both on the head, and they

shook hands and laughed at each other's black eyes. As the red-headed boy showed his late antagonist to the door, he turned to his uncle and said:

“Uncle Ike, if you have ever held up a railroad train, or robbed a bank, or stolen horses, or done anything that would cause you to be arrested, I beg of you to tell me of it now, so if anybody abuses you in my presence I won't get into a fight every time,” and the boy put his arm around his Uncle Ike and hugged him, and added, “You were a thoroughbred when you bilked that friend of yours to take the cure.”

“Oh, I don't know,” said Uncle Ike, “that reminds me of the battle of Chickamauga. When Bragg's forces were——”

“Fire! Fire!” yelled the red-headed boy, and he rushed out of doors and left the old man talking to his pipe.

“Has that battle of Chickamauga been fought out to a finish yet?” said the red-headed boy, as he stuck his head in the door after the imaginary fire alarm that he had created to escape Uncle Ike's war history, “for if it is ended I want to come in, but I can't stand gore, and your war stories are so full of blood that you must have had to swim in it.”

“Oh, you don't know a hero when you see one,” said the old man, as he straightened up and saluted the boy in a military manner, only that he used his left hand instead of his right hand.

“Well, I'll tell you,” said the boy as he got inside the room and stood with his hand on the door knob, ready to escape if Uncle Ike got excited. “You old veterans make me sick. I have heard nothing for fifteen years except war talk, old war talk, back number war talk, about how you old fellows put down the rebellion, and suffered, and fought, and all that rot. Why, I heard a bugler who enlisted for the Spanish war, and who only got as far as Jacksonville, say that you fellows that put down the rebellion in 1864 were just a mob, and that you didn't have any fighting, and that the Southern people were only fooling you, and that you didn't suffer like the Spanish war heroes did, and that you just had a picnic from start to finish. The bugler said he wouldn't ask any better fun than to fight the way you fellows did, when you had all you wanted to eat, good beds to sleep on, and servants to carry your guns, and cook for you. The bugler said you fellows all get pensions just for making an excursion through the Southern resorts, while the heroes of the Spanish war, who fought a foreign country to a standstill, and went without food, and got malaria, are without pensions, and just existing on the record they made fighting for their country——” and the boy stopped nagging the old man when he noticed that Uncle Ike was turning blue in the face, and choking to keep down his wrath.

“Where is this heroic bugler of the Spanish war?” said Uncle Ike, trying to be calm, but actually frothing at the mouth. “Bring him here, and let me hear him say these things, condemn him, and I will take him across my knee and I will knock the wind out of him, so that he can never gather enough in his carcass to blow another bugle. Why, confound him, he is a liar. The war of the rebellion was a war, not a country

schuetzenfest, with a chance to go home every night and sleep in a feather bed, and get a Turkish bath. The whole Spanish war, except what the navy did, was not equal to an outpost skirmish in '63. Of course, the rough riders and the weary walkers did a nice job going up San Juan hill, but we had a thousand such fights in the rebellion. After that skirmish there was nothing done by the army at Santiago, but to sit down in the mud and wait for the Spaniards to eat their last cracker, and kill their last dog and eat it, and then surrender. Ask that bugler to tell you where he found, in his glorious career as a wind instrument in the Spanish war, any Grants, Shermans, Sheridans, Logans, Pap Thomases, McClellans, Kilpatricks, Custers, McPhersons, Braggs, and hundreds of such heroes. What has the bugler got to show for his war? Shafter! And Alger! And all of them quarreling over the little bone of victory that was not big enough for a meal for our old generals of the war of the rebellion. And he talks about our pensions, the young kid. He probably wears corsets. Why, we didn't get pensions until we got so old we couldn't get up alone. His gang of Jacksonville heroes will probably get pensions when they are old enough. Bring that bugler in here some day, and don't let him know what he is going to run up against, and I will give you a dollar, and I will let you see me dust the carpet with him," and the old man sat down and fanned himself, while the boy looked scared for fear Uncle Ike was going to have a fit. "Why, at the battle of Pea Ridge, when a minie ball struck me, when I was on the firing line——"

"Keno," said the red-headed boy, as he went through the window head first, and over the picket fence on his stomach, and disappeared down the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Say, Uncle Ike, don't you think the Fourth of July is sort of played out?" asked the red-headed boy, as he came to Uncle Ike's room on the morning of the 5th, by appointment, to demonstrate to the old man that he had not been quite killed by the celebration of the great day. "It seems to me we don't have half as many accidents and fires as we used to," and the boy counted off to the uncle the dozen injuries he had received by burns, and dug into his eye with a soiled handkerchief in search of some gravel from a torpedo.

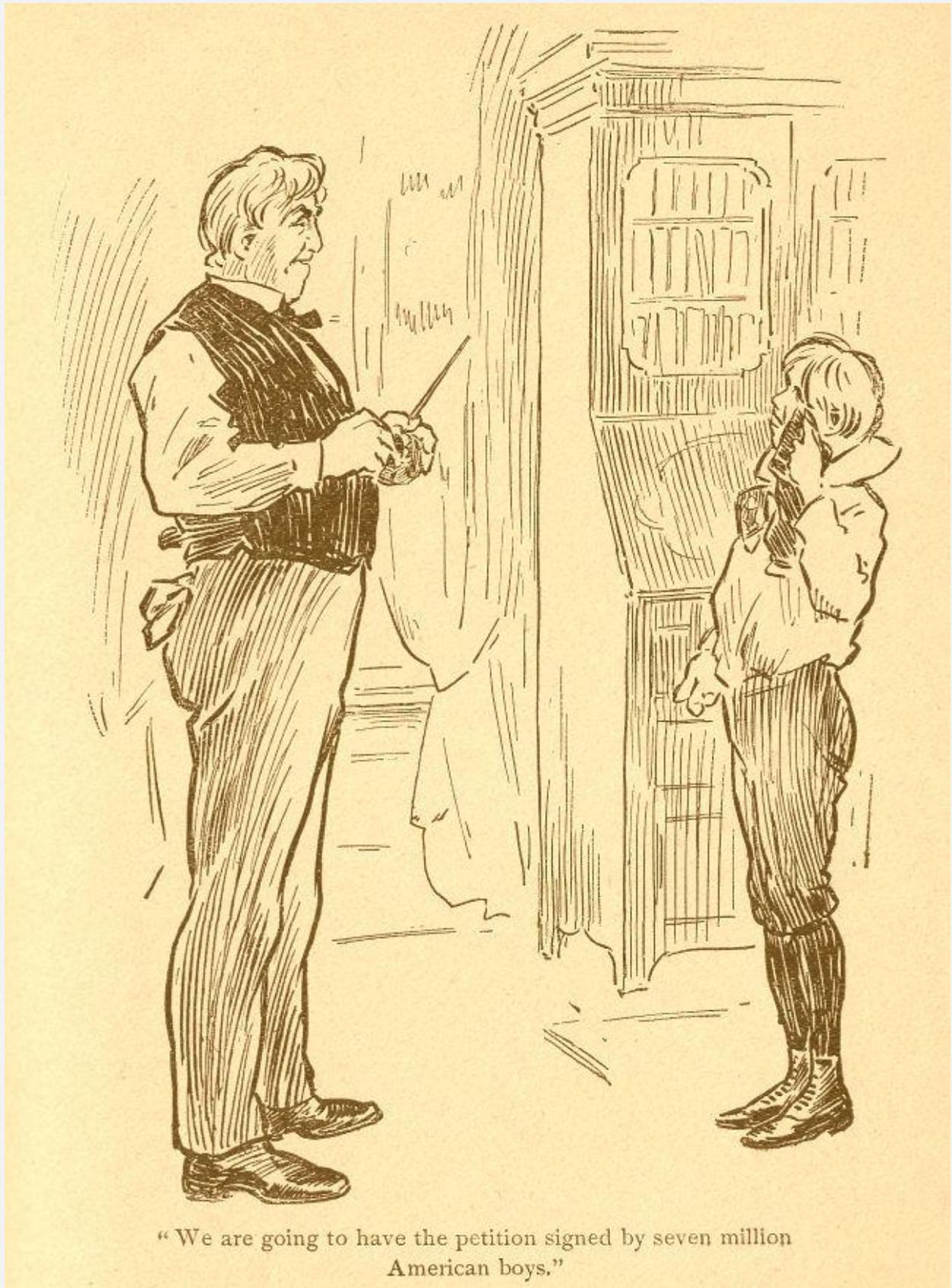
"Oh, I don't know," said Uncle Ike, as he lighted the old pipe and began to look over the boy's injuries. "The Fourth is carrying on business at the old stand, apparently. Your injuries are in the right places, on the left hand, principally, and the gravel is in the left eye. That is right. Always keep the right hand and the right eye in good shape, so you can sight a gun and pull a trigger, either in shooting ducks or Filipinos. You see, our country is growing, and we are celebrating the Fourth from Alaska to Porto Rico, and

from London to Luzon, so we can't celebrate so very much in any one place. I expect by another Fourth Queen Victoria will be yelling for the glorious Fourth, Emperor William will be touching off dynamite firecrackers, Russia will be eating Roman candies, and Aguinaldo will be touching off nigger-chasers and drinking red lemonade. This is a great country, boy, and don't you forget it."

"Well, you may be right," said the boy, as he poured some witch-hazel on a rag around his thumb, "but it looks to me as though the troops in the Philippines will be climbing aboard transports protected by the fleet, with Aguinaldo slaughtering the boys in the hospitals and looting Manila, if the President does not get a move onto himself and send another army out there to be victorious some more. The way it is now, we shall not have troops enough there to bury the dead. The boys have been debating at school the Philippine question, and it was decided unanimously that the President is up against a tough proposition, and if he does not stop looking at the political side of that war and send troops enough to eat up those shirtless soldiers, who can live on six grains of rice and two grains of quinine a day, we are going to be whipped out of our boots. That's what us boys think."

"Well, you boys don't want to think too much, or you are liable to have brain fever," said the old man, as he realized that there was mutiny brewing among the school children. "What you fellows want the President to do? Haven't we whipped the negroes everywhere, and taken village after village, and burned them, and—and—chased them—and——"

"Sure!" said the boy, as he saw that his uncle was at a loss to defend the policy of his government. "We have had regular foot races with them, and burned the huts of the helpless, and taken villages, and then didn't have troops to hold them, and when we went out of a village on one street, the niggers came in on another, and shot into our pants. We swim rivers and take towns with as brave work as ever was done, and become so exhausted we have to lay down in the mud and have a fit, and the niggers climb trees like monkeys, eat cocoanuts and chatter at us. Say, Uncle Ike, do you know us boys are getting tired of this business, and we are getting up a petition to the President to get a trained nurse to put Alger to sleep and run the war department herself."



"We are going to have the petition signed by seven million American boys."

“We are going to have the petition signed by seven million American boys. Why, if those niggers could go off in the woods and shoot at a mark for a week, and get so they could hit anything, our boys would all be dead in a month. The trouble is the niggers just pull up a gun and touch it off like a girl does a firecracker. She lights the tip end of the tail of a firecracker, and throws it, and you forget all about it, and when her firecracker has ceased to interest you, and you don't know where it is, it goes off in your coat collar, or down the waistband of your pants. A Filipino shoots the way a trained monkey touches off a syphon of seltzer water. He knows it will squirt if he touches the thumbpiece, but it is as liable to hit him in the face, or wet his feet as anything. Some day those niggers will learn how to shoot, and when Funston attempts to swim a river he will get a bullet through the head, and Lawton and MacArthur, who stand up in plain sight and let them practice will wish they hadn't. We boys have decided to support the President until he conquers those people, if that is what he is trying to do, but, by gosh, if he does not wake up and quit looking pleasant, and seeming to hope that Filipino shower is going to blow over, we feel that he will wake up some morning and find that a nigger tornado has struck his brave boys at Manila, and they will be in the cyclone cellars waiting for somebody to come and dig them out. Don't you think so, Uncle Ike?”

“I say, boy,” said Uncle Ike, as he lighted up the pipe, after letting it go out while listening to the war talk of the excited boy, “do you think you could arrange your affairs so as to leave here by tomorrow evening and take the limited for Washington? Would you accept the vacancy in the office of secretary of war? I know this offer comes sudden to you, and that you will have no time to consult your debating society as to whether you ought to accept the position, but when you reflect that the country is in a critical situation, and needs a man of blood and iron to steer the craft through among the rocks, I feel that you cannot refuse. The ideas you express are so near like those that General Jackson would express if he were alive, that I feel the country would be blessed if you were in a position to brace up the President. Now go wash your face, and I will wire the President that you will be there day after tomorrow morning. But if you go there thinking, as many people seem to think, that the President's backbone is made of banana pulp, and that he is not alive to the situation, you will make a mistake. There are chumps like you all over this country that wonder why they have not been selected to run this country, who think the commander-in-chief is running ward politics instead of the affairs of the country. Of course, a President gets under obligations to different elements in a campaign, and finds it necessary to surround himself with a cabinet, a few members of which are not worth powder to blow them up, but if they were all weak and vicious on the make, and political ciphers, and the President himself is all right, the country will not go very far wrong. What you boys want to do is to debate less on questions you do not understand, and saw more wood. Let the grown people run things a while longer, and you boys prepare to take the burden a quarter of a century hence,” and the old man got up and put his arm around the boy and felt of his head to see if he could find any soft spot.

“Well, I was only joshin' any way, Uncle Ike,” said the boy, as he put both arms around the old man, and felt in his uncle's pistol pocket to discover something that was eatable. “But, Uncle Ike, I am serious now. I have got in love with a girl, and she is mashed on another boy, and I am having more trouble than McKinley. You know that quarter you gave me yesterday? I saved 20 cents of it to treat her to ice-cream soda; and when I went to find her, she was coming out of the drug store with the other boy, and I found out they had been sitting on stools at the soda fountain all the forenoon, drinking all the different kinds of soda, until he had to hold her down for fear she would go up like a balloon, from the soda bubbles that she had concealed about her person. I have not decided whether to kill my rival, or go and enlist and go to the Philippines and break her heart. What did you do under such circumstances, Uncle, when you used to get in love?”

“I used to take castor oil,” said Uncle Ike, as he looked at the forlorn-looking boy, “but you don't need to. Just you take off those tan shoes and put on black shoes, and change your luck. I never knew it to fail, when a boy first put on tan shoes and a high collar. He is bound to get in love before night. Take off those shoes, and you can go out in the world and look everybody in the face and never get in love. It is the same as being vaccinated,” and the old man looked sober and serious, and the boy went to work to change his shoes, with a bright hope for the future lighting up his face.

CHAPTER IX.

“Go away from me! Don't you come any nearer or I will smite you!” said Uncle Ike, as the redheaded boy came into the room with his red hair cut short with the clippers, a green negligee shirt, with a red necktie, a white collar, a tan belt with a nickel buckle, and short trousers with golf socks of a plaid pattern that were so loud they would turn out a fire department. “I am afraid of you. Who in the world got you to have your red hair shingled so it looks like red sand-paper? And who is your tailor? Have I got to go down to my grave with the thought that a nephew of mine would appear in daylight looking like that? Get me a piece of smoked glass, or I shall have cataracts on both eyes,” and the old man knocked the ashes and deceased tobacco out of his pipe on his boot heel, and dug the stuff out of the bottom of the pipe with a jack-knife.

“Well, I had to have my hair cut, because the boys at the picnic filled my hair with burdock burrs, and it couldn't be combed out,” said the boy, as he took a match and scratched it on top of his head, and lit it, while the uncle sniffed at the burned hair. “Aunt Almira cut my hair first with a pair of dull shears, to get the burrs out, and then a barber cut off all there was left, with these horse-clippers, and I feel like a dog that

has had his hindquarters clipped to make a lion of him. Aunt Almira says I have got a great head. Say, Uncle Ike, did you ever examine the bumps on my head? I was at a phrenology lecture once, and the feeler could tell all that was going on in a man's head just by the bumps. Feel of mine, Uncle, and tell my fortune," and the red-headed boy came up to the old man for examination.

"I am no phrenologist," said Uncle Ike, as he smoked up and got the boy to coughing, "but there are some bumps I know the names of," and he felt all around the boy's head, and looked wise. "This place where there is a dent in your head is where the bump of veneration will grow, later, if you get in the habit of letting old people have a show, and get up and offer them your chair, and run errands for them without expecting them to pay you. This place on the back of your head, where there is a bump as big as a hickory nut, is what we call the hat rack bump, because you can hang your hat on it. The barber ought to have cut a couple of slices off that bump with his lawn mower. Here is a bump that shows that you are color blind. Be careful, or you will marry a negro girl by mistake. As a precaution, when you begin to get in love serious, bring the girl to me that I may see if she is white. Here is a soft bump that indicates that you will steal——"



“ Here is a soft bump that indicates that you will steal — ”

“Oh, come off,” said the boy, laughing, and removing his head from the investigation. “That is where I was struck by a golf ball. You are no phrenologist. I know what you are, Uncle Ike; you are a fakir. But, say, I was sick last night, after we had that green watermelon for dinner, and Aunt Almira said I was troubled with sewer gas, and she gave me the peppermint test. Do you think peppermint will detect sewer gas, Uncle Ike?”

“I know what you want, boy, you want to get me mad,” said Uncle Ike, as he threw his pipe into the grate because it wouldn't draw, and took a new one and filled it. “There is no greater fraud on the earth than this peppermint test for sewer gas. I had a house to rent, years ago, and was ruined by peppermint. When a tenant had anything the matter, from grip to corns, the doctor would look wise, snuff around, and say he detected sewer gas, and they would call in a health officer and he would put a little peppermint oil in somewhere, and go into another room, and when he smelled the peppermint he would say it was sewer gas, and send for a plumber, and they would begin to plumb, and I had to pay. I had nine tenants in two years, and every disease they had was laid to sewer gas, and I had to ease up on the rent or stand a lawsuit. When one family had triplets, and tried to stand me off on the rent on account of sewer gas, I became a walking delegate, and struck, and turned the house into a livery stable, and now, do you know, every time I go to collect rent I am afraid a horse has got sick, and the livery man will lay it to sewer gas. Why, boy, peppermint oil will go through an asphalt pavement. You might put peppermint oil on top of the Egyptian pyramids and you could smell it in fifteen minutes in Cairo. If anybody ever talks to you about sewer gas and peppermint test, call them a liar and charge it to me,” and the old man was so mad the boy's hair began to curl.

“Here, Uncle Ike, what you staring out of the window so for, with your eyes sot, like a dying horse, and your body as rigid as a statue?” and the boy rushed up to the window and looked out to see what had come over the old man.

“Hush, keep still, and don't scare her away,” said Uncle Ike, as he held up his hand and motioned the boy to keep still.

“By gosh, if it isn't a woman, Uncle Ike, that has paralyzed you, and you always said you didn't care for them any more,” said the red-headed boy, as he looked out the window and saw a blonde-haired young woman standing on the corner waiting for a street car, and glancing up at Uncle Ike through the frowsy hair that was loosely flying about her forehead. “And she is a blonde, too, and blondes have gone out of style. Didn't you read in the papers that the shows won't hire blondes any more, and that nothing but brunettes are in it? It must be pretty tough on a blonde to get her hair all fixed fluffy, after years of patient coloring, and then find she has gone out of style, and no op'ry will hire her to shed blonde hair on the coats of the chorus fellows. Oh, Uncle Ike, come away from the window or you will be stolen,” and the boy dragged the old man away from the window, handed him his pipe, and said, “Smoke up and try to forget it.”

“Forget nothing,” said the old man, as he lit the torch and a smile came over his good-natured face. “Don't you worry about blonde girls going out of style. These bleached ones, who never were the real thing, may go back to their natural, beautiful brunetticism, and when they realize how foolish they have been, trying to bunko nature, they will be happier than ever, but the natural blonde will never go out of style. She is a joy forever. Do you know, when a man gets in love with a girl he couldn't tell what the color of her hair was, to save him? He knows all about her eyes, and her hands, and her face, but unless he finds a hair on his coat he can't tell what is the color of the hair of his beloved. Love is like smoking. You may smoke in the dark, and if your pipe goes out you smoke right along and don't know the difference. You sit up with a girl in the dark and you can't see her, and she may go to sleep, but love keeps smoking right along and never seems to go out. When I was wounded at the battle of Pea Ridge, and was taken to a young ladies' seminary to be doctored and nursed back to life——”

“Oh, do quit, Uncle Ike! If you had been taken wounded to a young ladies' seminary, say in 1863, thirty-six years ago, you would have been there yet, and your wound would still be paining you, and the girls who saved your life would be grown up to be gray-haired old women,” and the boy jollied the old man until he blushed. “You must have known a man named Ananias in the army. Say, Uncle Ike, you know you wanted me to learn a trade, and I have decided that I would like to learn the trade of a bishop. I read of the death of a bishop the other day who was worth half a million dollars, and now you must tell me how to become a bishop, like Newman,” and the boy laughed as though he had got the old man in a tight place.

“Well,” said Uncle Ike, after stopping to think a moment, “you might do worse. Do you know, boy, that Bishop Newman, who died recently, did learn a trade? Well, he did. When he was a boy, he seemed to be a no-account sort of a duck, some like you. His parents were poor, and lived in the slums of New York. His hair was some the color of yours, and he loafed around, and made fun of his old uncle, no doubt, the same as you do. He had to do something to help earn the bread and beer for the family, and so he went to work stripping tobacco in a factory near his home. Somehow he got vaccinated with a desire to learn something, and after he had stripped tobacco, and snuffed it, and got some sense in his head, he began to learn to read. A girl stripper taught him first to read the labels on packages of tobacco, and taught him to spell. Then he got a taste for education, and became the smarty of the factory, and the boys who could not read called him 'snuff,' because his hair and freckles were the color of Scotch snuff. Some white man connected with the factory saw that the little rat had stuff in him, and he helped him to get an education, and he stripped tobacco daytimes and studied nights, and became a preacher, and finally a bishop. So, you smarty, if you want to learn the trade of a bishop, strip the wrapper off that package of tobacco and fill my pipe. Who knows but Bishop Newman stripped the very tobacco I am smoking now?” and the old man puffed and laughed at the boy.

“Gosh! it smells old enough to have been stripped when the bishop was a boy,” said the red-headed boy, and then he dodged behind a table, while Uncle Ike tried to catch him and teach him how to be a bishop.

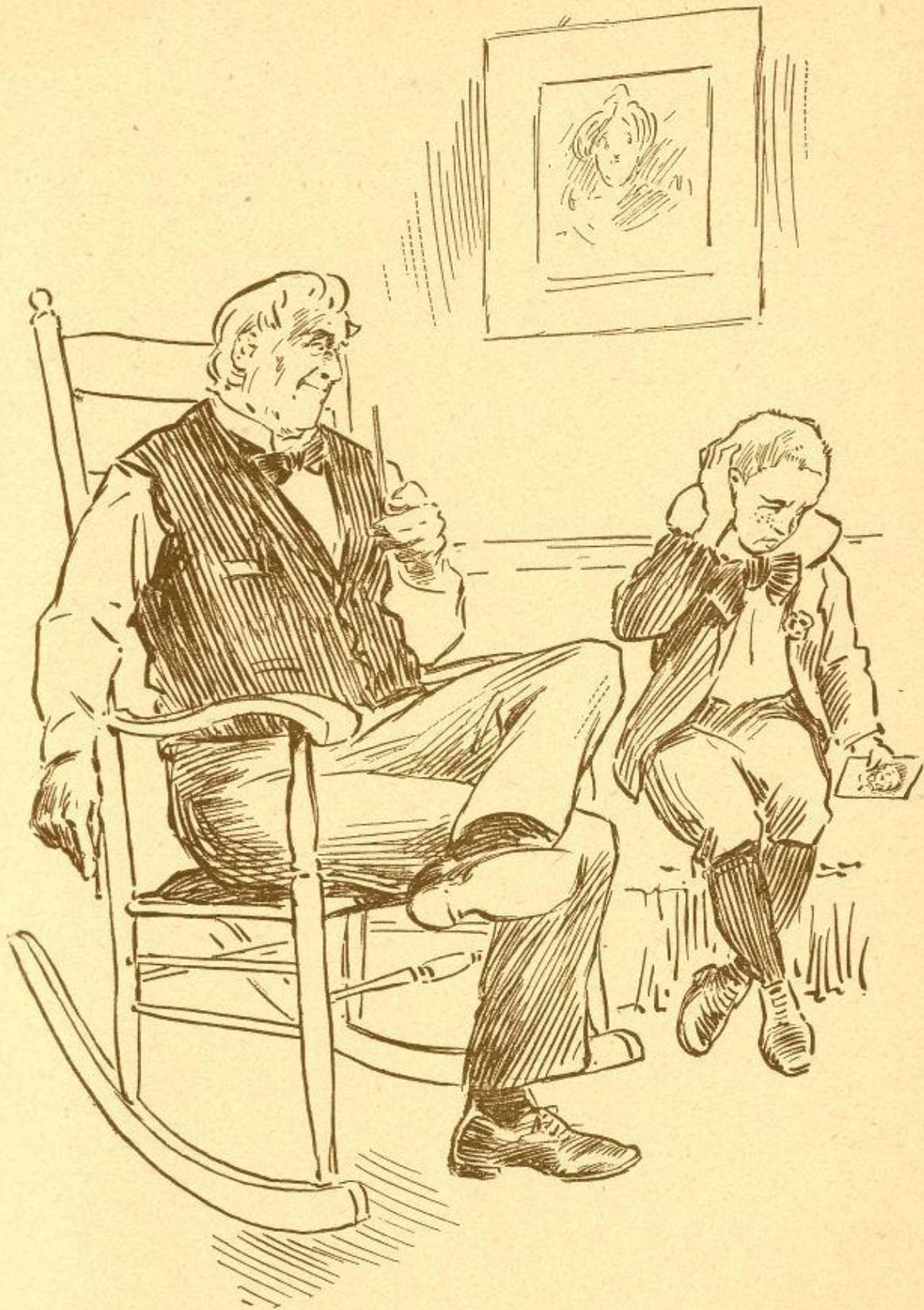
CHAPTER X.

Uncle Ike stood with his pipe in his left hand, his thumb pressing the tobacco down tight, and with a match in his right hand, just ready to scratch it on his leg, when he froze stiff in that position, and never moved for five minutes, as he watched the red-headed boy, who had walked into the room listlessly, his eyes staring at a picture he held in his hand, his face so pale that the freckles looked large and dark, his lips white as chalk, his cheeks sunken, his fingers gripping the picture, a faded and forlorn pansy in his buttonhole, and his short clipped hair standing up straight in rows like red beet tops in a vegetable garden.

“Anybody very dead?” said Uncle Ike, as he drew the match across the cloth, put it to his pipe, and began to swell out his cheeks and puff, keeping his eye on the boy, through the smoke, who had taken his eyes from the picture, drawn a deep sigh, and sat down on the lounge, as though he never expected to get up again.

“No, nobody dead,” said the boy, as he laid his head on a sofa pillow, closed his eyes, and placed the picture inside his vest. “But I wish there was. I wish I was dead.”

“How many times have I told you to put oil on cucumbers, and they wouldn't gripe you that way?” said Uncle Ike, as he drew a chair up beside the lounge and felt of the boy's pulse, and took his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration off his forehead, and finally took the picture out of his bosom and looked at it.



"She is a nice warm-looking girl."

“She is a nice, warm-looking girl, but you might have the picture on your stomach a week, and it wouldn't draw that colic out of you,” and Uncle Ike gazed with some admiration on the picture of the beautiful girl, whose high forehead, bright eyes, and beautiful chin, showed that she had the making of a rare and radiant woman.

“Tain't colic, and I haven't et no cucumbers,” said the boy, as he rolled his eyes up toward the roof of his head. “It's love, that's what it is, and I am miserable, and Aunt Almira said you had been in love over six hundred times, and could tell me what to do.”

“Well, I like your Aunt Almira's nerve,” said Uncle Ike, as he looked half pleased at the accusation. “Of course, I have had some encounters with the fair sex, but I have never entirely collapsed, the way you have. What's the symptoms? Don't the girl love you?”

“Yes! Gosh, she idolizes me,” said the boy, sitting up, and getting a little color in his face.

“Oh, then you don't love her,” said Uncle Ike, probing into the wound.

“It's false,” said the boy, getting on his feet and standing before the old man in indignation. “I love the very ground she walks on. Say, when I walk a few blocks with her, and can't see her again for a week, I go around the other six days and look at the boards she walked on, and it makes me mad to see anybody else walking where she did. I want to get rich enough to buy all the houses we have walked by, and the street cars we have rode in. Love her? Say, you don't know anything about love, Uncle Ike. The love you used to have was old style, and didn't strike in.”

“Oh, I don't know,” said Uncle Ike, “its all about the same. Was the same in Bible times, and will be the same hundreds of years hence, when we conquer the Philippines. Same old thing. Nobody invents any new symptoms in the love industry. There may be new languages to express it in, but it is just plain, every-day love. But if you both love each other, what is the use of all this colic?”

“Why, you see, she has to dissemble. That's what she says. She can't go with me all the time, and when I see her with anybody else it seems as though it would kill me. I know she does not smile at anybody else the way she does at me, but the condom fools might think she did, and love her. I know if one of those ducks should squeeze her hand, she would be mad, and cuff him, but I could squeeze her hand till her fingers cracked, and she would enjoy it.”

“I see,” said Uncle Ike, smoking right along. “You are like a man who owns the most beautiful diamond in the world, and is not allowed for some reason to be known as its owner, but is allowed to wear it only two hours a week, and then other people are allowed to wear it. You know it is yours, and yet when it is in the possession of others, you don't dare go and claim it, and they wear it as though they own it, and people see it in their possession and admire it, as it sparkles and throws rays of sunshine, and think how lucky is the man who wears it. Isn't that about your idea? She is yours, body and soul, but has not been delivered to you, eh?”

“Sure! That's it, exactly. What shall I do, Uncle Ike?”

“Shut up!” said the old man; “that is what you want to do. Brace up; you have no cause to worry. I can tell by that face of hers. When she is going with other boys, as she must, she is thinking of you all the time, and wishing your red head was in place of that of the kid who is buying ice-cream soda for her. When she walks about the streets she is thinking of when you were with her at the same place. And when you are permitted to pass an hour with her she will convince you in a minute that you are all the world to her, and that the other ducks are not in it. I can tell by her eyes, boy, and her mouth, and her whole face, that she is a thoroughbred.”

“Well, I swan, Uncle Ike, you are better than a doctor,” and the red-headed boy began to hug the old man, and dance around, and kick high, and he took the picture and looked at it, and said: “Nobody but a chump would doubt that girl,” and the boy suddenly became himself again, reassured as to the position he held in the mind of his girl, by a few words of kindly advice at the right time, when the boy was on the verge of suicide. He laughed and pinched himself to be sure he was awake, and then took on a serious look and said: “Uncle Ike, do you think it will take two hundred years, honestly, to subjugate the Filipinos, and tame them, so that they will eat out of our hands?”

“Well, we ought to do it in half the time the Spaniards have been trying and failed,” said the old man, as he slapped a mosquito that was eating him. “There, you see that mosquito is dead. No doubt about that, is there? But what effect does the death of that mosquito have on the nine or ten million of his race that are out here in the woods? This one simply got through the screen, and bucked up against a sure thing, and his bravery, or gall, got him killed, and I may think I am a hero because I killed him. But let me take my gun and go out in the woods, or on the marsh, where there are a million mosquitos to one of me, and what kind of a life will they let me lead? I should have to be slapping and kicking all the time, and couldn't attend to my shooting. It is just so with those Filipinos. They will stay in the jungles and breed, and enjoy the malaria and the rainy season, and a few will go around the camps and sing their songs, and keep the soldiers awake, and bite and poison them, and shoot and stab, and when the soldiers chase them they will go farther into the jungle, harass the flanks of the boys that are discouraged, and when another year is gone there will be more Filipinos than there are now, better armed, and hating the Americans worse than ever.. We may take towns, hold them if we have troops enough, and start a new graveyard at every place we try to hold, and when we give it up and go away, the human mosquitos will return buzzing and biting, and they will dig up the remains of some mother's boy, just to get the gold filling out of his teeth. If the war keeps on a few hundred years, instead of one large cemetery at Manila, that can be watched and kept a sacred spot, we shall have hundreds of small graveyards all over the archipelago, where the boys in blue that are buried will find it mighty lonesome when we take the living soldiers away. No, boy, it will not take two hundred years to subdue the Filipinos. That is, we will not be working at the job that long, because we are not built that way. If we find we have got into a hornet's nest, and

that the hornets don't have any honey, anyway, and that we don't need hornets in our regular business, somebody in authority will be apt to know when we have got enough, and we will probably shake the dice with some nation that is so addicted to gambling that it had as soon shake dice for hornets as anything, and we will let them play loaded dice on us, and shake sixes, and we will turn up deuces and trays, and let them win the condemned mess of hornets that didn't give honey, and that have nothing but stings, and wish whoever wins the hornets much joy. Understand me, boy, I am not saying anything against the policy of our administration, if it has got one, and I will hold up my hands and root for the army as long as it is in the game, and will encourage the President all I can to do what he thinks is right, but I shall always feel that Spain sold him a gold brick for 20,000,000 plunks, and that he has not yet found out that it is made of brass. I know the tobacco trust, and the cordage trust, and lots of other trusts that are interested, are trying to make him believe that the gold brick he bought is good stuff, and that he must protect it, or some other nation will get it away from him, but you wait until that Scotch-Irish blood of the President begins to boil, when he finds out that he has been bunkoed, and he will get those trust magnates together some day, and he will get pale around the gills, and mad as a wet hen, and he will say that he has heard about all the funeral dirges on the longdistance telephone from Manila that he wants to hear, and that the wails of the mourning mothers of the dying boys are keeping him awake nights, and that he has got about enough, trying to put bells on the Filipino wildcats, and that they can take the whole Philippine archipelago and go plum to hades with it, for he is going to stop the death rate, and get those boys home and set them to plowing corn."

"Oh, Uncle Ike, don't get excited. I only wanted to change the subject from my own troubles to the troubles of our country," and he went out singing, "There's Only One Girl in All This World for Me," while Uncle Ike took off his collar and wiped the perspiration off his neck, and fanned himself awhile, and then lit his pipe, smoked a spell, and finally said: "Well, it is none of my condum business, anyway, I s'pose."

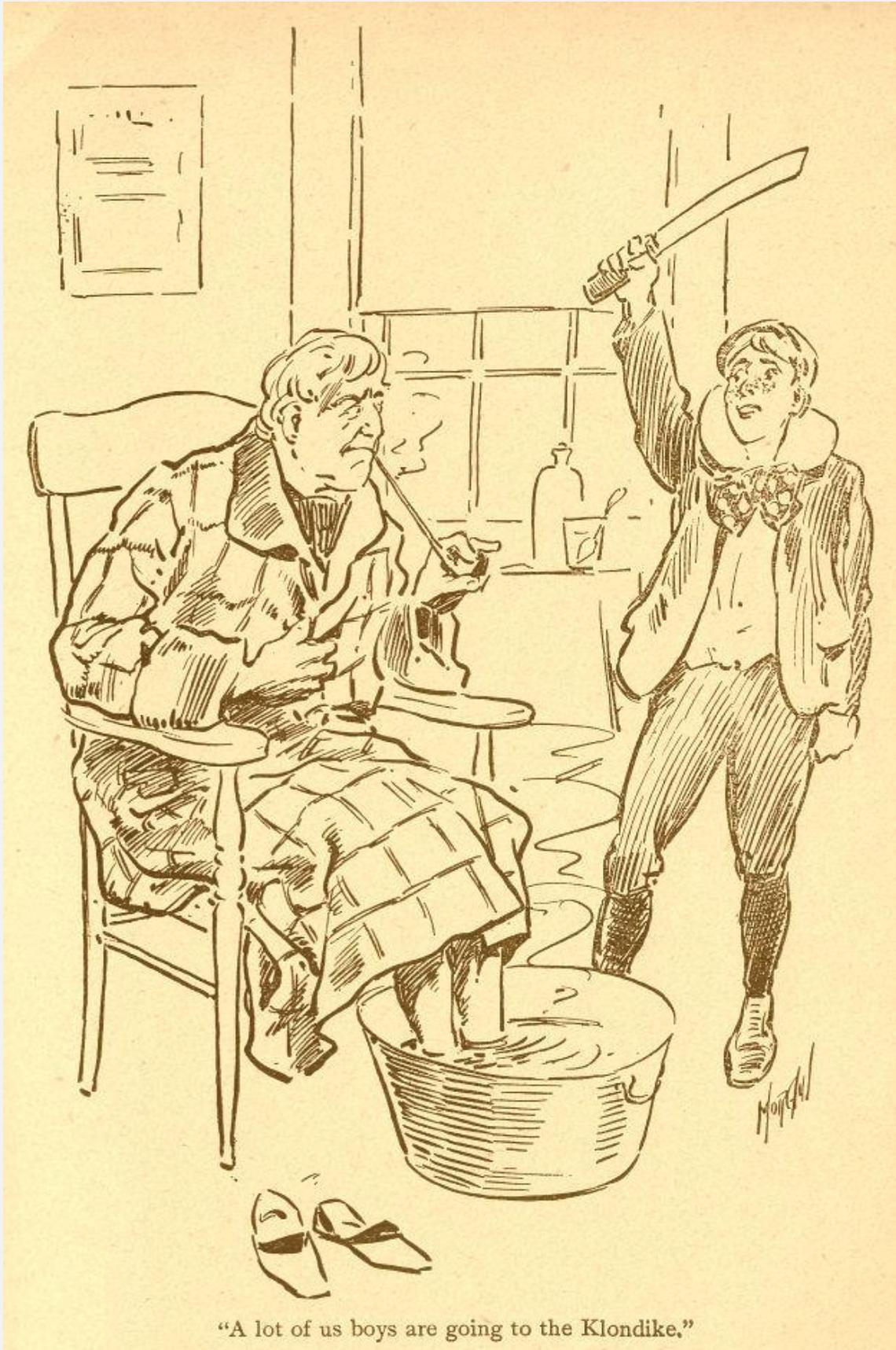
CHAPTER XI.

Uncle Ike was sitting in his room with a bath robe on, and his great, big, bare feet in a tub of hot water, in which some dry mustard had been sifted, and on a table beside him was a pitcher of hot lemonade, which he was trying to drink, as it got cool enough to go down his neck without scorching his throat. His head was hot, and he had evidently taken a severe cold, and occasionally he would groan, when he moved his body, and place his hand to the small of his back. His pipe and tobacco were far away on the mantel, though he could smell them, and the odor so satisfying to him when he was

well, almost made him sick, and when the red-headed boy came in the room the first thing the old man said was:

“Take that dum pipe and terbacker out of the room, and put it in the woodshed. Your Uncle Ike ain't enjoyin' his terbacker very well,” and the old fellow made up a face, and looked as though he was on a steamboat excursion in rough weather. The boy took the pipe by the tail, and the tobacco paper in his other hand, and went out, and soon returned with a heavy blanket coat on, a pair of felt boots, and a toboggan knit-cap, and a pair of yarn mittens on, though it was late in July, and the weather was quite hot. Uncle Ike looked at him in wonder, as though he was not sure but it was winter, and he was so ill as not to know that summer and fall had passed without his knowing it.

“What you got them sliding-down-hill clothes on for, in July?” said the old man, as he put one puckered-up bare foot on the other, in the water, and sozzled them around in the mustard in the bottom of the tub. “You will have me sunstruck yet, if you wear those clothes around here. What is up, anyway?”



"A lot of us boys are going to the Klondike."

“A lot of us boys are going to the Klondike,” said the red-headed boy, as he took a big hunting knife out of a sheath, “and I came in to see if you would grubstake me. We have been reading about the millions of dollars in gold nuggets and dust, that is being brought out, and we are going to have some of the gold. Want your corns cut?” said the boy, as he sharpened the knife on Uncle Ike's boot that lay on the floor.

“You ducks have been reading about the gold that has been brought out, but you forgot to read about the corpses that stayed in the Klondike, didn't you?” said the old man as he took a drink of the hot lemonade, and pulled the bathrobe around his hind legs. “You tell the boys you are not going, and that Uncle Ike will not grubstake you. Tell them you have found out that for every dollar in gold that comes out of the mines, a hundred dollars is spent to find it. Tell them that not one man in a hundred that goes there ever sees anything yellow, except the janders. Tell them that seven out of ten men either freeze to death, or die of disease, or starve to death, and that every trail in Alaska is marked with graves of just such fools as you boys. Tell them that they can make more money selling picture books at a blind asylum, or tin trumpets at a deaf and dumb school, than they could by digging gold in the Klondike, and that you are going to stay home. Now take off that uniform and get down on your knees and rub my feet dry,” and the old man drew one foot out of the tub and rested it on the edge, while the boy took a Turkish towel that looked like a piece of tripe, and began polishing the foot, like a bootblack.

“Gosh, but one of your feet would make about six the size of my girl's feet,” said the boy, as he fixed the old man up, and helped him onto a lounge, where he stretched out and went to sleep. For an hour the boy watched the old man, and listened to his snore, and finally he got a gutta-percha bug out of his fishing tackle, and when Uncle Ike woke up and began to stretch the boy said: “Uncle Ike, I have saved your life. This kissing bug was just ready to pounce, on you, and poison you, when I grabbed it and killed it. See!” and he held up the bug.

“Yes, I see,” said Uncle Ike, as he rubbed his eyes, and looked at the kissing bug. “You examine it close, right by the tail, and you will find a trout hook. I used to catch a great many trout with that bug,” and Uncle Ike got up and stretched his limbs, and found that his cold was gone, and he was well enough, and he dressed himself and began to act natural, and after the boy had looked him over, and marveled at the sudden cure, he said:

“Uncle Ike, you have deceived me. I thought you was on your last legs, and I was going to have a serious talk with you. Heretofore, when I have tried to talk serious with you, you have turned everything into fun, but now I want a serious opinion from you. What would you think of my going out on a farm and learning to be a farmer? I ride by farms and see farmers and boys at work, or lying in the shade, or drinking out of a jug, or sitting on loads of hay, or riding a horse plowing corn, and it seems to me they have an easy life, and they must make money; and if I can't enlist to fight Filipinos, nor go

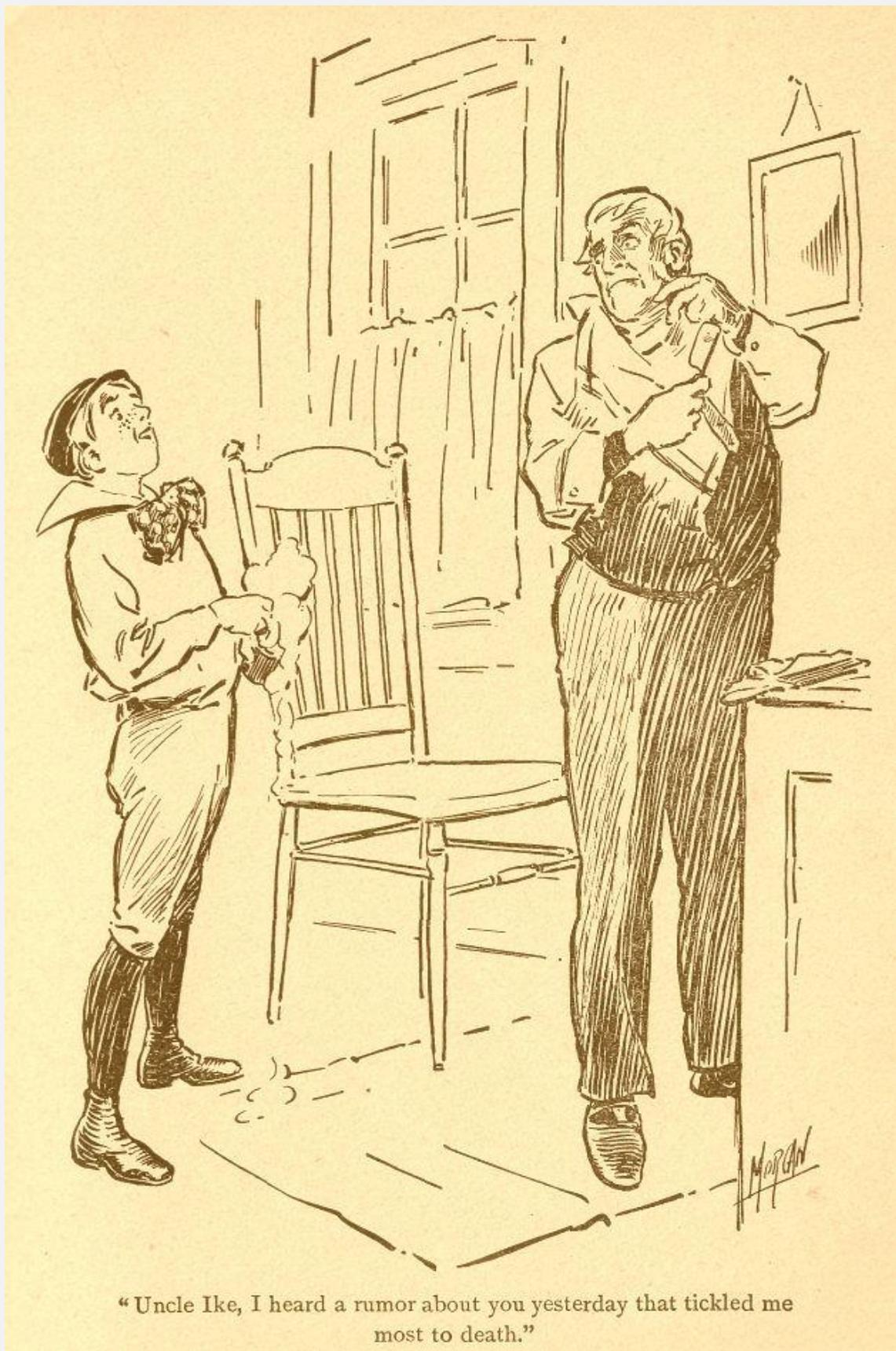
to the Klondike, I want to be a farmer. What do you think, Uncle Ike?" and the boy looked up into the old man's face appealingly.

"Well, bring back that pipe and terbacker, and I will tell you all about farming, for I was brung up on a farm till I was busted." The boy brought in the smoke consumer, and after the old man had puffed a few times, and found it did not make him sick, he continued: "In the first place, you are getting too old to learn farming. When city people have a call to farm it, they buy a farm, put up a windmill, get plumbers out from town, put in a bathtub with hot and cold water, and buy some carriages with high backs, and go in for enjoyment, regardless of the price of country produce. They put in hammocks and lawn tennis, and the young people wear knickerbockers and white canvas dresses, and roll their pants up, and all that. There is no money in farming that way. Now, you have got your city habits formed; you don't get up in the morning till after 7, and you have to take a bath, and have fresh underclothes frequently. You would want to lay in the shade too much and ride on the hay. Did it ever occur to you that before you could ride on the hay it has to be cut, and cured, and cocked up, and raked around? It takes a whole lot of backaches to get a load of hay ready for you to ride on. Now, you are going on 20 years old. If you had been born on a farm, you would be just about ready to quit it and come to town to learn something else. You would have a stomach full of farming, for you would have worked about twelve years, day and night; your hands would be muscular, and you would have callouses inside of them. You go out on a farm now, at your age, and when you get the first blister on your hands you want to send for a doctor, and you throw up the job and come back on my hands. Suppose you started out next Monday morning to learn to be a farmer. Let me make out a programme for you. You would go to bed Sunday night at 9 o'clock, and lay awake thinking of the glory of a farmer's life, and at 3 a. m. you would go to sleep, and at 4 you would hear the door to the attic open, and a voice that would sound like an auctioneer would yell to you to come down and get to work. You couldn't argue the case with the farmer, as you do with me when I try to get you up early to go fishing; and you would get up and put on a pair of cowhide shoes, brown overalls, a hickory shirt with bed-ticking suspenders, and you would go out into a barnyard that smelled like fury, and milk nine or fifteen cows on an empty stomach; and while another hired man was taking the milk to a creamery, you would see that it was not daylight yet, but you would go in the kitchen and eat a slice of pork, and hurry about it, and then you would curry off the horses, and help hitch the team to a reaper; and just as it was getting light enough to see things, you would go out to a wheat field, and, after the old man had cut two or three swaths around the field, several of you would turn in to bind up the bundles. They would show you how, and then they would see that you did your share of work.

"You would hustle for about four hours, and you would be so hungry it wouldn't be safe for a dog to come around you, and you would drink warm water out of a jug till your stomach ached, and you would wonder if it was not almost supper time, and if you looked at your watch you would find it was only about 9 o'clock in the morning, with

three more solid hours of work before dinner time. When the horn blew for dinner you would just be able to climb on one of the horses to ride to the house, and the harness would take the skin off your elbows. When you got to the house you would want to lay down and die, but you would have to pull water up in buckets to water the horses, and go up in the hay mow and throw down hay and carry oats to them, and when you went in to dinner you would feel as though you could eat a ten course banquet, but you would find that it was washing day, and they didn't do any cooking, and you would eat a bowl of bread and milk, and chew about a bushel of young onions, and when you were filled up and wanted to lie down and go to sleep, and die, the old man would tell you to hustle out and hitch up that team, and you would be so lame you couldn't ride on top of a hard farm harness, and you would walk to the field, your heavy shoes wearing the skin off your ankles, and the old machine would begin to stutter and rattle, and you would go to work binding bundles at 1 o'clock and work till dark, because it looked as though it was going to rain, and when you got the chores done, milked the cows, bedded down the horses, carried in wood to the kitchen and a few things like that, and they told you supper was ready, you would say you would rather go to bed than eat, and you would go up in the attic and fall on the bed, and go to sleep and dream of your Uncle Ike. Do you know where I would find you next? You would come into town on an early freight train Tuesday morning, and show up about breakfast time, and you would hunt the bathtub, and if any man ever talked farming to you again, you would be sassy to him. No, boy, the city man or boy is not intended for a farmer, but the farmer boy is intended for the city, when he gets enough of the farm. About so much farming has got to be done, but it will be done by those who are brought up to it, and who know that every minute has got to be used to produce something, that the appetite must be satisfied easily and cheaply, and that everything on the farm must be of marketable value, and nothing must be bought that can be dispensed with, and that everybody must work or give a good reason for not working. The pleasure of farming is largely in anticipation. The big crops and big prices are always coming next year. You would be about as good at farming as I would at preaching," and Uncle Ike gradually ceased speaking, like an old clock that is running down, and ticking slower and slower, and then he fell asleep in his chair, and the red-headed boy sat and thought of what had been said, and looked at his hands as though he expected to find a blister, and smelled of them to see if he had actually been milking cows, and then he rolled over on the lounge and went to sleep, and the two snored a match.

CHAPTER XII.



“Uncle Ike, I heard a rumor about you yesterday that tickled me most to death.”

“Uncle Ike, I heard a rumor about you yesterday that tickled me almost to death,” said the red-headed boy, as he came into the old gentleman's room while he was shaving, and the boy took the lather brush and worked it up and down in the cup until the lather run over the side, and he had lather enough on hand to shave half the men in town.

“What was it?” said the old man, as he puckered his mouth on one side, and opened it so he could shave around the corner of his mouth. “Nothing disreputable, is it; nothing to bring disgrace on the family?” and he wiped the razor on a piece of newspaper, and stropped it on his hand, as he looked in the mirror to see if there were any new wrinkles in his face.

“Well, I don't know as it would disgrace us so very much, if you looked out for yourself, and didn't steal,” said the boy, as he began to sharpen his knife on Uncle Ike's razor strop. “There is a rumor among the boys that you may be nominated for President, and a lot of us boys got together and took a vote, when we were in swimming, and you were elected unanimously. I am to be the boss who deals out the offices, and all the boys are going to have a soft snap. Before the thing goes any further the boys wanted me to see you, and have you promise that anything I promised should be good, see?”

“Uncle Ike, I heard a rumor about you yesterday that tickled me most to death.”

“Well, you are a dum nice lot of politicians, to work up this boom for me, without my consent,” and the old man put up his razor, and began to wash the lather off his face, and while he was rubbing his red and laughing face with a towel, he said: “If I am elected President, and I want you to understand that I have not yet consented to take the nomination, I would, the first thing I did, have all my relatives either sent to jail, or confined in various asylums of one kind or another. I think I would send you to a home for the feeble-minded.”

“What's the matter with relatives?” said the boy, as he took the razor, and searched around on his lip for some hairs, and finally got hold of one, and the razor pulled it so hard the tears came in his eyes; “seems to me a President with all his relatives in jail would be looked upon as a disgrace to society.”

“Well, I wouldn't care,” said the old man, as he struggled to make a fourteen-inch collar button on to a sixteen-inch shirt, and nearly choked himself before he found out he had got the boy's collar by mistake. “I have watched this President business a good many years, and have concluded that the most of the trouble a President has is through fool relatives. Look at Grant. You couldn't throw a stone in Washington without hitting a relative, and they got into more scrapes, and dragged Grant into more disgrace, and fool schemes, than anything. There wasn't offices enough for all of them, and some had to live in other ways, which didn't help Ulysses very much. Harrison never had any pleasure until he had an operation performed on his son to remove his talking utensils. That boy would be interviewed and jollied, and he would tell more things that were not so, about pa's policy, than the President could stand. But a brother is the worst relative

a President can have, if he is a half-way lawyer. A President cannot kill a brother that is older than he is, and can't prevent his being retained, and can't keep his brother's fingers out of all the contracts, and his being attorney for contractors, and can't tell him to keep away from the White House, and don't dare to tell his brother not to go around looking wise, as though he was running the whole administration. No, sir; there ought to be a law that when a man is elected President, all male relatives that are old enough to talk, should have their mouths sewed up, and be compelled to put on gloves that are fastened with a time lock, so they couldn't get their hands into anything that would bring disgrace on the chief magistrate. Now, if you boys want me for President, with this understanding, that you shall all keep away from me after the 4th of March, and never let anybody know that you ever heard of me, and that you will never write me even a postal card, why, you can go ahead with your boom," and the old man tied his necktie so it looked like a scrambled egg, and he and the boy went in to breakfast, the boy opening the outside door and whistling a weird whistle, which brought three boys up on the porch, when he said to them:

"By the way, that presidential boom for Uncle Ike is off. Don't let the gang do another thing. He is a lobster," and the boys went out into the world looking for another candidate, followed by a dog that jumped up and down in front of them as though he could lead them to a presidential candidate or a wood-chuck hole mighty quick.

"Speaking of dogs," said Uncle Ike, as he and the boy sat down to breakfast, and the other boys went out on the street to wait for the red-headed boy to finish eating, "where you boys going?"

"Just going to follow the dog," said the warm-haired proposition, as he kicked because the melon was not ripe. "Did you ever drown out a gopher, Uncle Ike?"

"Bet your life," said Uncle Ike, as he dished out enough food for the boy to have fed an orphan asylum. "Oh, I had a dog once that knew more than an alderman. Do you know, boy, that a dog is the best thing a boy can associate with? A boy never does anything very mean, if he has a dog that loves him. Many a time I have been just about ready to do a mean trick, when the dog would sit down in front of me, and look up into my eyes in an appealing way, and raise up one ear at a time and drop it, and raise the other, and he would jump up on me and lick my hand, and seem to say, 'Don't,' and, by gosh! I didn't. Say, if a mean boy has a dog that loves him, the dog is better than he is, and the boy is careful about doing mean things, for fear he will shame the dog. I don't suppose a dog will get to heaven, but, if his master goes to heaven, the dog is mighty likely to lay down on the outside of the pearly gates, and just starve to death, waiting to hear the familiar whistle of his master, who is enjoying himself inside. Now, let's go out on the porch while I smoke;" and the old man led the way, and lighted up the old churn, and puffed away a while, and the boy was in a hurry to get away with the other boys; and finally the boys came up on the porch, and the dog went up to Uncle Ike and

licked his hand, as though he knew the old man was a friend of dogs and boys. “What’s this scar on his nose? Woodchuck bite him?”

“Yes, sir,” said one of the boys. “And this one on the under lip?” said the old man. “Looks like a gopher had took a bite out of that lip.”

“That’s what it was,” said another boy, and they all laughed to think that a dignified old man like Uncle Ike could tell all about the scars on a cheap dog. “Well, boys, I won’t detain you if you are going out to exercise the dog on woodchucks or gophers. But let me tell you this,” and he puffed quite a little while on the pipe, and seemed to be harking away back to the bark of the dog friend of his boyhood, and the boys could almost see the dirt flying out of an old-time woodchuck hole as the dog of Uncle Ike’s memory was digging and biting at roots, and snarling at a woodchuck that was safe enough away down below the ground. “Let me tell you something. You want to play fair with the dog. A dog has got more sense than some men. He can tell a loafer, after one woodchuck hunt. The boy who gets interested when the clog is digging out a woodchuck, gets down on his knees and pushes the dirt away, and pats the dog, and encourages him, and when he comes to a root, takes his knife and cuts it away, is the thoroughbred that the dog will tie to; but the boy who sits in the shade and sicks the dog on, and don’t help, but bets they don’t get the woodchuck, and when the dog and his working partner pulls the woodchuck out, gets up out of the shade and begins to talk about how we got the woodchuck, is the loafer. He is the kind of fellow who will encourage others to enlist and go to war, in later life, while he stays home and kicks about the way the war is conducted, and shaves mortgages on the homes of soldiers, and forecloses them. That kind of a boy will be the one who will lie in the shade when he grows up, and not work in the sun. Didn’t you ever see a dog half-way down a woodchuck hole, kicking dirt into the bosom of the boy’s pants who is backing him, suddenly back out of the hole, wag his tail and wink his eyes, full of dirt, at the boy who is working the hole with him, and then run out his tongue and loll, and look at the fellows who are sitting around waiting for the last act, in the shade, and say to them, as plain as a dog can talk, ‘You fellows make me tired. Why don’t you get some style about you, and come in on this game on the ground floor?’ and then he gets rested a little, and you say, ‘dig him out,’ and he swallows a big sigh at their laziness, and goes down in the hole and digs and growls so the lazy boys think he has forgotten that they are deadheads in the enterprise, but the dog does not forget.”

“Well, I swow, if your Uncle Ike ain’t away up in G on woodchuck hunting,” said one of the neighbor boys as they all sat around the old man, with their eyes wide open. “How about drowning out a gopher?”

“Same thing, exactly,” said Uncle Ike, as he filled up the pipe again, and lit it, and run a broom straw through the stem, to give it air. “The dog watches the hole, and keeps tab on the boys who carry water. You have got to keep the water going down the gopher hole, and you got to work like sixty. Gophers know better than to have holes too near

the water, and the dog knows what boy flunks after he carries one pail of water, and says, 'Oh, darn a gopher anyway; I hain't lost no gopher,' and goes and sits down and lets the other boys carry water. The dog knows that the boy who keeps carrying water and pouring it in the hole is the thoroughbred, and that the quitter has got a streak of yellow in him. When the hole is filled up with water, and the gopher comes to the surface, and the dog grabs for it, and the boy who took off his clothes and carried water also grabs, and either the dog or the boy gets bit, usually the boy, the dog knows that the boy who worked with him on that gopher hole has got the making of a good business man in him. A business or professional career, boys, is just like digging out a woodchuck, or drowning out a gopher, and the fellows who help the dog when they are boys, are the ones who are mighty apt to get the business woodchuck when they grow up. I will bet you ten dollars that if you pick out the most successful business man in town, and go look at his left thumb nail, you will find a scar on it where a half-drowned gopher bit him, because he was at the hole at the right time. Now, go and have fun, and be sure and play fair with the dog," and Uncle Ike took down a broom and shook it at them as they scattered down the street, the dog barking joyously.

"I speak for carrying the water to drown out the gopher!" yelled the red-headed boy.

"Me, too!" shouted the other boys in chorus, as they disappeared from sight, and Uncle Ike listened until they were out of hearing, and then he limped down to the gate and looked up the road toward the country, but all he could see was a cloud of dust with a dog in it, and he walked back to the house sadly, and as he lifted the lame leg upon the porch, and took his hat, he said:

"Blamed if I don't hitch up the mare and drive out there where those boys have gone. I'll bet I know woodchuck holes and gopher holes them kids never would find if they had a whole passel of dogs," and he went out to the barn and pretty soon Aunt Almira heard him yell, "Whoa, gosh darn ye, take in that bit!" and she put on her sunbonnet and went out to the barn to see if he had actually gone crazy.

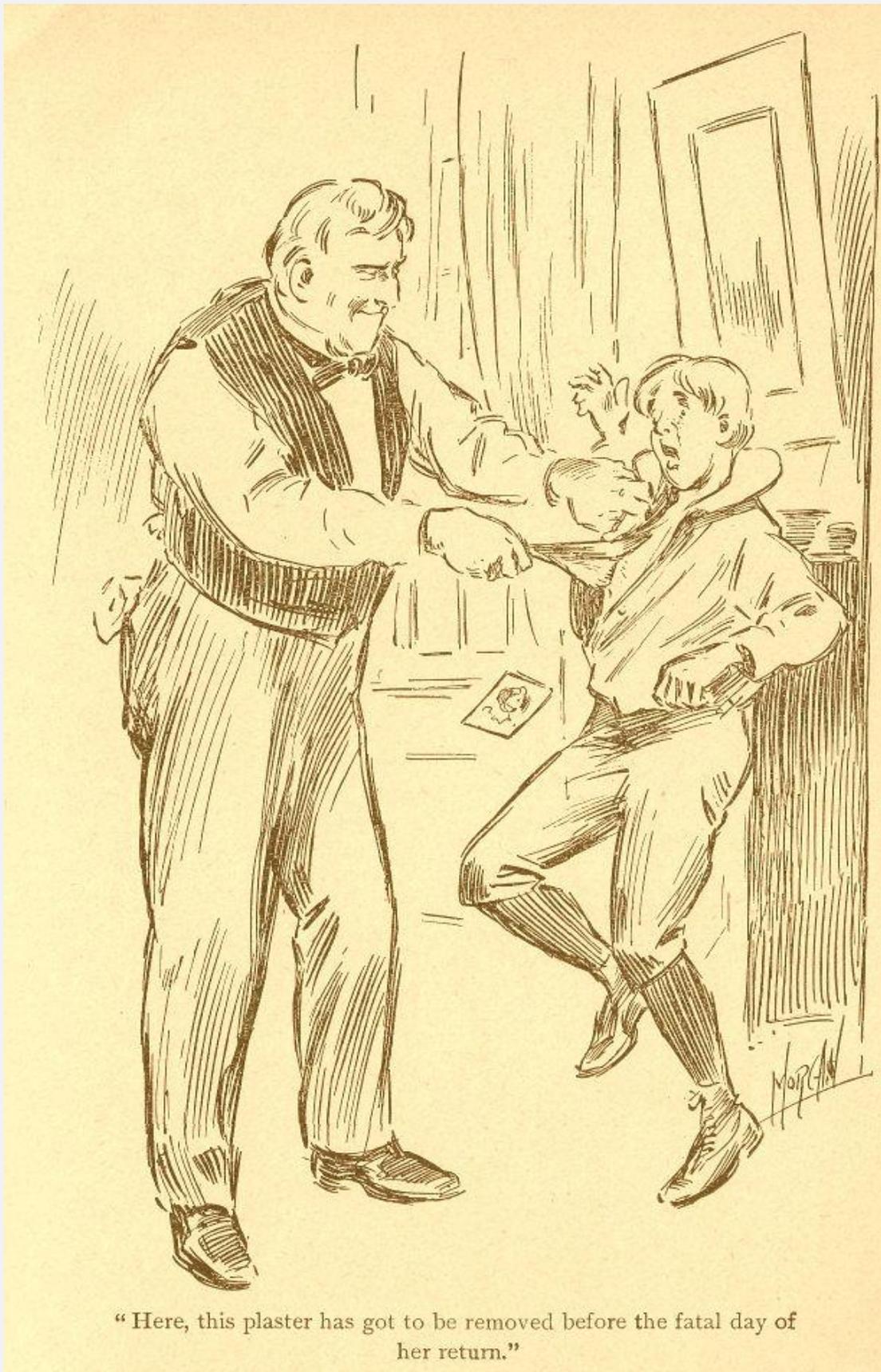
CHAPTER XIII.

"What you scratching yourself on the chest for?" said Uncle Ike, as the red-headed boy stood with one hand inside his vest, digging as though his life depended on his doing a good job. "Is there anything the matter with you that soap and water will not cure?" and the old man punched the boy in the ribs with a great big, hard thumb, as big as a banana.

“Uncle Ike, how long will a porous plaster stay on, and isn't there any way to stop its itching? I have had one on for seventeen days and nights, and it seems to be getting worse all the time,” said the boy, as he dug away at his chest.

“Good heavens, take it off quick!” said Uncle Ike, as he laid his lighted pipe down on the table, on a nice, clean cloth, and the ashes and fire spilled out, and burned a hole in it. “You will die of mortification. Those plasters are only intended to be used as posters for a day or two. What in the name of common sense have you worn it seventeen days for? Let's rip it off.”

“No, I have got to wear it eighteen days more,” said the boy, with a look of resignation. “Now, don't laugh, Uncle Ike, will you? You see my girl has gone to the seashore to be gone five weeks, and she gave me a tintype and told me to wear it next my heart till she got back, and I thought I could get it nearer my heart by putting it right against the skin, and putting a porous plaster over it, and by gum, I can feel her on my heart every minute. Now don't laugh, Uncle.”



“ Here, this plaster has got to be removed before the fatal day of her return.”

“Well, I guess not,” said Uncle Ike, as he put out the fire on the table-cloth, and smoked a little while to settle his thoughts. “Here, this plaster has got to be removed before the fatal day of her return, or you will be holding down a job as a red-headed angel. Now, open your shirt,” and the old man reached in and got a corner of the plaster, and gave a jerk that caused every hair on the boy's head to raise up and crack like a whiplash, while the tintype of the girl, covered with crude India rubber and medicated glue, dropped on the floor, and the boy turned pale and yelled bloody murder. “Now, don't ever do that again. A picture in your inside pocket is near enough to the heart for all practical purposes. Next, you will be swallowing her picture in the hope that it will lodge near your heart. Now I got something serious to talk with you about. One of the park policemen was here this morning looking for you. He said some of you boys just raised merry hades at the park concert last night. What did you do?”

“Just flushed quails,” said the boy, as he buttoned his shirt, and gave the sore spot a parting dig. “We played we were hunting quail, and we had more fun than you ever saw.”

“There are no quail in the park,” said Uncle Ike, as he looked curiously at the boy through the smoke.

“Here, this plaster has got to be removed before the fatal day of her return,” and puffed until his cheeks sank in, and the tears came to his eyes. “What is this quail fable, anyway?”

“You see,” said the boy, as he took a piece of ice out of the water pitcher and held it in his bosom, where the plaster came off, “when there is an evening concert at the park, the boys and girls go off in couples and sit under the trees in the dark, or on the grass, where no one can see them very well, and they take hold of hands and put their arms around each other, and all the time they are scared for fear they will be caught, and ordered to quit. Well, us boys go around in the dark, and when we see a couple in that way, one boy comes to a point, like a dog, another boy walks up to the couple and flushes them, and as they get up quick to go somewhere else, I blow up a paper bag and bust it, and they start off on a run. Say, Uncle Ike, it is fun. We chased one couple clear to the lake.”

“You did, did you, you little imp?” said the old man, as his sympathies were aroused for the young people who were disturbed at a critical time. “Don't let me ever hear of your flushing any more couples, or I'll flush you the first time I catch you with your girl. How would you like to be flushed? The parks are the only places many young people have to talk love to each other, and it is cruel to disturb them by bursting paper bags in their vicinity. If I was mayor I would build a thousand little summer houses in the parks, just big enough for a poor young couple to sit in, and talk over the future, and I would set policemen to watch out that nobody disturbed them, and if one of you ducks come along, I would have you thrown in the lake. The idea of a boy who is in love the way you pretend to be, having no charity for others, makes me sick, I'll bet none of

those you flushed last night had it so bad they had tintypes of the girls glued on their hearts with a porous plaster. Bah! you meddler!” and the old man stamped his foot on the floor, and the boy looked ashamed.

“Well, that's the last time I will mix in another fellow's love affair,” said the boy, as he climbed up on Uncle Ike's knee.

“Now, I want to talk to you seriously,” said the boy, as he looked up into Uncle Ike's round, smooth, red and smiling face. “Us boys have been reading about the serious condition of our country, when its wealthy citizens are leaving it and going abroad to live. Do you think, uncle, that William Waldorf Astor's deserting this country, and joining England, is going to cause this country to fail up in business? In case of war with England, do you think he would fight this country?”

“Well, you kids can borrow more trouble about this poor old country of ours than the men who own it can borrow. Astor! Why, boy, his deserting his country will have about as much effect as it would for that man working in the street to pack up his household goods and move to Indiana. Do you suppose this state would tip up sideways if he should quit running that scraper and move out of the state? Not much. The Astors have been rich so long that they are un-American. It is not the natural condition of an American to be rich. When a man gets too rich, he is worried as to what to do with his money. There is no great enjoyment that the very rich can have in this country that the poor cannot have a little of. The first thing a very rich man acquires is a bad stomach. He becomes too lazy to take exercise, and lets a hired man take exercise for him. He looks at his money, and thinks of his stomach. In Astor's case there was nothing in this country that he could enjoy, not even sleep. Nobody respected him any more than they did every other honest man. Only a few toadies would act toward him as though he was a world's wonder, on account of his wealth. People with souls, and health, and good nature, in the West, got rich as he, and went to New York, and knew how to spend money and have fun, and do good with it; and Astor couldn't understand it. He wanted to be considered the only, but he never had learned how to blow in money to make others happy. If he gave to the poor, an agent did it for him, and squeezed it, and made a memorandum and showed it to him once a year, and he frowned, and his stomach ached, and he took a pill, and sighed. I suppose two girls from California, daughters of an old Roman of the mines and the railroads, who died too soon, a senator with a soul, taught Astor how to do good with money, and maybe scared him out of the country. Those girls seemed to, know where there was a chance for suffering among the poor, and they kept people in their employ on the run to get to places before the bread was all gone, until half a million of the people that only knew there was an Astor by the signs on buildings for rent, knew these Fair girls by sight, and worshiped them as they passed. The girls are married now, but they give just the same, and wherever they are in the world there is the crowd, and there is the love of those who believe them angels. Astor could not find any one to love him for any good he ever did that did not have rent or interest as the object, and he went away where a man is respected in a half-way manner,

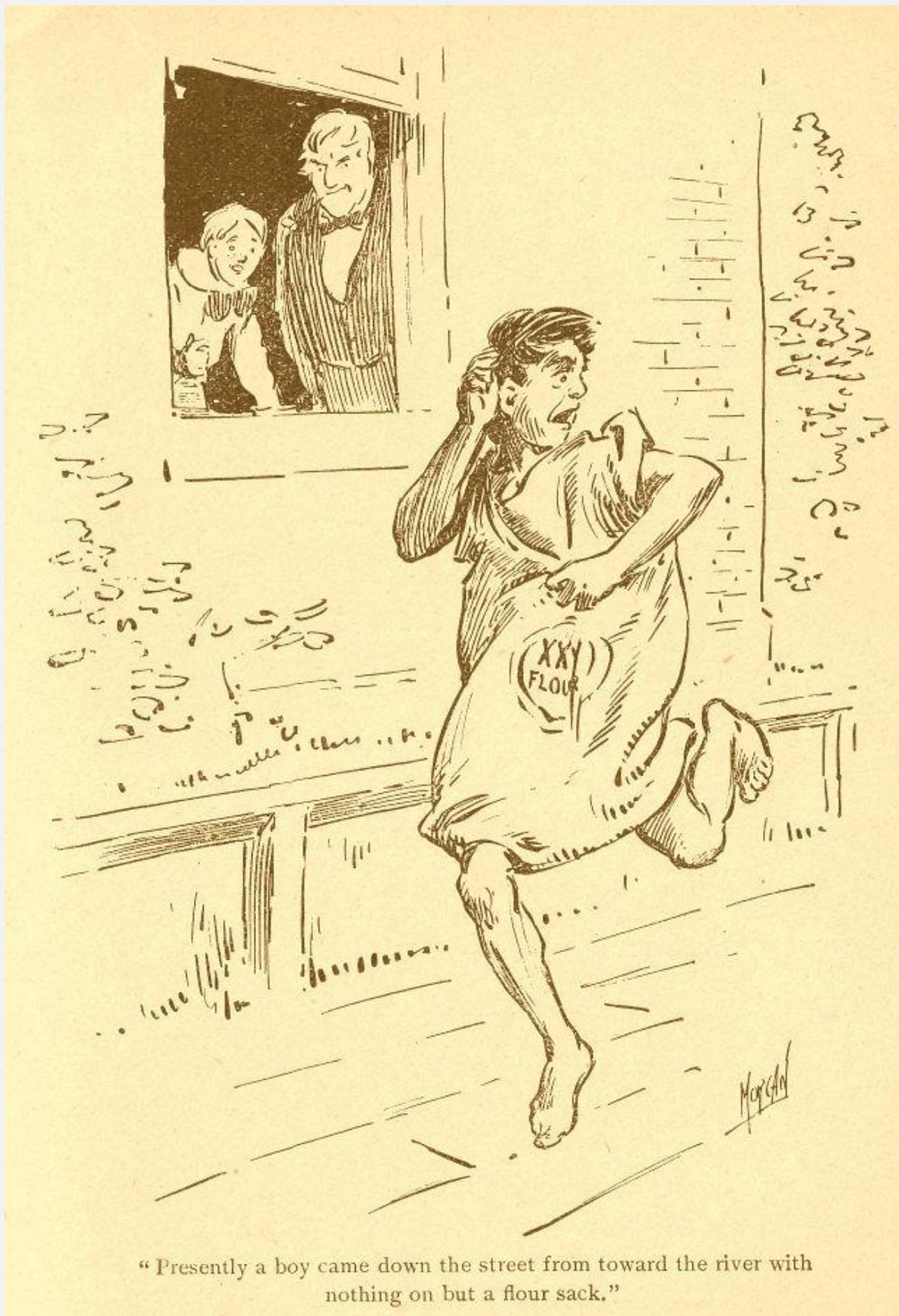
in proportion to the money he spends on royalty, in imitating royalty, and he will run a race there, and get tired of it; and some day, if he lives, he will come back to this country in the steerage, as his ancestors did, and take out his first papers and vote, and maybe he will be happy. The only way for a rich man to be very happy is to find avenues for getting his congested wealth off his mind, where it will cause some one who is poor and suffering to look up to him, and say that riches have not spoiled him. But to inherit money and go through life letting it accumulate, and not finding any avenue where it can leak out and be caught in the apron of a needy soul, is tough. No, you boys need not worry about the desertion of Astor. If we have a war with Great Britain, you would find Astor taking a night trip across the channel, and France would draw him in the lottery. One foreigner who landed in this country the day Astor sailed away, will be of more value in peace or war than Astor could be if he had remained.”

“Gosh!” said the boy, as he got up out of Uncle Ike's lap, “if you are not a comfort! Between that porous plaster, and Astor's going to England, and my girl at the seashore, I was about down with nervous prostration, but I am all right now,” and the redheaded boy went out to round up the gang and tell them the country was all safe enough, as long as they had Uncle Ike to run it.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Well, you are a sight!” said Uncle Ike, as the red-headed boy came in the room, all out of breath, his shirt unbuttoned and his hair wet and dripping, and his face so clean that it was noticeable. “Why don't you make your toilet before you come into a gentleman's room? Where you been, anyway?”

“Been in swimming at the old swimming hole,” said the boy, as he finished buttoning his shirt, and sat down to put on his shoes and stockings, which he had carried in his hat. “Had more fun than a barrel of monkeys. Stole the clothes of a boy, and left him a paper flour sack to go home in. Wait a minute and you will see him go by,” and the boy rushed to the window and yelled to Uncle Ike to come and see the fun.



“Presently a boy came down the street from toward the river with nothing on but a flour sack.”

Presently a boy came down the street from toward the river with nothing on but a flour sack. He had cut holes in the bottom to put his feet through, and pulled it up to his body, and the upper part covered his chest to the arms, which were bare and sunburned, and the boy was marching along the street as unconcerned as possible, while all who saw him were laughing.

“What did you do that for?” said Uncle Ike, as he called to the boy to come in.

“Just for a joke,” said the red-headed boy, laughing, and jollying the boy dressed in the flour sack, as he came in at Uncle Ike's invitation.

“Well, that is a good enough joke for two,” said Uncle Ike. “Now take off your clothes and change with this boy, and put on the flour sack yourself,” and he superintended the change, until the other boy had on a full suit of clothes, and the red-headed boy had on the flour sack. “Now I want you to go to the grocery and get me a paper of tobacco.”

“O, gosh, I don't want to go out in the street with this flour sack on. Some dog will chase me, and the people will make fun of me,” said the boy, with an entirely new view of a practical joke.

“But you go all the same,” said Uncle Ike, taking down a leather strap that he sharpened his razor on, and driving the boy outdoors. “Bring back this boy's clothes, also,” and he sat down and waited for the boy to return. He came back after awhile with the tobacco and the clothes, followed by a lot of other boys, and after the two had changed clothes, and all had enjoyed a good laugh, Uncle Ike said: “Boys, playing practical jokes is a good deal like jumping on a man when he is down. You will notice that the weaker boy always has the joke played on him. Boys always combine against the weak boy. The boy that can whip any of you never has to wear a flour sack home from the swimming hole, does he? Any joke that you can take turns at having played on you is fair, but when you combine against the weak, you become a monopoly, or a trust. When I was a boy we used to tie the clothes of the biggest and meanest boy in knots, and if he couldn't take a joke we all turned in and mauled him. After this, if there is to be any jokes, let the biggest boy take his turn first, and then I don't care how soon the others take their dose, but this trust business has got to be broke up,” and Uncle Ike patted the boys, on the head and said they could go and have all the fun they wanted to.

“Speaking of trusts, Uncle Ike, I thought you said, a spell ago, that the trusts would be brought up with a round turn,” said the red-headed boy, reading, as he glanced at a heading in a morning paper, “but here is an article says that a thousand million billion dollars have been invested in trusts in New Jersey, and the manager of one of the biggest trusts says nobody can do anything to stop them. He says: 'What are you going to do about it?'”

“Well,” said Uncle Ike, as he filled the air with strong tobacco smoke, and his eyes snapped like they did when he was mad, “you wait. I am older than you are. I remember when old Bill Tweed, the great robber of New York, who had stolen millions of dollars from the city, and was in his greatest power, became arrogant, and asked the people

what they were going to do about it. When people think they are invincible they always ask what anybody is going to do about it. When a bully steps on the foot of a quiet and inoffensive man, purposely to get into a row, he looks at his victim in an impudent manner and says, 'What are you going to do about it?' and the victim gets up deliberately and thrashes the ground with the bully. The people got mad at Tweed when he said that, and they chased him over the world, and landed him in the penitentiary, where he died. That will be the fate of some of these trust magnates. The foundation of the trust is corruption. Its trade mark was uttered years ago by a great railroad man who said, 'The public be d——d.' That expression is in the mind of every man connected with a trust. He turns the thumbscrews on the public, raises prices, and if they complain, he says, 'What are you going to do about it?' and if anybody says the public cannot stand it, they say 'the public be blessed,' or the other thing. Now, wait. The public will be making laws, and the first law that is made will be one that sends a man to the penitentiary who robs through a trust. If three men combine to rob it is a conspiracy. If a hundred or a thousand combine to rob seventy million people, it is treason. You wait, boys, and you will hear a noise one of these days when the people speak, and you will hear trust magnates who fail to get across the ocean before the tornado of public indignation strikes, begging for mercy. Now, gosh blast you, run away. You have got me to talking again," and Uncle Ike lighted his pipe and shut up like a clam, while the boys went out looking for trouble.

Uncle Ike had been dozing and smoking, and fixing his fishing tackle, and oiling his gun, and whistling, and trying to sing, all alone, for an hour, after the boys had gone out to have fun, and when he saw them coming in the gate, two of them carrying a big striped watermelon, and the others watching that it did not fall on the ground, he was rather glad the boys had come back, and he opened the door and went out on the porch and met them.

"S-h-h!" said the red-headed boy, as Uncle Ike thumped the melon with his hard old middle finger, to see if it was ripe. "Don't say a word. Let's get it inside the house, quick, and you carve it, Uncle," and they brought it in and laid it on the table, and the boys looked down the street as though they were expecting some one.

"We never used to ask any questions when I was a boy, when a melon suddenly showed up, and nobody knew from whence it came," said Uncle Ike, as he put both hands on the melon and pressed down upon it, and listened to it crack. "Do you know, if a person takes potatoes, or baled hay, that does not belong to him, it is stealing, but if a melon elopes with a boy, or several boys, the melon is always considered guilty of contributory negligence," and the old man laughed and winked at the boys. "But a house is no place to eat a melon in, and a knife is not good enough to cut a melon. Now, you fetch that melon out in the garden, by the cucumber vines, and I will show you the conditions that should surround a melon barbecue," and the old man led the way to the garden, followed by the boys, and he got them seated around in the dirt, with the growing corn on one side, a patch of sunflowers on another, a crabapple tree on one

side, giving a little shade where they sat, and the alley fence on the other. The boys were anxious to begin, and each produced a toad-stabber, but Uncle Ike told them to put away the knives, and said:

“The only way to eat a melon is to break it by putting your knee on it, and taking the chunks and running your face right down into it. A nigger is the only natural melon eater. There,” said he, as he crushed the brittle melon rind into a dozen pieces, and spread it open, red, and juicy, and glorious. “Now 'fall in,' as we used to say in the army,” and the boys each grabbed a piece and began to eat and drink out of the rind, the juice smearing their faces and running down on their shirt bosoms, and Uncle Ike taking a piece of the core in his hands and trying to eat as fast as the boys did, the red and sticky juice trickling through his fingers, and the pulp painting pictures around his dear old mouth, and up his cheeks to his ears, while he tried to tell them of a day during the war when he was on the skirmish line going through a melon patch, and how the order came to lie down, and every last soldier dropped beside a melon, broke it with his bayonet, and filled himself, while the bullets whistled, and how they were all sick afterwards, and had to go to the rear because the people who owned the melons had put croton oil in them.

“Gosh, but this is great!” said the red-headed boy, as he stopped eating long enough to loosen his belt.

“You bet!” said one of the other boys; “Uncle Ike is a James dandy,” and he looked up and bowed to a boy with an apron on, who came into the garden with a piece of paper in his hand, which he handed to Uncle Ike.

“What is this, a telegram?” says Uncle Ike, as he takes it with his sticky fingers and feels for his glasses.

“No, it is the bill for the melon——50 cents,” said the grocer's boy.

“Bunkoed, by gosh!” says Uncle Ike, as he looks around at the laughing boys who have played it on him.

“Don't ever ask where a melon comes from,” said the red-headed boy.

“Sawed a gold brick on me, you young bunko-steerers,” says Uncle Ike, as he wipes his hands on some mustard and feels in his pocket for the change; “but it was worth it, by ginger,” and he pays for the melon, they all go in the house and wash the melon off their hands and faces, the old man lights his pipe and says: “Boys, come around here to-morrow and play this trick on Aunt Almira, and I'll set up the root beer.”

CHAPTER XV.

“Say, where you been all day?” asked Uncle Ike of the red-headed boy, as he showed up late in the afternoon, chewing a gob of gum so big that it made his ear ache. “Here, I’ve been waiting all day for you, with so many things on my mind to tell you about that I have had to make memorandums,” and the old man took out his knife and shaved some tobacco off a plug, rolled it in his hands and scraped it into the pipe, and lit up for a long talk.

“I been working,” said the boy, as he took some pieces of chocolate out of his pocket and offered them to his uncle. “I am working for a syndicate, and have got a soft snap, with all the money I can spend,” and the boy shook the pennies in his pocket so they sounded like emptying a collection plate.

“Working for a syndicate, a-hem!” said the old man. “A syndicate is a great thing, if you are the syndicate, but if you work for it you get left, that’s all. Now tell me about it. What you doing for a syndicate, and who furnishes you the money to spend? Tell me, so I can see whether it is honest. Somehow I can’t feel that a syndicate means any good to a boy.”

“It is this way, Uncle Ike,” said the boy, as he threw away his gum and took another stick out of his pocket, and chewed it until he fairly drooled, “you know these slot machines in the depots and hotels, where people put in a penny and pull out a knob and get a stick of gum or a chocolate, or some peppermint drops. Well, the syndicate wants a boy to go around and put in pennies, and get the prizes, when people are looking on, so as to get them interested, so they will put in pennies, see?”

“Sure! You are a sort of capper for a gum bunko game, eh? Rope in the people and get them next to a good thing,” said Uncle Ike, looking at the boy over his glasses. “What particular talent does this new business bring to the front? Do you make speeches to the people, encouraging them to invest their hard-earned pennies in your great scheme for the amelioration of the condition of the down-trodden, or what do you do? Tell me how the thing works.”

“Why, my work is all pantomime. The man who hired me said I had a face that was worth a fortune. I go up to a slot machine, and act as though I never saw such a thing before. Then I monkey around, and seem to be puzzled, and my face looks serious, and the people in the depot waiting for trains gather around and watch me, and when the jays are all ripe, ready to pick, I put a penny in the slot, draw out a stick of gum, put it in my mouth, and then I smile one of those broad smiles, like this, and the people begin to put in pennies, and they surround the machine, and money just flows in, until their train goes, when another crowd comes in and I work them on the chocolate slot, and just blow in pennies belonging to the syndicate that owns the machines. Oh, it’s a great snap, Uncle Ike. You ought to go into it,” and the boy threw away his gum and went to eating chocolate.

“Is that so? My face would be my fortune, too, would it?” said Uncle Ike, who was beginning to show that he was mad. “And what salary does the syndicate pay you for your valuable services as a piece of human fly paper?”

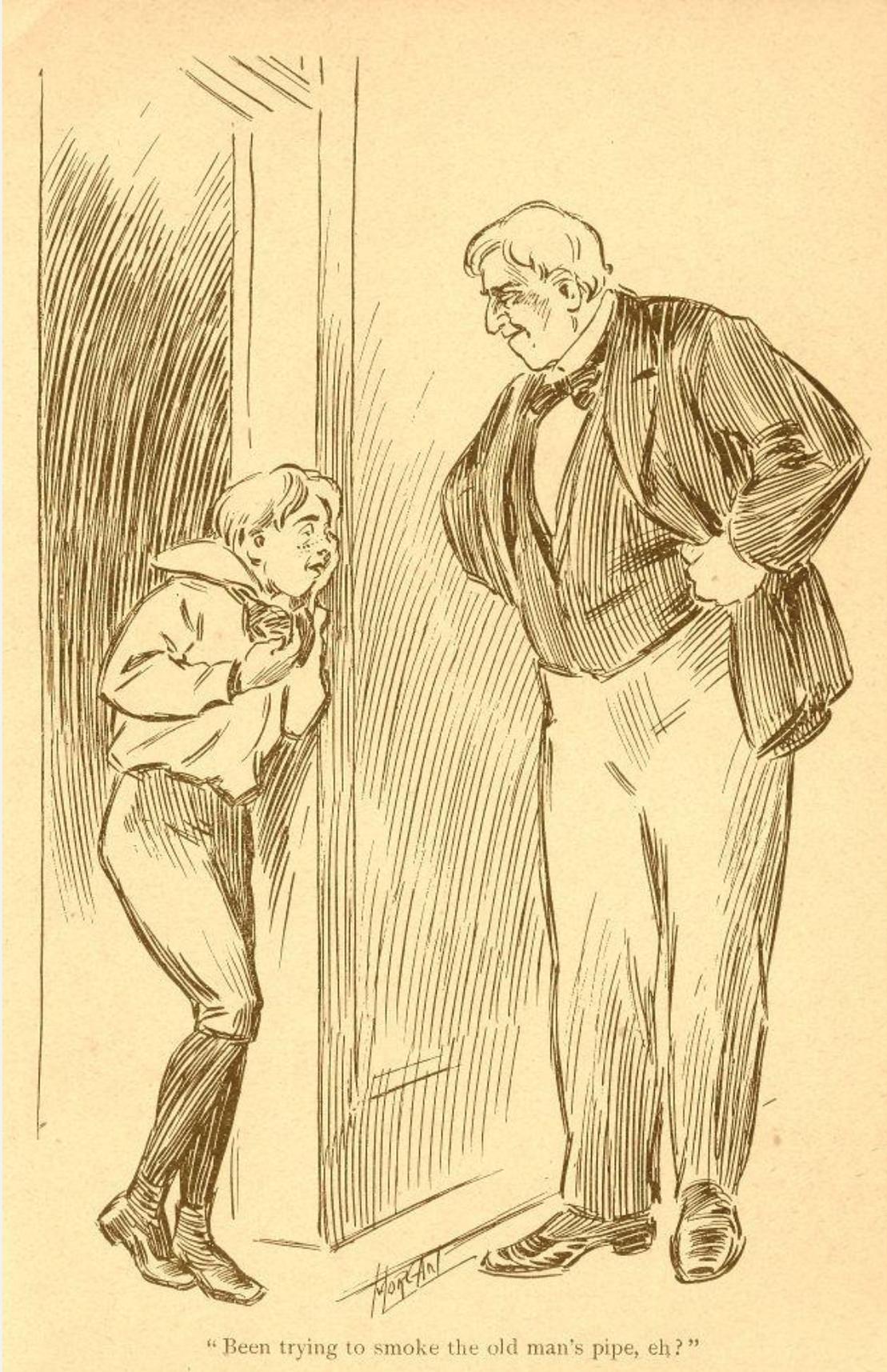
“O, they don't pay me any salary,” said the boy, as he took out a handful of syndicate pennies and poured them from one hand into another, to show the old man that he had wealth. “I don't ask anything for my services. I just get pay in fun, and have all the gum, and chocolate, and lemon drops that I can eat. The man told me it would be an experience that would be valuable to me in after life, being in the eye of the public, leading the people. He said this would be the making of me, and open up a career that would astonish my friends. Don't you think so, Uncle? Can't you see a change in me since I went to work for the syndicate?”

“Well, I don't know but I do,” said Uncle Ike, as he pondered over the remarks of the boy. “You begin to look more bilious, probably on account of the chocolate you have eaten, to deceive the people at the depot into the idea that it is good stuff. And perhaps this experience will be the opening of a career. If you can, by your actions, cause strangers to run up against a slot machine, I don't see why you couldn't, in time, be a pretty good capper for a three-card monte game, where you could pick out the right card, and the jay loses his money. If this is the kind of business you have selected for a career, it will not be long before you will be in demand as a bunko-steerer. You would be invaluable, with that innocent face of yours, in roping in strangers to a robbers' roost, where they would be fleeced and thrown down stairs on their necks. With about two days more experience on a slot machine, some gold-brick swindler will come along and raise the syndicate out on your salary, and put you on the road selling gold bricks. Starting in business as a fakir, you will rise to become a barker for a sideshow, graduate into bunko and gold bricks, and if you are not sent to the penitentiary, there is a great opening for you as a promoter of a trust in the air we breathe. We shall have to part company. My reputation is dear to me. I have never turned a jack from the bottom when I had one to go in seven-up, and to associate with a boy who will rope people to buy mouldy gum, and be an advance agent of prosperity as recorded on a slot machine, is too much, and I bid you good-bye. I have loved you, but it was because you were innocent and tried to do the fair thing, but—good-bye,” and the old man laid down his pipe, picked up his hat and started for the door.

“Hold on, Uncle Ike,” said the boy, taking the handful of pennies out of his pocket and laying them on the table, “I didn't know it was so bad. I won't do it any more. Come back, please.”

“Well, I got to go downtown,” said the old man, “and I will be back in an hour. In the meantime you write out a letter of resignation to the syndicate. Say that you find a diet of decayed chocolate and glucose candy is sapping the foundation of your manhood, and that your Uncle Ike has offered you a position on the staff of a gold-brick syndicate,” and the old man went out, leaving the boy to write his resignation.

“Well, how is my decoy duck, and has he sent in his resignation?” said the old man, as he came in a little later and found writing material and pennies on the table, and the boy lying on the lounge looking pale and sick. “What is this? Sick the first time you have to resign an office? That won't do. You never will make a politician if you can't write out a resignation without having it go to your head,” and the old man sat down by the boy and found that he was as sick as a horse, his face white, and cold perspiration on his upper lip among the red hairs, and on his brow among the freckles. The boy's bosom was heaving, and his stomach was clearly the seat of the disease, and suddenly the boy rushed out of the room, into, the bathroom, and there was a noise such as is frequently heard on steamboat excursions. The old man thought it was the chocolate and gum that had made the boy sick, until he looked at his pipe on the table, which was smoking, although he had been away an hour or more.



“ Been trying to smoke the old man’s pipe, eh? ”

“Been trying to smoke the old man's pipe, eh?” said he, as the boy staggered out of the bathroom so weak he could hardly stand, “Well, that plug tobacco in the pipe is a little strong for a bunko-steerer, but I suppose you thought if you were going to be a business man, and leave me, you ought to take with you some of my bad habits. Let me fill the pipe with some of this mild switchman's delight, and you try that,” and he brought the pipe near to the boy.

“Take it away, take it away,” said a weak voice, coming from under a pillow on the lounge. “Oh, Uncle Ike, I will never touch a pipe again. You look so happy when you are smoking that I thought I would like to learn, so I lit the pipe, and drew on it, and the smoke wouldn't come, and I drew in my breath whole length, as I do when I dive off a spring board, and the whole inside of the pipe came into my mouth, and I swallowed the whole business, and pretty soon it felt as though a pin-wheel had been touched off inside of me, and the sparks flew out of my nose, and the smoke came out of my ears, and they turned on the water in my eyes, and my mouth puckered up and acted salivated, like I had eaten choke-cherries, and pretty soon the pin-wheel in my stomach began to run down, and I thought I was going to stop celebrating, when the pin-wheel seemed to touch off a nigger-chaser, and it went to fizzing all around inside of me, up into my lungs, and down around my liver, and it called at all my vital parts and registered its name, and when the nigger-chaser seemed to be dying it touched off an internal skyrocket, and s-i-z-boom—that was when I went in the bathroom, 'cause I was afraid of the stick. Say, Uncle Ike, does anyone ever die from smoking plug tobacco?”

“Oh, yes, about half of them die, when they smoke it the first time. When their eyes roll up, like yours, and they cease to be hungry, and feel as though they had rather lie clown than stand up, they don't last very long,” and the old man looked serious, and reached for his pipe and a match, and said: “Any last message you want to send to anybody; any touching good-bye? If you do, whisper it to me, and I will write your dying statement.”

“Don't light that dum pipe!” said the boy, rolling over and looking like a seasick ghost, as Uncle Ike was about to scratch a match on his trousers. “Here is the address of my girl. Write to her that I am dead. That I died thinking of her, and smelling of plug tobacco. Put it in that I died of appendicitis, or something fashionable, and say that eight doctors performed eight operations on me, but peritonitis had set in, and there was no use, but that they cut a swath in me big enough to drive an automobile through. I had rather she would think of me as dying a heroic death, than dying smoking plug tobacco. And, say, Uncle Ike, after you have written her, don't make a mistake and send my resignation to the syndicate to her. O, God! but it is hard to die so young,” and the boy went to sleep on the lounge, and Uncle Ike went to taking the kinks out of a fish line, knowing that when the boy woke up he wouldn't be dead worth a cent. About half an hour later the boy rolled over, opened his big eyes, sat up, and stared around, and Uncle Ike said:

“Now, you go in the bath-room and wash your face in cold water, and you will be all right,” and the boy did so, and came back with almost a smile on his face, and he looked at the papers on the table, and said:

“Uncle Ike, you didn't send that appendicitis story to my girl, did you? Gosh, but I am all right now, and I am not going to die.”

“No, I didn't send it; but next time I will, by ginger,” and the old man laughed. “Here, have a smoke on me,” but the boy went out in the open air and kicked himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

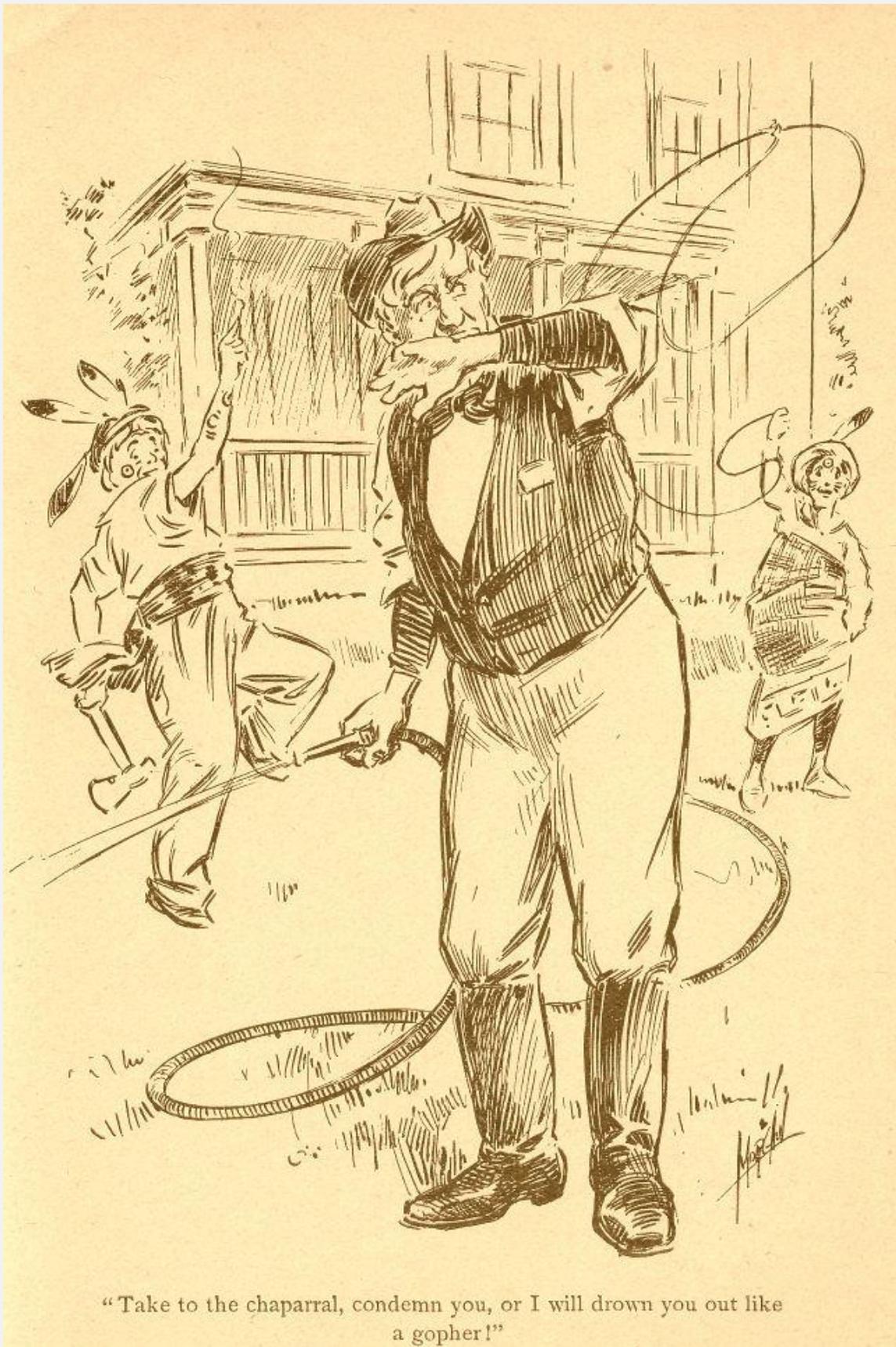
It was a beautiful, hot, sunny morning, and after breakfast Uncle Ike came out on the porch in his shirt sleeves, and with a pair of old hunting shoes on, and his shirt sleeves rolled up, showing the sleeves of a red flannel undershirt, a kind he always wore, winter and summer. He leaned against the post of the porch, lit his pipe, and looked away toward the hazy, hot horizon, and thought of old days that had been brought to his mind the day before, when he saw the parade of a Wild West show. The old man was a '49er, who went across the plains for gold when the country was young, and the yells of the Indians had made him nervous, as they did half a century ago. He had staked the red-headed boy and several of his chums to go to the show, and was waiting for them to show up and report. He stepped down on the lawn and took up the nozzle of a sprinkler and turned it on a lilac bush, when suddenly there was a yell that was unmistakably that of a Comanche Indian; and he stopped and looked at the bush, and could plainly see a moccasin and a leg with buckskin fringe on it, and he knew the boys were laying for him, to scalp him and have fun with him; so he held the nozzle as his only protection against the bloodthirsty band of savages, headed by Chief Red Head, his nephew, but a bad Indian when off the reservation. From behind an evergreen tree down by the gate there came a blood-curdling yell, which was evidently from the throat of “Watermelon Jim,” a neighbor's boy, while from the wild cucumber vine on the south porch came a noise like that of a pack of wolves breakfasting on a fawn.

“Surrender!” shouted a damp voice from behind the lilac bush, where the hose was turned. “Surrender, or we burn down your ranch over your head!” and a painted Indian, with red, short hair showing under the feather, crawled toward a rosebush, where it was dry.

“Never!” said Uncle Ike, as he bit the stem of his pipe, and smiled at the boys who were peeking out from behind the different hiding places. “Your Uncle Ike often dies, but he never surrenders,” and he cocked the nozzle of the lawn sprinkler, and stood ready for the attack.

The red-headed Indian lit a parlor match and held it aloft, which was apparently a smoke signal, for an Indian behind the porch appeared and suddenly a swish was heard in the air, and a piece of clothesline with a noose in it came near going over Uncle Ike's head; so near that it broke his clay pipe, leaving the stem between his lips.

“Ah, ha! You will, will you? Vamoose!” said Uncle Ike, as he turned the hose on the Indian with the lasso, and drove him behind the porch with water dripping down his calico shirt, taking the color out. Then an Indian near the gate began to fire blank cartridges with a toy pistol and Uncle Ike put his elbow up in front of his face, as he said afterward, to save his beauty, and Uncle Ike started toward that Indian, dragging the hose, and shouting, “Take to the chaparral, condemn you, or I will drown you out like a gopher!”



“Take to the chaparral, condemn you, or I will drown you out like a gopher!”

For a moment there was an ominous silence. The Indians had withdrawn behind the currant bushes, but Uncle Ike knew enough of Indian warfare to know that the silence was only temporary. Suddenly there was a blazing and crackling, and a big smoke from the back of the house, and it seemed the redskins had set fire to the house, the hired girl yelled fire and murder, and came out with a pail of water, while the chief yelled "Charge!" and in a minute Uncle Ike was surrounded by the tribe, his legs tied with the clothesline, though he fought with the garden hose until there was not a dry rag on one of the boys or himself.

"Burn him at the stake!" shouted a little shrimp who carries papers every afternoon, after school, as he wiped the red paint off his cheek on to his bare arm, and shook water out of his trousers leg.

"No, let's hold him for a ransom," said the redheaded boy. "Aunt Almira will give us enough to buy a melon, and make us a pail of lemonade, if we let this gray-haired old settler off without scalping him."

"Chief, spare me, please," said Uncle Ike, as he sat up in a puddle of water on the battle ground, with his legs tied. "I am the mother of eleven orphan children. O, spare me! and don't walk on that pipe of mine on the grass there, with your moccasins. I will compromise this thing myself, and pay the ransom. Here is a dollar. Go and buy melons, and we will have a big feed right here. But what was the fire behind the house, and is it put out?"

"The ransom is agreed to," said the red-headed boy, as he took off his string of feathers, and gave a yell, hitting his lips with the back of his hand so it would "gargle," "and the fire is out. We put some kerosene on an empty beer case, that was all." So Uncle Ike handed over the dollar, and was released, while a boy who had washed his paint off was sent to a grocery after a melon. Then they wiped the mud off Uncle Ike, and all went upon the porch, a new pipe of peace was provided, and they talked about the Wild West show of the night before, while Uncle Ike did the most of the smoking of the pipe of peace, though he wiped the stem once and handed it to the red-headed chief to take a whiff, but the chief, after his experience with plug tobacco cholera a few days before, declined with thanks.

"What interested you most at the show?" said Uncle Ike, puffing away, as he sat on the floor of the porch, and leaned his back against one of the posts. "When you go to a show you always want to get your mind on something that makes an impression on you."

"Well, sir," said the boy who had worked the lasso on Uncle Ike, "the way these Mexicans handled the lariat struck me the hardest, only they look so darned lazy. They just wait for a horse to get in the right place, and then pull up. I would like to see them chase something, and catch it by the leg, that was trying to get away. But the Cossacks! O, my! couldn't they ride, standing up, or dragging on the ground with one foot in the

stirrup. Gosh! if Russia turned about a million of those Cossacks loose on China, they wouldn't do a thing to John Chinaman.”

“The Indians got me,” said another boy, as he took off a moccasin and hung it up in the sun to dry, after his fight to the death with Uncle Ike's waterworks. “I would like to be an Indian, or a squaw, and never have anything to do but travel with a show, and yell. They just have a soft snap, dressing up in feathers, and paint, and buckskin, and living on the fat of the land, and yelling ki-yi! in a falsetto voice.”

“Oh, I don't know,” said the red-headed boy, “what struck me as the most exciting was the battle of San Juan hill. Say, did you see our boys just walk right up to the Spaniards, in the face of a perfect hailstorm of blank cartridges, with a gatling gun stuttering smokeless powder, and the boys in blue firing volleys, and the rough riders walking on foot, and the Spaniards just falling back, and pretty soon we went right over them, and down came the Spanish flag, and then the Stars and Stripes went up, and there was where I yelled so the roof ripped. But what made me cry was to see Old Glory and the British flag get together, every little while, and float side by side, and seem to be grown together as one flag, and everybody seemed glad. What you think about things, Uncle Ike? Don't sit there and smoke up, all the time, but tell us what you think about the American and British flags waving together so much lately. Are you in favor of an alliance? Do you want to be an assistant Englishman, Uncle Ike?”

“Well, I don't want to be quoted much on this business,” said Uncle Ike, as he looked around at the boys, who were listening intently. “I have watched the course of England and all the countries, for over, fifty years, in their relations with this country, and the only friendship England ever showed to us was in the last war. They did us good, no doubt, and I trust I am grateful, as becomes a good citizen. It was like a big boy and little boy fighting. The big boy can whip if he is not interfered with, but a lot of boys are standing around, ready to mix in to help the little fellow. They are ready to trip up the big fellow, so the little one can jump on him, and they are getting ready to throw stones at him, and kick him on the shins. Then a big bully that they are all afraid to tackle, comes along and says: 'This little fellow picked on the big fellow, and kept nagging him till he had to fight or run. Now the little fool has got to take his medicine, and you fellows mustn't mix in, or you got me to fight. Just keep hands off, that's all.' That's all there was to it, but it came in mighty handy, and we appreciate it, but there is too much grand stand play about an alliance. In other wars with England, Germans and French and Poles have fought with us, and for us, and yet we have never felt like having an alliance with them. Do you ever take much stock in Russia, boys? Don't ever forget Russia. During our war between the North and South, we were once in a tight place. England and other countries were about to recognize the Southern Confederacy, and England was doing everything possible to break us up, furnishing privateers, and harboring confederate gunboats, and making it warm for us. Boys, your Uncle Abraham Lincoln was perspiring a good deal those days. They say he couldn't wear a collar, he sweat so. It was believed that England and several other countries were going to

simultaneously recognize the Confederacy, and maybe turn in and fight us. Warships from other countries were hovering around our southern coast, and our soldiers were feeling pretty blue, the cabinet never smiled, and nobody laughed out loud except Uncle Abe, and even his laugh seemed to have a hollow, croupy sound. One day, when the strain was the greatest, and everybody felt as though there was a funeral in the family, and there were funerals in most families, a flock of warships flying the flag of Russia, steamed by Sandy Hook, and up to New York, saluted the forts and the Stars and Stripes all along up to the Battery. It seemed as though those battleships never would stop coming. They lined up all around New York, and their guns pointed toward the sea, and every Russian on board acted as though he was loaded for bear. The news went to Washington that night, and they say Uncle Abe had night sweats. The next morning a Russian admiral, who had gone over to Washington on a night train, called to pay his respects to the President, and presented him with a document in the Russian language, which had to be interpreted by the Russian minister. When it was interpreted they say old Abe danced a highland fling, and hugged the Russians and danced all hands around. That document has never been published, but it was to the effect that the Russian fleet was at the disposal of the President of the United States, to fight any country on the face of God's green earth that attempted to mix in. See? It was not long before other nations discovered that Russia had sent her fleet to stay, and every Russian on every vessel acted as though he was spoiling for a fight, and seemed to say to the world, 'Come on, condemn you!' And nobody ever came along to fight. And Uncle Abe began to be in a laughing mood, and you know the rest, if you have read up about the war. Nobody has ever suggested an alliance with Russia, and yet we are under more obligations to that old Czar than to anybody. In fact, we don't want an alliance with anybody. We want the friendship of all. If I have any more love for one country than another, I do not know which it is, only when I see a Russian, even one of those Cossacks that rode so well, I feel like taking him by the hand and telling him, when he goes home, to go up to the Winter palace and give my love to the Czar, because I always have before me the picture of that Russian fleet in New York harbor, when things were hot. England has done a similar favor during this last war, and if we had another war, and the newspapers would quit nagging him, you would find the young emperor of Germany doing something for us equally as good. So, boys, don't get stuck on one country, but give them all a chance to be good to us."

"Gosh, Uncle Ike, I never heard anything about that Russian fleet," said the red-headed boy. "England can go plum to thunder. I thought England was the only country that was ever even polite to us."

"Come on, boys, let's go and play Cossack," said one of the Indians, and they went rolling over the picket fence on their stomachs, leaving Uncle Ike to go and put on some dry clothes.

CHAPTER XVII.

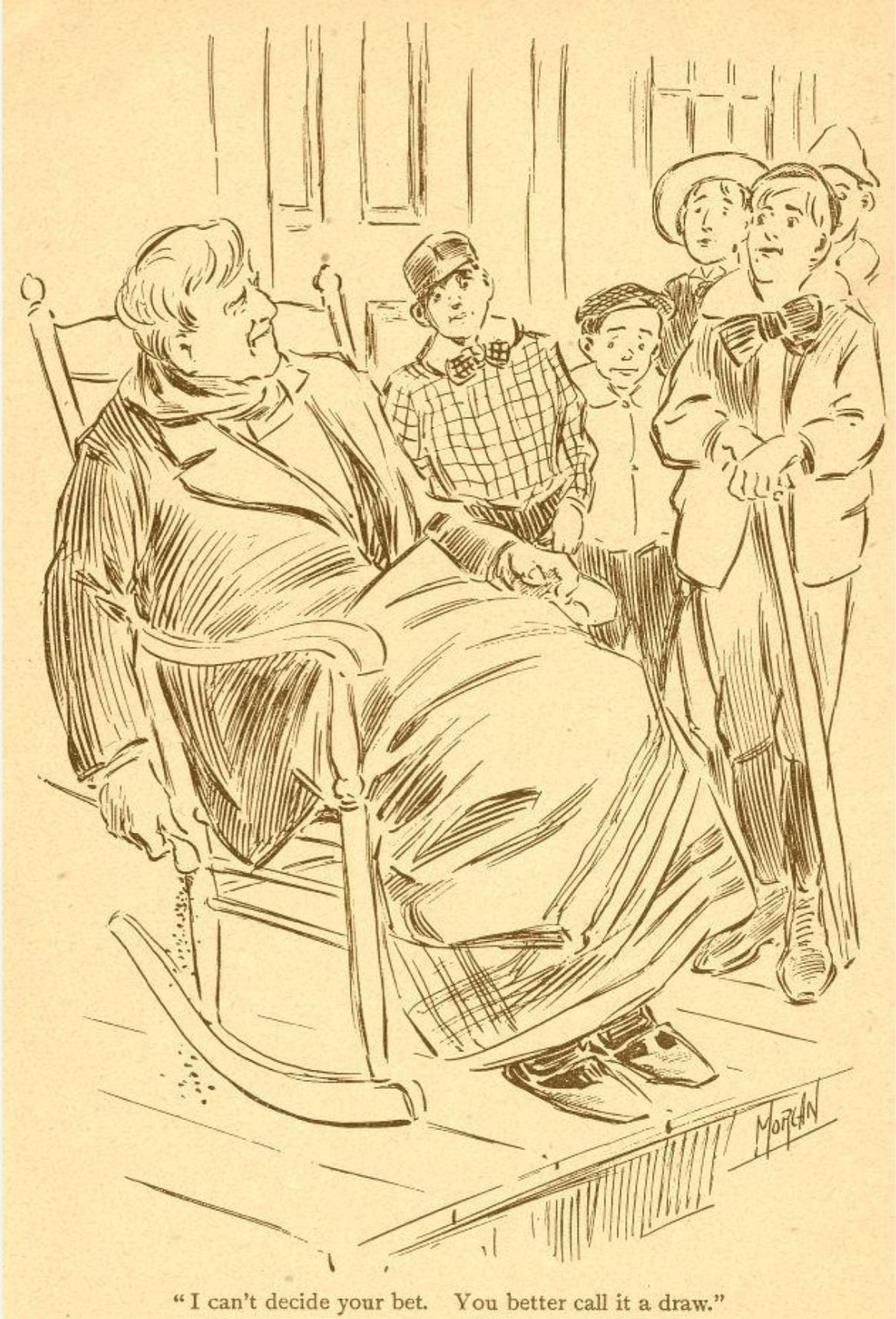
Uncle Ike had been having twinges of rheumatism in one of his legs ever since he had the scrap with the Indians, and turned the hose on them and got wet himself, and he sat out on the porch one morning with a blanket over his leg trying to warm it up, smoking his pipe in silence, and wondering why the good Lord arranged things so a good man should grow old, and have pains. The red-headed boy and quite a flock of kids of about his age were sitting on the sidewalk, outside the fence, arguing something in loud voices, and finally he heard them agree to leave it to Uncle Ike, and then they piled over the fence and came up to the porch, and the red-headed boy was the spokesman.

He said: "Say, Uncle Ike, us boys have got a bet and you are to decide it. Isn't it true that the people of Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines are gamblers, and hasn't our government fought them to a standstill to send people there to induce them to stop gambling and to attend to business? Isn't gambling a sin, and is it not our duty as a nation, to teach these ignorant people the wickedness of gambling, bull fighting, cock fighting, and all that?" and the boys sat all around Uncle Ike, waiting for a decision to be handed down, as they say in court.

The old man rapped the bowl of his pipe on the arm of the rocking chair, blew through the stem, made up a face when he got some of the nicotine on his tongue, took a piece off the broom and run through it, blew again, reached for the tobacco bag, filled it up, lighted it, smoked a minute or two in silence, while five pairs of big boys' eyes watched him as though he was a chief justice. He wiggled around a little, to ease his leg, knitted his brow as the pain shot through his leg, almost said damn; then the pain let up, his face cleared off, a smile came over it, he looked at the little statesmen around him, and finally said:

"Well, boys, you must not grow up with the idea that our own beloved country has no faults. Just love it, with all its faults; fight for it, if necessary, but don't get daffy over it. In the countries you speak of, everybody gambles more or less. In this country only a small proportion gamble, and yet the element of chance is something that is very attractive to most people here at home. The other evening your Aunt Almira brought home a beautiful goblet she won at a progressive euchre party of neighbors. How much more of a sin is it for the Cuban woman to win five dollars at monte, and buy a goblet? It is scarcely three years since tickets in Havana lotteries were publicly sold in this country. There is more money lost and won on draw poker in one day in New York than is lost and won in Havana on monte and roulette. You can find almost any gambling

game in Chicago or Milwaukee that you can find in the Philippines; and while we do not have bull fighting, we have prize fighting every night in the week, far more brutal. It is the gambling instinct in men and women that keeps the stock exchanges going, and industrial stocks, manipulated by those who control the prices, is tinhorn gambling, as much as pulling faro cards from a silver box in a brace game, where the dealer gets a rake-off, the same as the commission man, who deals the cards in stock or wheat. I don't know whether it is the object of our government to attempt to show the people of these new possessions the wickedness of gambling, and cock fighting, and all that; but if it is, thousands of men who have become bankrupt from gambling here at home could be sent there as object lessons; but the chances are they would put up a job to skin the natives out of their last dollar on some game they did not understand. If gambling is a sin, let he who is without sin throw the first stone into a Porto Rican cock fight. Let the senator who never played draw poker be the first to introduce a resolution to stop gambling in Manila. Let the army general that never sat up all night at a faro bank issue the first order against monte and roulette in Havana. Let the men who furnished embalmed beef for widows' sons, issue edicts against making fresh meat out of live bulls. I can't decide your bet. You better call it a draw," and the old man looked at the boys as though he wanted to change the subject.



"I can't decide your bet. You better call it a draw."

“Say, boys, Uncle Ike knows more than any man in the world,” said the red-headed boy, “but he argues too much. Let’s go and play shinny and call it golf,” and they went off on a gallop, leaving Uncle Ike with his lame leg and his pipe.

Uncle Ike sat and thought for an hour or more, on the porch, occasionally moving his rheumatic leg so it hurt him worse than it did before he moved it, and then he wondered what in the deuce he had moved it for. He thought of his experience as a gambler, since the boys had talked about gambling. He thought of the time he went to a State fair, when he was a boy, right fresh off the farm, with his white shirt his mother had sat up the night before to iron for him, his ready-made black frock-coat that the sun had faded out on the shoulders, the old brown slouch hat he had traded another one for with a lightning rod peddler, his shoes blacked with stove blacking, instead of being greased, as usual. He thought how a gambler at the State fair picked him out for a greeny before he had fairly got through the gate, and wondered how the gambler could have known he was so green without being told, and yet he carried a sign of greenness, from the faded and sunburned hair of his head to the sole of his stove-blackening shoes. He thought how the gambler got him to bet that he could find the pea in the shell, and how he had been so confident that he could find it that he had bet his whole month’s wages, and when the gambler had taken it, and wound it around a wad he had, and put it in his vest pocket, he remembered, here sitting on the porch with his rheumatic leg, how mad he was when the gambler who had ruined him, shouted, “Next gentleman, now! Roll up, tumble up, any way to get up!” As he sat there waiting for the boys to come back and be company for him, he thought how destitute he was when the gambler had taken his money, how he was twenty miles from home, with only 20 cents in his pocket, and he sat down on a chicken coop, and ate 10 cents’ worth of the hardest-hearted pie that ever was, and the tears came to his eyes, and the great crowd at the fair all mixed up with the horses and cattle, and he wandered about like a crazy person, all the afternoon, and at night started to walk home, with the balance of his wealth invested in gingerbread that stuck in his throat as he walked along the road in the dust, and he drank at all the wells he passed, until before he got home the peaches he had eaten before he gambled, combined with the corrugated iron pie, and the gingerbread and the various waters, gave him a case of cholera morbus big enough for a grown person, and when he got home along toward morning he wanted to die, and rather thought he would. Then he began to wonder if that gambler ever prospered, and whether he wound up his career in the penitentiary, or in politics, when he saw a big dust down the road, where the boys had gone, and presently the whole crowd came on a run, barefooted, and the first to arrive hit Uncle Ike on the arm and said, “Tag; you’re it,” and they all laid down on the grass and panted, and accused each other of shoving, and not running fair. After they had got so they could breathe easy, and each had taken a lot of green apples out of his shirt, and were biting into them and looking sorry they did so, the red-headed boy said:

“Uncle Ike, we have been talking it over, and have decided that some day you are to take us down to Pullman, the town founded by George Pullman. We have read a book

about the town, and all about the philanthropist who laid it out, and made a little Utopia—I think that's the word—for the laboring men in his employ, where they have little brick houses made to fit a family, with gas and water. The book says he was a regular father to them, and we want to see a place where everybody is happy and contented. Will you take us there some time, Uncle Ike? Isn't Pullman the greatest and happiest man in the world?"

"Look a here," said Uncle Ike, as he got up and tried his lame leg, and found the pain was gone, and walked down on the lawn where the boys were rolling in the grass, and sat down on a lawn chair; "when you read a book of fairy stories, you want to look at the date. That book was written a dozen years ago to advertise Pullman cars. It is out of date."

"Well, isn't the town there, and are not the laboring people happy, and singing praises to the great and good Mr. Pullman, and showering blessings on his family, and helping to make a heaven upon earth of the town he built for them?"

"I thought you boys were up to the times," said the old man, as he lighted up his pipe, and crossed his legs so the lame one was on top, "but you are back numbers. You read too much algebra, English history and fables. Why, Pullman has been dead for years, both the man and the town. I guess I'll have to educate you a little in American history, that you don't get in the ward school. Pullman was a carpenter who worked with a jack plane, and a saw, and things. It is said he took advantage of some ideas another man forgot to patent, got the ideas patented, and the result was the sleeping car. He made money by the barrel, and when the callouses and blood blisters were off his hands, and they became soft, he began to blow in money, and made people acquainted with the fact that he was too rich for words. He still looked like a carpenter, but smelled like a rose garden, for he learned to take a bath every few minutes and perfume himself, so the old-fashioned perspiration that had been so healthy for him would not be noticed. He hunted dollars as a pointer dog hunts chickens, and finally he got so much money he could not count it, and he hired men who were good at figures to count it for him. Then his brain took a day off and studied out Pullman, and he built it on the prairie. His idea was all right, only that he couldn't get over the idea that he must have a big percentage on his outlay, in rents. He wanted his men to be happy, but he wanted them to pay big prices. Another thing he wanted was for them not to think, but to let him do all the thinking. For a few years they were happy, but they kept getting in debt; he cut down on wages, but kept rents up, and the price of gas and water never went down. If they did not like it they could go somewhere else, and leave some of the furniture to square up, if they were behind in rent, but usually the bookkeeper took it out of the wages. Then they traded at his stores, attended his theater, and he got most all the velvet. They stood it as long as possible, and asked for more wages, and more work, and his agents—Pullman was never there himself, he had an island in the St. Lawrence, and residences everywhere except at his Utopia—told them to hush up and go to work, and be mighty quick about it, or he would fire them bodily out of the town. Then they struck, and

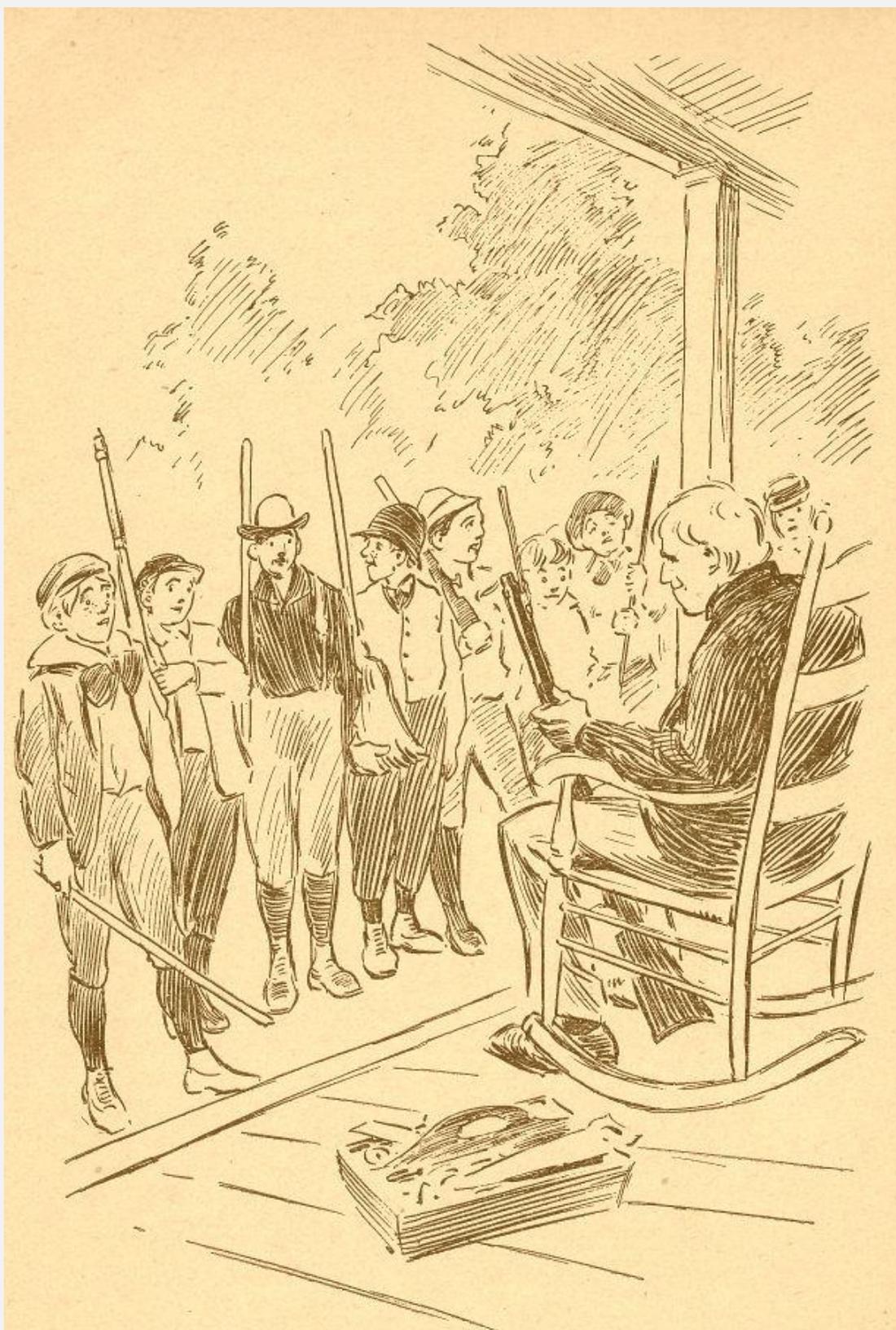
wanted to arbitrate, but Pullman telegraphed that there was nothing to arbitrate, and then the Utopia became a Tophet, which it had resembled for some time. Everything was closed up, men saw their children hungry, and they were moved away by charity to new places, where they might get some work. The cold-blooded proposition that is not popular with American citizens was that if men would get on their knees, apologize, and beg, the authorities would see what could be done for them. Men became desperate, troops were sent to guard the premises and to jab with bayonets these happy workmen that did not move along fast enough. Pullman himself stayed at his island, or at the seashore, and the men who had dared to think without a dog license were growing thinner, and by and by nearly all were gone; others took their places, but the old town was not what it used to be. Workmen preferred to live miles away, in attics, or anywhere, in preference to the Pullman cottages. Then, one morning Pullman died, quick action, at his house and millionaire neighbors buried him. Few flowers were sent by the old laborers. His boys, twins, had developed a partiality for jags, and having been cut off with little money in his will, they have wandered around, from one drunk cure to another, marrying occasionally, and otherwise enjoying themselves, until their poor mother was almost crazy, and the Pullman works are run by men who happened to be in on the ground floor, but who don't care much about the laboring man. No, sir," said the old man, warming up to the subject, "I will not take you kids to Pullman. I had rather take you to a cemetery, or visit the homes of the cliff dwellers of Mexico. Now, go wash up for dinner. You get me to talking, and I forget all about, my rheumatism, and my dinner, and everything," and the old man started for the house, and the boys looked at each other as though they had learned something not in the school books.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was the first cool and bracing morning since the extreme heat of the summer, and Uncle Ike had begun to feel like going duck shooting. He could almost smell duck feathers in the air, and he had put on an old dead-grass colored sweater, with a high collar that rubbed against his unshaven neck, and he had got out his gun to wipe it for the hundredth time since he laid it away at the close of the last season. He looked it over and petted it, and finally sat down in a rocking chair, with the gun between his knees and a few cartridges in his hand that he had found in the pocket of his sweater; and he got to thinking of the days that he had passed, in the last half century, shooting ducks, and hoping that the clock of time could be turned back, in his case, and that he might be permitted to enjoy many years more of the sport that had given' him so much enjoyment, and contributed so greatly to his health and hardness of muscle. He was

cocking the old gun and letting down the hammers in a contemplative mood, and occasionally aiming at a fly on the opposite wall, as though it was a cluck, when, the door opened and the red-headed boy, accompanied by eight other boys, armed to the teeth with such weapons as they could find, marched in and formed a line on the opposite side of the room, and at the command, "Present arms!" given by the red-headed captain, they saluted Uncle Ike. He arose from the rocking chair, placed his shotgun at a "carry," and acknowledged the salute, and said:

"If that horse pistol that No. 2 soldier has got pointed at my stomach is loaded, I want to declare that this war is over, and you can go to the cook and get your discharges, and fill out your blanks for pensions. But now, what does this all mean? Why this martial array? Why do you break in on a peaceful man this way, a man who does not believe in shedding human gore, so early in the morning?"



“Uncle Ike, we came to offer you the position of Colonel of our regiment.”

“Uncle Ike,” said the red-headed boy, stepping one pace to the front, and saluting with a piece of lath, “we came to offer you the position of colonel of our regiment. We have thought over all the men who have been suggested as leaders, and have concluded that you are the jim dandy, and we want you to accept.”

“Well, this takes me entirely by surprise;” said Uncle Ike, as he laid the shotgun on the table; “I certainly have not sought this office. But I cannot accept the trust until I know what is the object of the organization. Who do you propose to fight?”

“We are organized to fight the French, both with weapons and by the boycott,” said the leader, swelling out his chest, and each red hair sticking up straight. “We have watched the trial of Dreyfus, and the outrage of his conviction without a particle of testimony against him, has just made us sick, and we are forming a regiment to fight Frenchmen wherever we find them. We had the first battle at daylight this morning, when a French milkman drove along, and we threw eggs at him, and his horse run away and spilled four cans of milk. We are for blood, or milk, or any old thing that Frenchmen deal in. We will not drink any French champagne, and have decided not to visit the Paris Exposition.”

“Well, I swow! you have got it up your noses pretty bad, haven't you?” said the old man as he ordered the platoon to sit down on the floor and go into camp. “It is pretty tough, the way the French treated Dreyfus, but how are you going to make your boycott work?”

“We are going to petition the President to cut off supplies for the Paris Exposition, withdraw from participation in it, and we are going to ask all the people that were intending to go to Paris to stay away.”

“I see, I see,” said Uncle Ike, feeling in the pocket of his old sweater, and finding a handful of leaves, twigs and plug tobacco that had accumulated there for years. “How many Jew boys have you got enlisted in your army? You know this Dreyfus trouble is a fight on the Jews, not only in France, but of the whole world. You ought to have a whole regiment of Jew boys. How many have you got?”

“Well, we haven't got any yet, but a whole lot of them are going to think about it, and ask their parents if they can join,” said the captain.

“Yes, they will think about it, but they won't join,” said the old man, reaching for his pipe, and lighting up for a talk. “The Jews are the most patient, peaceful people in the world. They come the nearest to acting on the theory of the Golden Rule, of any class of people, and they are about the only people that will turn the other cheek, when hit on the jaw. They have been assailed for thousands of years, until they look upon being ostracised and trodden upon as one of the things they must expect, and they don't kick half as much as they ought to. If they had the enthusiasm and the fighting qualities of the Irish, they would take blackthorn clubs and mow a swath through France wide enough for an army to march over. Why don't you fellows wait until the Jews map out a plan of campaign, and then follow them? It is no dead sure thing that if the people of

other countries boycotted France, that they would not ruin more Jews than Frenchmen, as the Jews are in business that the Exposition will make or break, while the French just sit around and drink absinthe and shout 'viva la armee!' Don't you see you may ruin the very people you want to help? Then, stop and think of another thing. It is not many months ago that a Jew cadet at West Point was hazed and abused and ostracised by the other cadets, and had his life made such a burden that he had to resign and go home, heart-broken to a heart-broken mother. That was almost as bad as the Dreyfus case as far as it went. How can the President boycott France for abusing Jews when our own army officers, that are to be, have shown a meanness that will size up pretty fairly with the French army devils. I'll tell you, boys, what you do. Let your sympathy go out to Dreyfus, and all his people, but don't go off half-cocked. Wait until the representative Jews of this country decide what it is their duty to do in this case, and then join them, and help them, whether it is to fight or to pray. If they conclude to sit down, and look sorry, and turn the other cheek, and be swatted some more, you be sorry also. If they decide to get on their ears, and fight, with money, or guns, or boycott, you do as you like about helping them out. But if you read, in a day or two, that France has borrowed a few more millions of Rothschild, to pay off these officers who have persecuted Dreyfus, you can make up your minds that it is a good deal like our politics here at home, mighty badly mixed. Now you go and get me a wash basin of hot soft water, and some rags, and I will clean this gun, and you disband your army, and appoint a good Jew for colonel, and when he says the affair is ripe for a fight you can spiel," and the old man took the gun apart and prepared to clean it.

"Atten-shun!" shouted the red-headed boy to his army, and each soldier jumped up off the carpet and stood erect as possible. "I will now disband you, and deliver my farewell address." Then he whispered to Uncle Ike, and the old man handed him a half dollar, when the captain gave the money to a boy who seemed to be second in command, and added, "Go and buy you some ice-cream soda, and be prepared to respond to the call to arms at a minute's notice. If France does not pardon Dreyfus, and I can get a lot of Jew boys to join us, we won't do a thing to France. Break ranks! Git!" and the boys went outdoors and made a rush for a soda fountain.

"Now, Uncle Ike," said the boy, as he watched his army going clown the street, "I have got a favor to ask of you. I want you to give me music lessons."

"Well, I'll be bunkoed," said Uncle Ike, as he began to pull the sweater off over his head. "I can't sing anything but 'Marching Through Georgia.' What you want music lessons for?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you, if you won't laugh at me," said the boy, blushing. "You see, my girl has got back from the seashore, where she has been taking salt-water baths. She was too fresh, but she is salty enough now, and her face and arms are tanned just like these Russia leather moccasins. You couldn't tell her from an Indian, only she doesn't smell like buckskin. She has been taking lessons all summer at a conservatory of music,

and she can sing away up so high that when she strikes a high note and gargles on it, it makes your hair raise right up, and bristle, it is so full of electricity. She has got a tenor voice that——”

“Hold on, hold on, you have got all mixed up,” said the old man. “She does not gargle. That is called warbling, or trilling, or trolling, or something. And no girl has a tenor voice. She must be a soprano.”

“Well, that's what I want to take music lessons for, so I can talk with her intelligently about her music. Why, last night we were at a party, and I turned the music while she played and sang, and I got the wrong page, and got her all tangled up, and when she got through, and the people were telling her how beautiful she sang, I told her she had the most beautiful bass voice I ever saw, and she was so mad she wouldn't speak to me, so I want you to teach me which is tenor, and which is baritone, and which is that other thing, you know, Uncle Ike.”

“Yes, I think I do,” said the old man as he turned his head away to keep from laughing. “You want to learn to be a he Patti, in four easy lessons. Why, you couldn't learn enough about music to be in her class in fourteen years. What you want to do is to look wise, and applaud when anybody gets through singing, and say bravo, and beautiful, and all that, but not give yourself away by commenting on the technique, see?”

“Stopper! Backerup! What is technique on a girl, Uncle Ike?” asked the red-headed boy, as his eyes stuck out like peeled onions. “I have been around girls ever since I was big enough to go home alone after seeing them home, without being afraid of spooks, but I hope to die if I ever saw a technique.”

“The technique,” said Uncle Ike, looking wise, “is what we musicians call the—the—get there, Eli. You know when a girl is singing, and gets away up on a high note, and keeps getting it down finer all the time, until it is not much bigger than a cambric needle, and she draws in a whole lot of air, and just fools with that wee bit of a note, and draws it out fine like a silk thread, and keeps letting go of it a little at a time until it seems as though it was a mile long, and the audience stops talking and eating candy, and just holds its breath, and listens for her to bite it off, and she wiggles with it, and catches another breath when it is keeping right on, and it seems so sweet and smooth that you can almost see angels hovering around up in the roof, and she stands there with her beautiful eyes shining like stars, and her face wreathed in smiles, and that little note keeps paying out like a silk fish line with a four-pound bass running away with the bait, and the audience gets red in the face for not breathing, and when everybody thinks she is going to keep on all night, or bust and fill the house with little notes that smell of violets, she wakes up, raises her voice two or three degrees higher, and finds a note that is more beautiful still, but which is as rare as the bloom of a century plant, so rare and radiant that she can't keep it long without spoiling, and just as you feel like dying in your tracks and going, to heaven where they sing that way all the time, she shakes that note into little showers of crystal musical snowflakes, and then raises her voice one note

higher just for a second, and backs away with a low bow and a sweet smile, and the audience is dumb for a minute, and when it comes to, and she has almost gone behind the scenes, everybody cheers, and waves handkerchiefs, and stands up and yells until she comes back and does it over again, that is technique.”

“Well, sir, my girl has got a technique just like that. She can sing the socks right off of——”

“Oh, hold on; don't work any of your slang into this musical discussion. When you want to know anything about music, or falling in love, or farming, come to your Uncle Ike. Office hours from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m. No cure no pay. If you are not satisfied your money will be cheerfully refunded,” and the old man got an oil can and begun to oil the old shotgun, while the boy started to sing “Killarney” in a bass voice, and Uncle Ike drew the gun on him and said: “If you are looking for trouble, sing in that buzz-saw voice in my presence. I could murder a person that sang like that.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Uncle Ike was leaning over the gate late in the afternoon, waiting for the red-headed boy and some of his chums to come back from the State fair. He had gone to the fair with them, and gone around to look at the stock with them, and had staked them for admission to all the side shows, and when they had come out of the last side show, and were hungry, he had bought a mess of hot wiener sausages for them, and while they were eating them somebody yelled that the balloon was going to go up, and the boys grabbed their wieners and run across the fair grounds, losing Uncle Ike; and being tired, and not caring to see a young girl go up a mile in the air, and come down with a parachute, with a good prospect of flattening herself on the hard ground, he had concluded to go home before the crowd rushed for the cars, and here he was at the gate waiting for the boys, saddened because a pickpocket had taken his watch and a big seal fob that had been in the family almost a hundred years. As he waited for the boys to come back he smoked hard, and wondered what a pickpocket wanted to fool an old man for, a man who would divide his money with any one out of luck, and he wondered what they could get on that poor old silver watch, that never kept time that could be relied on, and a tear came to his eye as he thought of some jeweler melting up that old fob that his father and grandfather used to wear before him, and he wondered if the boys would guy him for having his pocket picked, he, who had mixed up with the world for half a century and never been touched. It was almost dark when the red-headed boy and his partners in crime, came down the sidewalk, so tired their shoes interfered, and they stubbed their toes on the holes in the walk, even.

“Well, I s'pose you ducks spent every cent you had and had to walk five miles from the fair ground,” said Uncle Ike, as he opened the gate and let them fall inside and drop on the grass, their shoes covered with dust, and their clothes the same. He invited them in to supper, but the peanuts, the popcorn, the waffles, the lemonade, the cider and the wieners had been plenty for them, and it did not seem as though they ever wanted to eat a mouthful again.

“Where is your fob and watch?” said the redheaded boy, as he noticed that the big stomach of the old man carried no ornament.

“Well, I decided this afternoon that it did not become a man of my age to be wearing gaudy jewelry,” said Uncle Ike, “and hereafter you have got to take your uncle just as he is, without any ornaments. The watch never did keep time much, and I have had enough of guessing whether it was 1 o'clock or 3.”

“Never going to wear it any more?” asked the red-headed boy, with a twinkle in his eye.

“No, I guess not,” said Uncle Ike, as he heaved a sigh.

“Then I guess we can draw cuts for the old rattle-box,” said the boy, as he pulled the watch and fob out of his pants pocket.



“Here! where did you get that watch?”

“Here! where did you get that watch?” said Uncle Ike, in excitement. “I thought a pickpocket on the trolley car got it, and I was hot. Say, that is one of the best watches in this town. Where did you find it? Did the police get the man?”

“Oh, police nothin’,” said the boy. “Say, Uncle Ike, you were the easiest mark on the fair ground. There you stood, looking up at the kites, with your hands behind your back, like a jay from way back, and I knew somebody would get your watch; so I just reached up and took it, and left you standing there. I wanted to teach you a lesson. Don't ever wear your jewelry at a fair. Here's your old ticker. Sounds as though it had palpitation of the heart,” and the boy handed it to the old man.

“Well, by gum! To think I should live all these years, and go through what I have, and then have an amateur pickpocket take me for a Reuben, and go through me! But how did you like the great agricultural display?”

“Oh, I don't know,” said the boy, taking off his shoes and emptying the sand out. “It seems to me the farmers ought to be encouraged. I wonder how many hundred dollars it cost to hire that girl to go up in a balloon; and what good could that exhibition do the farmers? If that girl's parachute hadn't parachuted at the proper time, and she had come down and been killed, wouldn't the people have been so horrified they would never go to another fair, and couldn't the state have been sued for damages for hiring her to kill herself?”

“Oh, maybe,” said the old man, winding up his watch a lot ahead, and holding it to his ears to see if it had heart disease, as the boy had intimated. “But, you see, people have got to be amused. It has got so there is not the inspiration in looking at vegetables that there used to be, and the patchwork quilt does not draw like a house afire. The farmers are not going to blow in money to exhibit things for a blue ribbon, and the wealthy people who have fancy stock take the premiums and advertise their business. Money is paid for exhibits that more properly belong to the circus and the vaudeville, that ought to be paid in premiums to farmers who raise things. We hire a balloonist, believing that she will fall and kill herself before the season is over. We take the chance that she will kill herself at our fair, but if she does not, and is killed at some cheap fair, somewhere else, we feel that we are abused, and have been trifled with. What interested you the most at the fair?” asked the old man.

“The wieners,” said the boys, all at once. And the red-headed boy added: “When a feller is so hungry his eyes look straight ahead, and he can't turn them in the sockets, there is nothing like a hot wiener to start things moving, and the man who invented wieners ought to have a chromo. By gosh, I am going to bed,” and the boys all started for their resting places, while Uncle Ike felt of his stomach where the fob rested, and looked as happy as though he had never been robbed.

“Come on, Mr. Train-robber,” said Uncle Ike the next morning, as the boy showed up in the breakfast room, and the old man held up his hands as he supposed passengers did when train-robbers attacked a train. “Go through me, condemn you, and take every

last dollar I have got. I have brought you up to be an honest boy, and you turn out to be a pickpocket, and rob me of my watch. Oh, I tell you, no old bachelor ever had so much trouble bringing up a boy as I have. Now, I expect you will graduate in burglary, bunko, and politics, won't you?" and the old man looked at the laughing boy with such pride that the boy knew he was only fooling.

"No, if I went into burglary and kindred industries, I could never find such easy marks to practice on as dear old Uncle Ike," and the boy put his arms around the old man and asked him what time it was, and the Uncle grabbed his fob as though he was not sure whether it was there or not. "Now, let's eat breakfast," and they sat down together, and Aunt Almira poured the coffee, while Uncle Ike looked over the morning paper.

"You can disband your army, and let them go back to the paths of peace, for Dreyfus has been pardoned," said the old man. "I knew that they would pardon that man."

"Now, wouldn't that kill you," said the boy, as he sampled two or three pieces of canteloupe to find one to his taste. "That breaks up my scheme to fight the French. Uncle Ike, I have about made up my mind to lead a different life and become a minister, and preach, and go to sociables, and just have a dandy time. Say, it's a snap to be a minister, and only have to preach an hour Sunday, and have all the week to go fishing and hunting. What denomination would you advise me to become a minister of?"

"Well," said Uncle Ike, as he dropped a few lumps of sugar into his coffee, and looked at the boy across the table, "from the color of your hair, and your constant talk about falling in love every time you see a pretty girl, and the manner in which you take up a collection every time you see me anywhere, I should say you would make a pretty fair Mormon. Yes, if I was in your place I would preach Mormonism, as your experience in taking things out of people's pockets, in the way of watches, would come handy, and you are so confounded freckled you would have to have wives sealed to you or they would not stay. A minister has got to be pretty condemned good-looking, nowadays, to hold a job in a fashionable church."

"But the minister business is easy, ain't it? They don't have to work, anyway," and the boy looked at Uncle Ike as though life expected an opinion that was sound.

"If you took a job preaching," said the old man, whirling around from the table, and sitting down in his old armchair, and lighting his pipe, "you wouldn't have any, soft snap. Do you know anything about what a minister has to do? Let's take one week out of the life of a regular minister. He starts in on Monday morning by having a woman call at the parsonage, a woman dressed poorly, and whose pained face makes his heart ache, and she tells him a tale of woe, and he goes to his wife and gets a basket of stuff out of the kitchen to give her, a kitchen not stocked any too well, and sends her home with immediate relief, and then goes out to hunt up the relief committee of his church to give the woman permanent relief. He comes back after a while and finds other callers, some to have him make a diagnosis of their souls, over which they are worrying, another to have him help get a son out of the police station, who used to belong to the Sunday-

school, and one man wants him to preach a funeral sermon in the afternoon. He gets out of the police station in time for the funeral, and they make him go clear to the cemetery, and stop at the house with the mourners on the way back, and he gets a cold dinner that night, and has to call on several sick friends that evening, and one of them is so nearly gone that he remains with him to the last, and gets home at midnight. The other days of the week are the same, only more so, and in addition he has to run a prayer meeting, several society meetings, a sociable, settle a quarrel in the choir, and bring two members of the church together who have not spoken to each other for months, attend a ministers' meeting and map out a plan of campaign against the old boy, run out into the country to preach a little for a neighboring preacher who is sick, or off on a vacation, attend a missionary meeting, marry a few couples, and prepare two sermons for Sunday forenoon and evening, sermons that are new, and on texts that have not been preached on before. One night in the week he can get on his slippers and sit in the library, and the other nights he is running from one place to another to make a lot of other people happier, and he has more sickness at home than any man in his congregation, and he works harder than the man who digs in the sewer, and half the time the people kick on his salary and wonder why he doesn't do more, and say he looks so dressed up it can't be possible he has much to do, and when he gets worn down to the bone, and his cheeks are sunken, and his voice fails, and his step is not so active, they saw him off on to some country church that never did pay a minister enough to live on, and he never kicks, but just keeps on praying for them until he kicks the bucket, when he ought to give them a piece of his mind. How do you like it?"

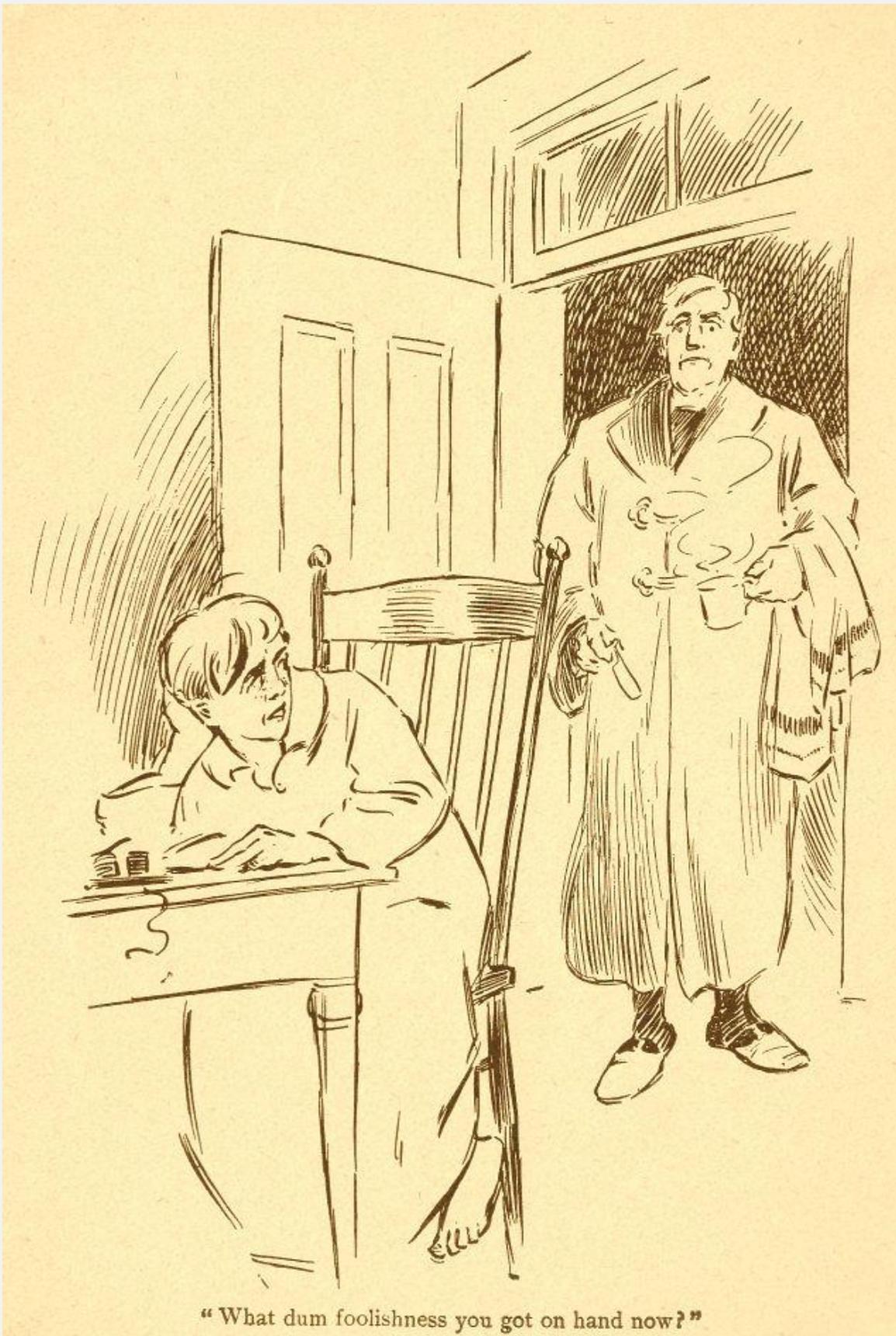
"Say, Uncle Ike, I surrender. I don't want to preach. Where can a man enlist as a pirate? The pirate business appeals to me," and the boy got up and took his golf club to go out.

"Yes, you have many qualifications that would come in handy as a pirate, and I will use my influence to get you into politics, you young heathen," and the old man gave the red-headed boy a poke in the ribs with his big hard thumb, and they separated for the day, the old man to smoke and dream, and the boy to have fun and get tired and hungry.

CHAPTER XX.

Uncle Ike did not get up very early, on account of a little pain in one of his hind legs, as he expressed it, a rheumatic pain that he had almost come to believe, as the pension agent had often suggested, was caused by his service in the army thirty-five years ago. The pension agent, who desired to have the honor of securing a pension for the old man, had asked him to try and remember if he was not exposed to a sudden draft, some time

in the army, which might have caused him to take cold, and thus sow the seeds of rheumatism in his system, which had lain dormant all these years and finally appeared in his legs. The old man had thought it over, and remembered hundreds of occasions when he was soaked through with icy water, and had slept on the wet ground, and gone hungry and taken cold, but he realized that he had taken no more colds in the army than he had at home, and he could not see how he could swear that a chill he received thirty-five years ago could have anything to do with his present aches, and though he knew thousands of the old boys were receiving pensions, that were no worse off than he was, he had told the pension agent that he need not apply for a pension for his pain in the knee. He said he felt that he might just as well apply for a pension on account of inheriting rheumatism from an uncle who fought in the Mexican war, and he would wait until the government did not insist on a veteran having such an abnormal memory about sneezing during the war, as a basis for pension claims, and when it got so a pension would come to a soldier by simply looking up his record, and examining his physical condition, he would take a pension. The old man had heard a peculiar clicking down in the sitting room, all the morning, while he was dressing, and he wondered what it was. As he limped into the sitting room, with his dressing-gown on, and began to round up his shaving utensils, preparatory to his morning shave, he found the red-headed boy in his night shirt, sitting at a table with an old telegraph instrument that looked as though it had been picked out of a scrap-pile, and the boy was ticking away for dear life, his hair standing on end, his brow corrugated, and his eyes glaring.



“What dum foolishness you got on hand now?”

“What dum foolishness you got on hand now?” asked the old man, as he set a cup of hot water on the mantel, and began to mix up the lather. “What you ticking away on that contrivance for, and looking wise?”

“This is a telegraph office,” said the boy, as he stopped operations long enough to draw his cold bare feet up under him, and pulled his night shirt down to cover his knees. “I am learning to telegraph, and am going into training for president of a railroad. Did you see in the papers the other day that Mr. Earling was elected president of a railroad, and did you know that he started in as a telegraph operator and a poor boy, with hair the color of tow? They used to call him Tow-Head.”

“Yes, I read about that,” said Uncle Ike, as he looked in the glass to see if the lather was all right on his face, and began to strop his razor. “I knew that boy when he was telegraphing. But he knew what all those sounds meant. You just keep ticking away, and don't know one tick from another.”

“Yes, I do,” said the boy, as he smashed away at the key. “That long sound, and the short one, and the one about half as long as the long one—that spells d-a-m, dam.”

“Well, what do you commence your education spelling out cuss words for?” asked the old man, as he raked the razor down one side of his face, pulling his mouth around to one side so it looked like the mouth of a red-horse fish. “Anybody would think you were in training for one of these railroad superintendents who swear at the men so their hair will stand, and then swear at them because they don't get their hair cut. The railroad presidents and general managers nowadays don't swear a blue streak, and keep the men guessing whether they will get discharged for talking back. This man Earling never swore a half a string in his life, and in thirty years of railroading he never spoke a cross word to a living soul, and his brow was never corrugated as much as yours has been spelling out that word dam. Got any idea what railroad you will be president of?” and the old man wiped his razor, stropped it on the palm of his hand, put it in a case, and went to a washbowl to wash the soap off his face.

“Well, I thought I would start in on some narrow-gauge railroad, and work up gradually for a year or two, and finally take charge of one of those Eastern roads, where I can have a private car, and travel all over the country for nothing. As quick as I get this telegraph business down fine I shall apply for a position of train dispatcher, and then jump right along up. Uncle Ike, you will never have to pay a cent on my railroad. I will have a caboose fixed up for you, with guns and dogs, and you can hunt and fish all your life, with a nigger to cook for you, and a porter to put on your bait, and another nigger chambermaid to make up your bed, and I will wire them from the general office to sidetrack you, and pick you up, and all that.”

“Is that so?” said the old man, as he stood rubbing his face with a crash towel till it shone like a boiled lobster. “You are hurrying your railroad career mighty fast, and if you are not careful you will replace Chauncey Depew before you get long pants on. Now, you go get your clothes on and come to breakfast, and after breakfast I will tell

you something.” The boy dropped the key, after ticking to the imaginary general office not to disturb him with any messages for half an hour, as he was going to be busy on an important matter, and he went to his room and soon appeared at the breakfast table, and after the breakfast was over, and the old man had lighted his pipe, the boy said:

“Now, Uncle Ike, tell me all you know about railroading in one easy lesson, for I have to go to a directors' meeting at ten, and then we are going out to look over the right of way,” and the boy ticked off a message to have his special car ready at eleven-thirty, stocked for a trip over the line.

“I see you are getting well along in your railroad career, and like nine out of ten boys who want to be railroad men, you are beginning at the private car instead of the gravel train, issuing general orders instead of working in the ranks,” and the old man smoked up and thought a long time, and continued: “The successful railroad man begins at the bottom, and learns the first lesson well. Do you know how long this man Earling has been getting where he is today? Thirty-five years. More than the average age of man. The successful railroad man, if he begins telegraphing, gets so he can send or receive anything, with his eyes shut, and never makes a mistake. After a long time he gets a measly country station, where he does all kinds of work, and he is satisfied. He goes to work to increase the business of that station, to clean up around the depot, and please all the customers, as though he was going to live there all his life. He never thinks he is going to be a high official, but just makes the best of the present. Some day he is awfully surprised to be given a better station, and he hates to leave, and maybe sheds a tear as he parts with the friends he has made there. But he goes to his new place and improves it, and gets in with a new, pushing class of people, and begins to grow. He maybe works there ten years, and his work shows so the officials recognize it, and he never makes a mistake in his telegraphing, and some day they call him into headquarters during a rush, to help the train dispatcher, and then he has to move into the city and watch trains on thousands of miles of road, to see that they don't get together, as train dispatcher. He thinks that position is good enough, and he hopes they will let him alone in it, but some day he assists the superintendent, and he is so well posted they are all surprised. They wonder how that station agent got to knowing all the men on the road, and how much a train of freight cars weigh, and how many cents per mile each loaded car earns for the company, and what cars ought to go to the shops for repairs, and how many new cars will have to be bought to handle the crops on his division. The 'old man,' as the president is always called, gets to leaning on this always good-natured, promoted, station agent, who is so modest he wouldn't offer a suggestion unless asked his opinion, and when asked gives it so intelligently that you could set your watch by it, as the boys say. He is always sober, never sleepy, and whether figuring on the wheat crop of Dakota to a carload, or wearing rubber boots and dining on sausage and bread for a couple of days fixing up a washout, he is always calm and smiling, and every man works as though his own house was afire, till the washout is repaired and the first train pulls over. When the rich, fat, gouty directors come around, once a year, to take an account of stock, and see

the property at work, they see the modest man, and by and by he is taken off his feet by a promotion that almost makes him dizzy. Other railroads see that he is all wool, and they try to steal him away, but he says he has got used to his old man, and he knows every spike in the system, and there are gray hairs beginning to come around his ears, and he guesses he will not go away and have to make new acquaintances, and he remains with the road where he learned to tick, as you are ticking, and one day he is at the head of it. But if you examine into the head of the man who gets up from station agent to president, you will find that there is brain there and no cut feed. Another station agent might get the bighead the first time he was promoted, and they would have to promote him backward, on that account, but it would be because there was excelsior in his head, instead of brain, and he would be mad and jealous, and say mean things about those who got promoted, and stayed promoted. Now, let me give you a pointer. Don't train for general manager or president of a road. Train for the thing you are going to get first, whether it is operator or brakeman, and when you have mastered the details of that place, learn something about the next above. It is like going up a ladder; you have got to go up one step at a time, and get your foot on the step so it will stay, then go up another step. If you attempt to step from the ground to the top of the ladder, you are going to split your pants from Genesis to Revelations, and come down on your neck, and show your nakedness to those who have watched you try to climb too fast, and they will laugh at you. Now, go on with your condum ticking, but tick out something besides d—a—m, dam," and the old man went out to see if there had been any frost the night before, with an idea that if there was he would shoot a few teal duck, and cure his rheumatism that way, instead of putting on liniment.

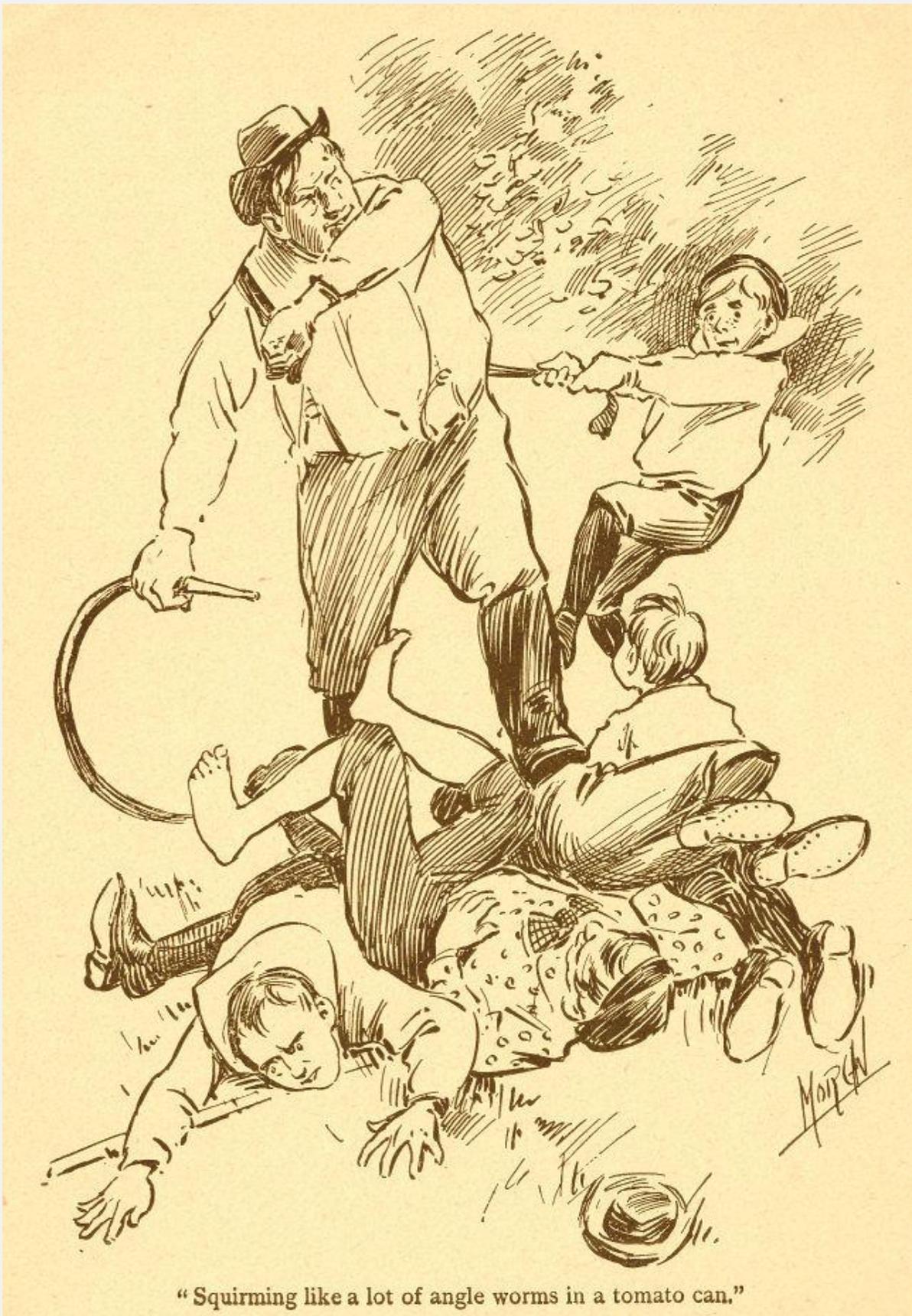
CHAPTER XXI.

Uncle Ike was out in the front yard in the early morning, in his shirt sleeves, with no collar on, an old pair of rubber boots to keep the dew from wetting his feet, and he was helping the Indian summer haze all he could, by smoking the clay pipe and blowing the smoke up among the red and yellow leaves of autumn, and as he kicked the beautiful leaves on the lawn into piles he thought what foolish people they were who claimed last week that winter had come, because it was a little chilly, when he could have told them, by half a century's experience, that the most beautiful part of the year was to come, the Indian summer, the lazy days when you want to shoot snipe, and eat grapes, and have appendicitis. The red-headed boy came out yawning, half awake, and raised his arms and stretched until it seemed that he would break his back.

“You remind me of Indian summer,” said the old man, as he stepped on the boy's bare foot with his soft rubber boot.

“Oh, I don't know,” said the boy, as he let out a secret school society yell at some boys across the street, which brought them all over-into the yard, as though there was a dog fight on. “Uncle Ike, you remind me of Father Time, after he has been to a barber and got shaved, with your smooth old laughing face. Why do I remind you of Indian summer?”

“Well, your red hair resembles the frosted leaf of the maple tree, your brown freckles look like the dead and dying leaves of the oak, your unwashed chalky face looks like the leaves of the ash, your sparkling eyes like the dewy diamonds on the grass, and your sleepy look as you just come from your bed makes me think of the hazy atmosphere that the Indians loved so well. What all you boys around here for so early in the morning, anyway, disturbing your Uncle Ike when he wants to think?” and he grabbed half a dozen boys and piled them up in a heap on the grass, and put one of his big rubber boots on the top one, and held them down, squirming like a lot of angleworms in a tomato can.



"Squirring like a lot of angle worms in a tomato can."

The red-headed boy took Uncle Ike by the suspenders and pulled him off the boys, and then they all grabbed his legs and threw him down and sat on him, breaking his pipe, and pulling off his rubber boots and making him yell, "Enough!" before they would let him up, but he laughed and spanked them with a leg of a rubber boot, and finally they all sat down on the porch, panting, and Uncle Ike was the youngest boy in the gang, apparently.

"Come to order," said the red-headed boy, and every boy took off his hat, and braced back against the side of the house, and Uncle Ike looked on, wondering what was coming next. "We have met, gentlemen," said the red-headed boy, "to make arrangements to nominate Dewey for President. We have watched the manner in which the people have received him at New York and Washington; have noticed his modesty and level-headedness, and us boys, Uncle Ike, have decided that Dewey shall be the next President. If any person has got anything to say why he should not be President, let him speak now, or forever after hold his peace. It is up to you, Uncle Ike, and this assemblage would like to hear a few casual remarks from you, before breakfast, on this subject. Now, boys, hurrah for Uncle Ike, the jolliest old scrapper in the business. Now, give the yell, 'Who are we! who are we! we are the kids for old Dewe-e—siz! boom! yah!'" and the boys yelled until Uncle Ike had to respond.

"Well, you condum heathen can settle more public questions here on this porch than all the political parties," said the old man, as he fixed a broken suspender with a nail, and came up to the boys with one rubber boot in his hand, and reached for a new pipe on the window sill, loaded it, and lit it for a talk. "You ought to have better sense than to think of Dewey placing himself in the hands of the politicians, and going into politics, where he will have to be cat-hauled by all the disreputable critters in the country. Look at Grant! When he got out of the war he was just like Dewey, and would be alive today if he had not got into the hands of the politicians. Dewey can sit down in Washington as he is, and have more power for good than any President, and he will be proud of himself and his country. If he went into politics he would be betrayed, and made responsible for all the stealing and mistakes of those under him, and in a little while he would hate himself, and would like to get all the politicians into a Spanish ship and turn the Olympia loose on them."

"Yes, but nobody could say anything against Dewey," said the red-headed boy, interrupting Uncle Ike. "All he would have to do would be to appoint a cabinet of admirals, and give all the other offices to the midshipmen and jackies, and send army officers abroad as ministers and things. The people would lynch a man that said anything against Dewey."

"They couldn't say anything against, him, could they?" said Uncle Ike, pulling on the rubber boot. "Well, you are an amateur in politics. Do you know what they would do if Dewey were nominated? They would prove that he murdered a man in Vermont in 1852, in cold blood, and produce the corpse. They would swear that he was the inventor

of the wooden nutmeg, and that he had six wives living, and that he was in cahoots with Aguinaldo, and that he didn't sink the Spanish fleet, but that it got waterlogged and went down without a shot being fired. They would claim that he was the originator of the process of boiling maple roots and putting the juice into glucose, and selling it for pure Vermont maple syrup. They would claim that the reception he received at the hands of the American people was a put-up job; that he paid all the expenses himself, out of money he stole from the government, and that all the cheering was done by hired claquers, who were all promised an office when he was elected. And then if he was elected, every man that knew him before he went to Manila would claim to have been the making of him, and want to be in the cabinet, and every man that has shook hands with him since, would expect the best office at his disposal, and if they didn't get the offices they would prove that he was responsible for the embalmed beef scandal, and that he was in partnership with Capt. Carter in robbing the government, and ought to be in jail. Oh, you can't tell me anything about politics, and if I could see Dewey I would tell him to say nothing but 'nixy' to every proposition to mix him up. Now, all you boys come in to breakfast,” and the old man tossed the boys toward the dining room door as though they were footballs.

“Well, Uncle Ike, you have punctured our tire again. Every time we get a scheme to save the country, you come in with your condumed talky-talk, and throw us in the air. Guess you will have to take the nomination yourself, and run on a platform of seven words, 'Here's to the boys, God bless 'em,’” and the red-headed boy got under Uncle Ike's arm, and the gang went in to breakfast, Uncle Ike trying to argue against being nominated, and having to go to the White House with a lot of tough boys making life a burden to him, when he would have to get married, for no President is a success as a bachelor, as Cleveland found out. As Uncle Ike got the boys all around the table, he bent his head and reverently asked a blessing—something he had never done before in the presence of the red-headed boy, and when the meal was over and the boys had all gone away, except the warm-haired one, and Uncle Ike had begun to smoke again, the boy said to him:

“Uncle Ike, I did not know that you belonged to any church.”

“Well, I don't,” said Uncle Ike, as he got up and looked out of the window, and blew smoke at a fly that was buzzing on the glass.

“Then how could you ask a blessing, and expect that it will be heard? I supposed a person had to be initiated in a church, and be sworn in, and given the password, and take the degrees, before he was ordained to ask a blessing,” said the boy.

“No, that is not necessary,” the old man said. “Now, you haven't got much religion, and never jined, but you give thanks to the Lord quite often. When you are happy, and enjoying yourself, and smile and laugh, you are unconsciously thanking the Ruler for making things so comfortable. All pleasure is made possible by a higher power, and all you got to do is to feel grateful, same as you would to me if I gave you a dollar, and

there you are. You just be square, and do business on the golden rule plan, and you have got a heap more religion than some people who are Matting about all the time. I just thought I would paralyze you kids by showing you that I was all wool, and wanted the Lord to keep tab on us, and know that we appreciated good health, and all that. Now, you go to school, and don't say anything to that blue-eyed teacher of yours that you have nominated me for President. I don't want to get girls after me, thinking they will be mistress of the White House,” and the old man took his gun and went down into the marsh looking for snipe.

CHAPTER XXII.

Uncle Ike had been reading the morning paper, as he sat before the grate fire, in the sitting room, while the red-headed boy was using a slate and pencil trying to figure out something to make it match the answer as given in the arithmetic, and having guessed the answer right he was drawing a picture of Uncle Ike and his pipe, and occasionally wetting his finger in his mouth and rubbing out some feature of the old man that didn't suit. He had the old man pictured in a football costume of padded trousers, nose guard, ear guard, knee pads, and all the different things used in football, and when he showed the picture to Uncle Ike, that old citizen sighed, though he looked a bit pleased that he should be the study of so eminent an artist. Uncle Ike had been reading that there was to be a football game that afternoon, between the State university and Beloit college, and he wanted to go like a dog, but he had abused football so much that he was ashamed to speak of going.

“I hope you are not interested in that disreputable game,” said Uncle Ike, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the andirons of the fireplace. “I hope you don't want to go and see respectable boys maimed and killed, and knocked down and dragged out, and sandbagged, and brained. I have seen a bull fight in Mexico, but I never want to see anything as bloody as a football game,” and the old man winked to himself, and filled the pipe.

“Oh, what you giving me?” said the boy, jumping up in indignation. “Football is no worse than the old-fashioned pullaway you used to play. I am going to see this game through a knothole in the fence I rented from a boy who has the knothole concession at the baseball park.”

“No, you don't,” said Uncle Ike, “you will go in the gate like a gentleman. No nephew of mine is going to grow up and be a knothole audience. You get two or three of your chums and come around here about 2 o'clock, and I will go with you, and stand between

you and the sluggers, and see this game out. I don't want to go, and detest the game, but I will go to please you," and the old man looked wise and fatherly.

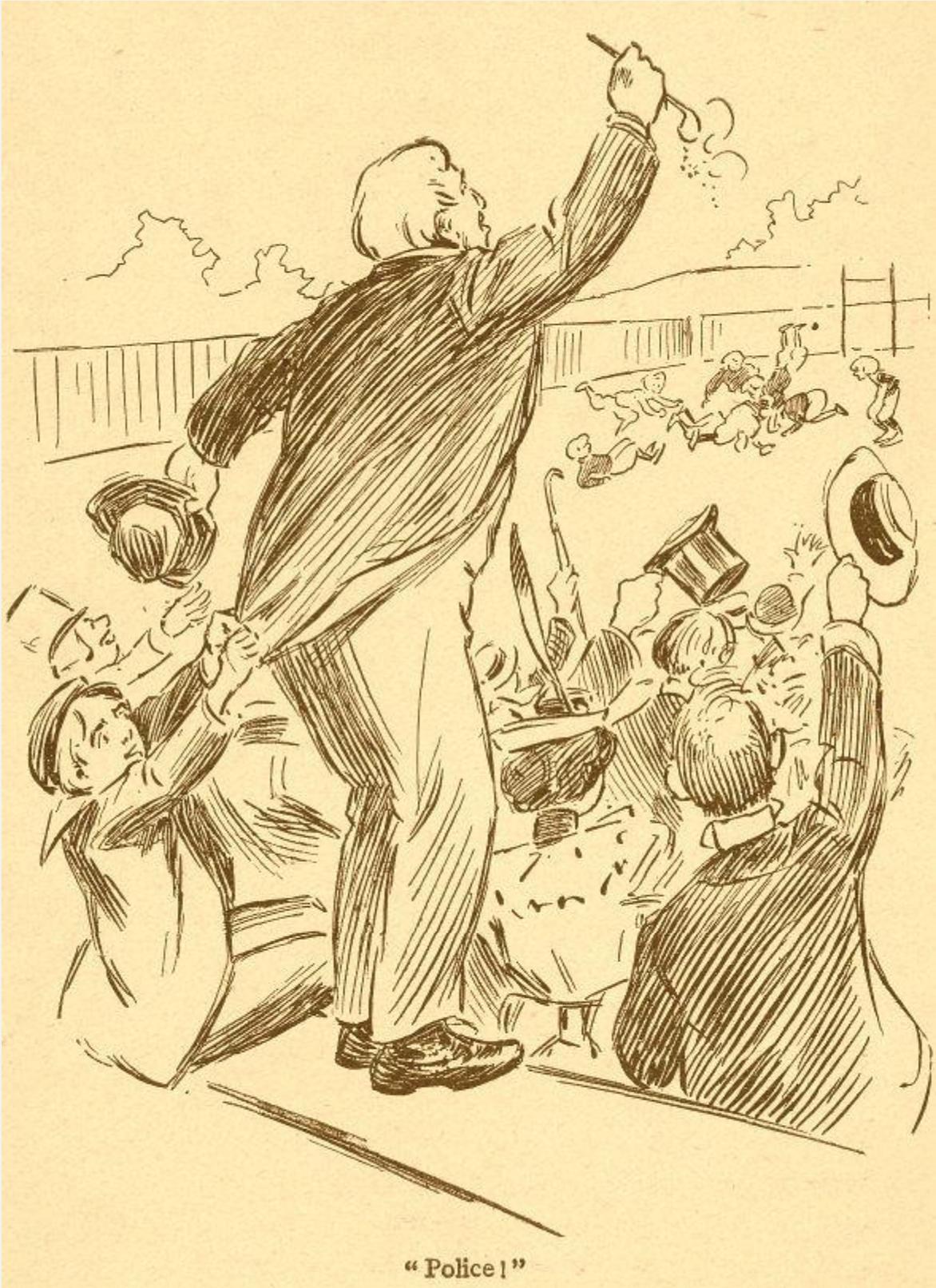
"Oh, you don't want to go, like the way the woman kept tavern in Michigan," said the boy, as he edged toward the door.

"How was it that the woman kept the hotel in Michigan?" he asked, looking mad.

"Like hades," said the boy, "only the man who told me about it said she kept tavern like h——l, but I wouldn't say that in the presence of my dear old uncle," and the boy slipped out ahead of a slipper that was kicked at him by the laughing old man.

So in the afternoon Uncle Ike, the red-headed boy and two chums appeared at the gate, the old man plunked down two dollars with a chuckle, asked if he could smoke his pipe in there, and was told that he could smoke a factory chimney if he wanted to, and they went in and got seats on the bleachers, and as they sat down the old man said it was almost exactly like the bull ring in Mexico. The boys explained to him that the red ribbons were university colors and the yellow belonged to Beloit, and he must choose which side he would root for. As the red matched his flannel underwear and his flushed face, he said he was for the university, and then the boys explained the game, about carrying the ball, getting touchdowns, kicking goal, and half-back and quarter-back, and when the teams came in and the crowd yelled, Uncle Ike felt hurt, because it made so much noise, and people acted crazy. Uncle Ike looked the players over, and he said that big fellow from Beloit was John L. Sullivan in disguise, and wanted him ruled off. The play began, the ball shot out behind the crowd, a man grabbed it and started to run, when someone grabbed him by the legs and he went down, with the whole crowd on top of him. Uncle Ike raised up on his feet and waved his pipe, and when one of the men did not get up and they brought water and tried to bring him back to life, he shouted: "That is murder. I saw that fellow with the black socks strike him with a hatchet. Police!" but someone behind him yelled to him to sit down, and the red-headed boy pulled his coat tail, he sat down, and the game went on, but Uncle Ike was mad, because the dead boy was playing as lively as anybody.

Then a man got the ball and started on a run down the field, with the whole crowd after him, and finally they got him down and Uncle Ike stood up again and said: "Stop the game. I saw a fellow trip him up, and pound him with a billy, and stab him. Say, boys, he's dead, sure. Where's the police? Ain't there no ambulance here? Kill the umpire!" he shouted, remembering that he was an old baseball fan.



“ Police ! ”

“Oh, don't worry, Uncle Ike, they are all right,” said the boy, waving a long piece of red ribbon, as the two bands tried to play a “Hot Time” and a waltz at the same time. “Now watch the kangaroo kick off,” and as he kicked the ball the whole length of the field the old man simply sat still and said:

“Gee whiz, but that was a corker. U-rah-u-rah!” and the only way to stop him was to feed him peanuts.

From an enemy of football the old man was rapidly becoming its friend. When the men came together at first, and went down in a heap, legs flying in all directions, and noises like heavy blows coming to him, he would swear he saw a man strike another with a mallet, but later in the game he said it served the man right, and he ought to have been hit with an ax, and before the game was over he was so interested that he got down off the bleachers, leaned over the railing and yelled at the combatants to eat 'em up, and when the game was over he rushed into the field, hugging the players, and saying that it was the greatest thing that ever was, and offering to act as one of the bearers to the funeral, if anybody had been killed, and when the boys got him out of the grounds he took up the whole sidewalk, waving his ribbons, tied on his cane, shouting the university yell till he frothed at the mouth, and on the way home he took the boys into a store and bought them a new football, and insisted that they come into the front yard and play a game every morning, and offered to have the shrubbery cut down to give them room. As they got home, and the other boys had gone away, the red-headed boy said:

“Uncle Ike, you have disgraced the whole family. You went to the football game under protest, a quiet, inoffensive citizen, ostensibly to take care of us boys, and the first jump out of the box you got crazy, and we had a terrible time to get you home. I don't suppose you remember what you did do out there. Do you remember of putting your arm around a strange lady, and hugging her, and telling her to yell? Her husband is looking for you with a gun. Do you remember of grabbing a young woman sitting in front of you, just as they made a touchdown, pulling her head over into your lap, and patting her cheeks with your great big hands, and telling her she ought to marry a football player? Her brother is coming up street now with a baseball club. I suppose you have no recollection of jumping up and sitting down in the lap of a woman in the seat behind you, throwing your arms around her, and telling her she was a darling, and squeezing her till you broke her corset. She says you offered her marriage, and her lawyer will be here in the morning to find out what you are going to do about it. I think you better be examined by doctors to see if you are not getting nutty, and let them send you to a sanitarium,” and the boy sighed, and looked at the old man as though his heart was broken.

“Say, did I do any of those things?” asked Uncle Ike, as he got up and looked out of the window, and then locked the door, and acted frightened. “Well, I'll be dumbed! I recollect the woman in front of me, and the one behind, but I pledge you my word that

I did not know that I hugged anybody. I am willing to apologize, but I'll be condemned if I marry any of 'em, and I'm not crazy. That confounded game got me all mixed up, and I may have acted different from what I would ordinarily, but it was not my intention to propose to any female."

"But say, Uncle Ike, what did you think of the game as a means of building up muscle, pluck, push, get there, and general usefulness?" asked the boy.

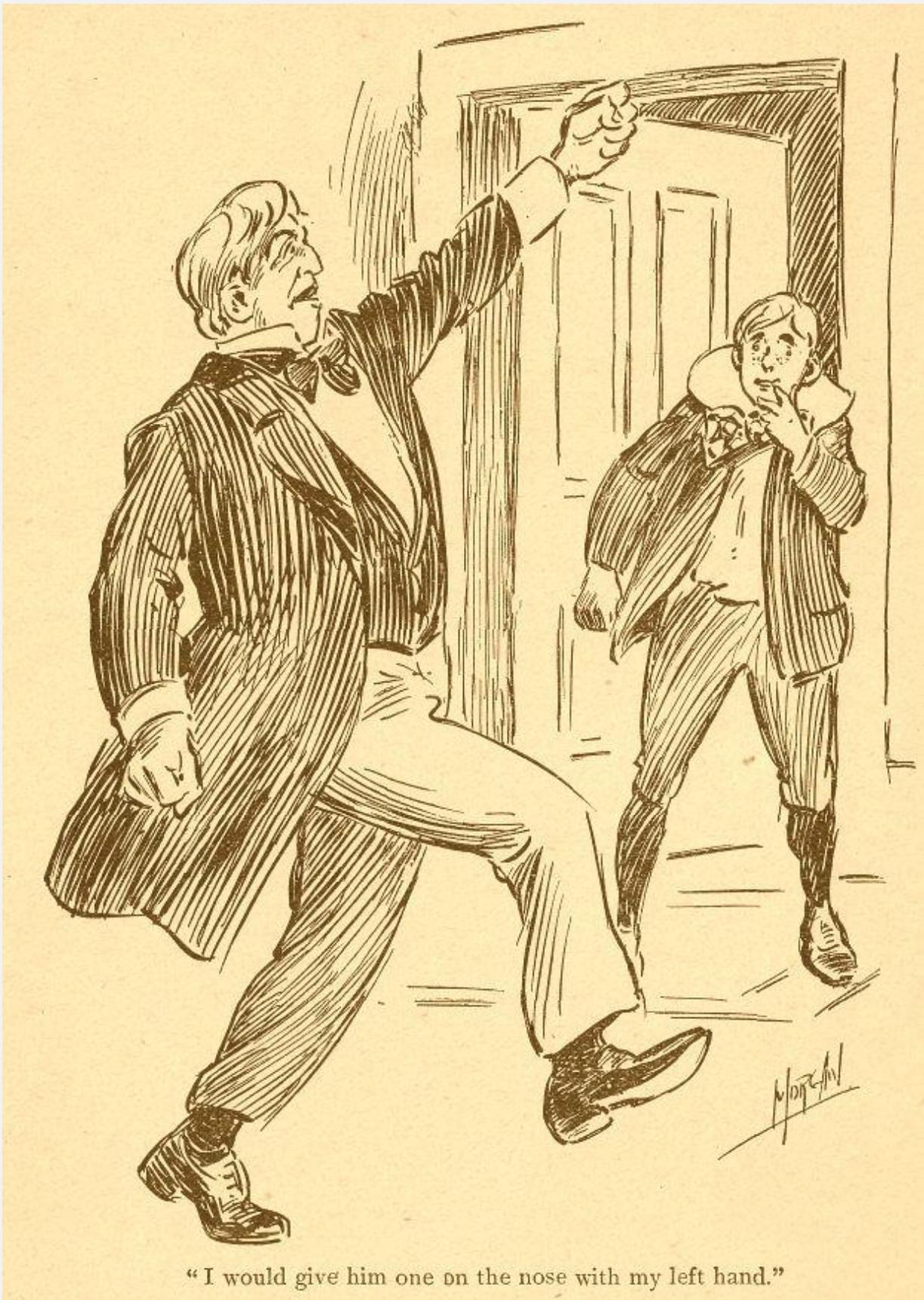
"Greatest thing I ever saw," said Uncle Ike, as he looked out of the window, to see if any females he might have hugged in his excitement were out there waiting for him. "Say, I saw young fellows in that game that I used to know, who would cry if taken across their father's knee, and beg for mercy, and they would rush into the most dangerous position, and if knocked silly they would smile, never groan, and suck a swallow of water out of a sponge, and go in for another knockdown. That game will make men of the weak boys, and cause them to be afraid of nothing that walks. The boy who pushes, and tackles, and runs through a wilderness of other boys who are trying to down him, and get his pigskin away, will become the pushing business man who will go through the line of business progress, and make a touchdown in his enterprise, and he will kick a commercial or professional goal, over the heads of all competitors. Life is only a football game, after all. Every man in business who is worth his salt is a pusher, a shover, a tackier, a punter, or half-back, and the unsuccessful ones are the ones who carry the water to bring the business players to, when they become overheated, and do the yelling and hurraing when the pushing business man in the football game of life makes a touchdown. It is these rough players that become the rough riders when war comes to the country, and they rush the ball up San Juan hill in the face of the Spanish tacklers, and the interference of barbed wire and other things. War is a football game also, and the recruiting officers are not looking for the weak sisters who can't push and shove, and fight, and fall over each other, and when wounded laugh and say it is nothing serious. A country that has a majority of its boys growing up to fight on the football field for fun, has no cause to fear any war that may come to it, for if they will fight like that in good nature, to uphold the colors of their college, what will they do to uphold 'Old Glory,' which comprises the dearest colors in all the world? Yes, boy, you can go on playing football, and if you are injured your Uncle Ike will pay all the expenses, and sit up nights with you, but you better not take me to any more games, for the first thing you know I will be bringing home here more wives than that Utah congressman has got. Now, go rest up, and next week I will take you to see President McKinley, at the hotel here, and you will see him throw his arms around me and say, 'Hello, Uncle Ike!' I used to know him when he wasn't President," and Uncle Ike dismissed the boy, and sat by the window till dark, looking out to see if anybody was coming to claim his hand in marriage, and wondering if he did make as big a fool of himself at the football game as the boys said he did.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Uncle Ike had been to church with the red-headed boy, and they had listened to a sermon on patriotism, and the minister had expressed himself on the subject of the Philippines, and the duty the President owed to civilization to keep on killing those negroes until they learned better than to kick at having a strange race of people boss them around, and Uncle Ike had walked home along the bank of the lake, and breathed the free air that was his because his ancestors had conquered it from England, and he couldn't help having a little sympathy for those Filipinos who had been bought from a country that didn't own them, by a country that had no use for them, and wished it could get rid of them honorably, without hurting the political party that was acting as overseer over them. He didn't want to seem disloyal to a country that he loved and had fought to preserve, but when he thought of those poor, ignorant people, trying to learn what freedom meant, and what there was in it for them, studying the constitution of the United States to find out how to be good and great, and dodging bullets, he felt as though he wished he knew just what the Savior of Man would do in the matter if He had been elected President. He had left the red-headed boy at Sunday-school, and now they were both back home, waiting for the dinner bell to ring. The boy was studying some pamphlet he had brought home, and looking mighty serious.

“Any great problem been presented to you at Sunday-school that you are unable to solve?” said Uncle Ike, as he walked by the boy and tried to stroke the corrugated lines out of his forehead, and patted him on the head. “For if there is anything you are in doubt about, all you got to do is to let your Uncle Ike be umpire, and he will straighten it out for you.”

“Thank you, awfully,” said the boy, as he dropped his book, walked up to the old man, and looked him squarely in the face. “You are the man I have been looking for. Uncle Ike, suppose a man should haul off, without provocation, and smash you on the side of the face, a regular stinger, that would jar your head until you could see stars, what would you do?”



“I would give him one on the nose with my left hand.”

“Oh, say, that is an easy one,” said the old man, as he filled the pipe and lighted it, and threw the match in the grate. “Do you know what I would do? I would give him one on the nose with my left hand, and when he was off his guard I would paste him one under the ear, or on the point of the jaw, and then I would stand over him and count ten, and if he came to, I would give him some more, and when he had got enough, I would say to him: 'Now, when you feel that way again, and want to enjoy yourself, you come right to me, for I don't have any too much exercise, anyway.' But why do you ask? You knew all the time what I would do if a man hit me,” and the old man walked around the room as though he would like to see someone hit him.

“That's what I feared,” said the boy, as the twinkles played around his eyes. “You see, among the verses in the Sunday-school lesson was this one, 'If they smite you on one cheek, turn the other cheek, also,' and I thought I would like to get the opinion of an expert as to how to go about it, to turn the other cheek the right way.”

“Say, here, you don't take advantage of an old man that way,” said Uncle Ike, as the boy began laughing. “When you ask questions like that you want to read the verse first, and give a man a chance. 'Course, if they smite you on one cheek, you want to do just what the Bible says. Some of you kids make me tired,” and the old man wished dinner was ready, so they could change the subject.

“I told my teacher I didn't see how a fellow could turn the other cheek, also, and maintain his standing in society, but she said it was the way to do, and then the Sunday-school superintendent came along, and she asked him about it. He belongs to the athletic club of the Y. M. C. A., and I have seen him box with soft gloves, and he said it was right to turn the other cheek, but I noticed he smiled, and then the minister visited our class, and the teacher asked him to impress on us boys the idea of turning the other cheek. He looked pious, and said you must turn the other cheek when smote, as it showed a meek and forgiving disposition, but I know the minister is a boxer, also, and I heard that he almost jarred the head off a tramp last summer for sassing him, so I am worried as to what it is best to do, in a case of smoting. The teacher, you know her, the pretty girl that let you hold her hand so long at the picnic, when you was introduced to her, and you told her you used to know her mother when she was a girl, and used to go with her, and all that rot, she told me I better talk it over with you, Uncle Ike, and see what you thought about it. So you honestly think it is best for a boy to grow up letting people get in the habit of smiting, so to see him turn his other cheek, and get another bat on that cheek, eh? Don't you think a boy that takes that kind of medicine, without making up a face, ought to say, 'Thank you, ever so much,' and always wear pinafores, and stay in the kindergarten, and if he ever grows up and goes into business he better become a he-milliner, or a manicure, say? It's up to you, now, Uncle Ike, and I am ready to listen, and to follow your advice, and be a boy or a girl, just as you say, but I don't know any girl in my set that would let anybody smite her much, without pulling hair a little, at least.”

Uncle Ike had been thinking pretty hard, as the boy talked, had let his pipe go out, and his face had taken on a serious look, a look also of pride as he listened to the boy, but he was trying to think how to steer him right on that turning the other cheek also business. He fumbled for the tobacco bag, and as he emptied some tobacco into the pipe, his hand was unsteady, and he spilled a good deal on the floor, and he had to scratch two or three matches on his pants before he could get one that wouldn't break off, or go out. Finally he got the pipe lighted, and he puffed a long time, and looked at himself in the big mirror over the mantel, to see if he was looking his best, and finally he said:

“I'll tell you, my boy, I don't think they are turning the other cheek also when smote, as much as they used to. The theory is all right, and if everybody would do so, there would not be any trouble, and all would be peace. I suppose that verse in the Bible was written when the Jews were trying to get along without having scraps all the time. There were people there, Jew-baiters, I suppose, who just laid for them, and knowing them to be opposed to a fight, they would smash them, and on the advice of leaders they would turn the other cheek, and go home with a black eye. I don't suppose I could write a Bible half as good as the old one, but I think if that verse had been changed a little, so the Jews would have stood up for their rights, and everlastingly lambasted anybody that came around jarring them on the cheeks, and been brought up to fight their way through, from Jerusalem to France, things would have been different. But, as I say, things have changed a good deal since Bible times. I think, now, if I was a boy, growing up to take my place in the business world, I might try to forget that verse, or think of it as we do of the Golden Rule, or the 'love one another' verse. You may try as hard as you like and you can't love your neighbor as yourself, unless he, or she, as the case may be, is a lovable person, and loves back. There can be no arbitrary rules that will bind you against what you think is right. Suppose your neighbor is a horsethief, or a liar, who belongs to another political party, and backbites, and steals your wood, and kicks your dog, and puts up jobs on you, how you going to love that neighbor as yourself? Two or three thousand years ago maybe these things would have been all right, when they didn't have any newspapers, and trolley cars, and there was no business except selling fish, and no money but coppers. I'll tell you how I shall bring up my boys, when I have any, and that is to keep their cheeks away from the smoter who smotes. Be on your guard, and if a boy tries to smite you on one cheek, you duck, and side-step, and smile at him, and keep your hands up so if he makes a feint to smite you on one cheek, just stand him off, and maybe he will think that you are onto his smiting on the cheek business yourself, and are no chicken, that is going to keep cheeks for other people to smite, and he may quit, and you can laugh over it, and consider the incident closed. But if he gets gay, and it seems to be his day to smite cheeks, and he acts as though he had picked you out for a soft mark, and rushes in to do you up, if I ever hear of your running, or putting your hands down, and letting him biff you, one, two, on both cheeks, and you come home here crying, with the nosebleed, and your eye blacked, and you haven't done a thing to

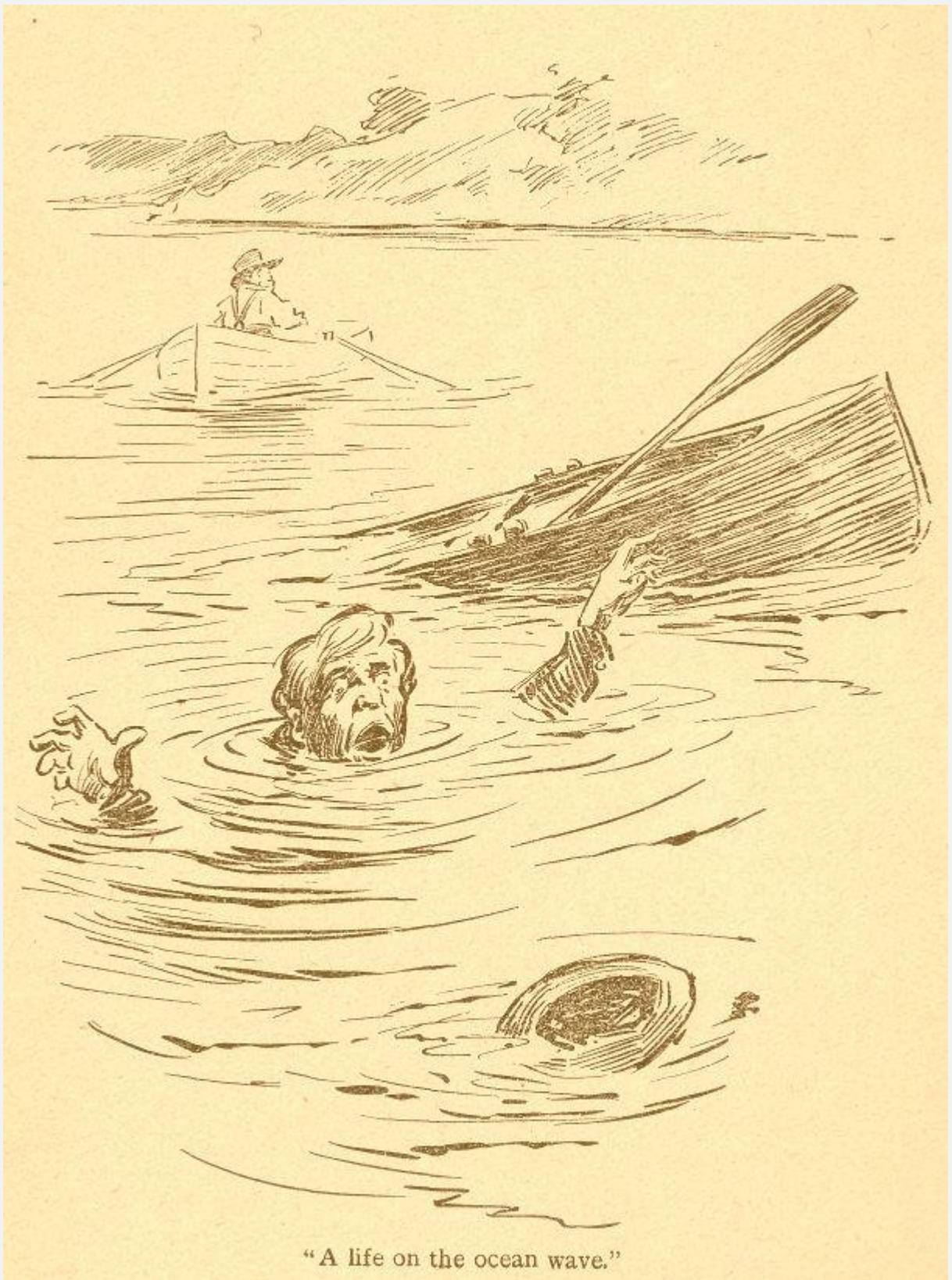
that cheek smiter, I will warm your jacket so you will think there is a hornets' nest in it, hear me?" and the old man looked cross and sassy. "No, sir; you just let him search for your cheeks, and if he won't quit, you finally give him your left in the neck, and side-step, and keep out of his way, and if he wants more, find a place where there is an opening, and jab him until he quits looking for cheeks to smite, and other cheeks to turn also. I don't know as it is right, but turning the other cheek also has gone out of style, and nobody is doing it that has got any gravel in their crop. Don't let me ever catch you fighting, that is, bringing on a fight, but don't you ever let anybody use you to practice that verse on, because your minister or your Sunday-school superintendent wouldn't allow anybody to smite them without getting hurt."

"Well, I like that," said the boy, getting up and starting for the dining room. "I will do just as you say, Uncle Ike, and try to avoid trouble. But what shall I tell that blue-eyed teacher you advised me—the one, you know, that you was so sweet on at the picnic?"

"Oh, tell her I told you to try and grow up to be a regular thoroughbred, like your Uncle Ike, and only turn the other cheek to girls, see! And tell her I never squeezed anybody's hand at a picnic, unless they commenced it, by gosh!" and the old man took the red-headed boy in his arms and carried him bodily into the dining room, and there was a smile on his good old face that was good to look upon.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Uncle Ike had met with a misfortune that troubled him, and he was smoking and trying to think of some way to explain the affair. All his life he had been an all-around sport, and cluck shooting had been his hobby. He had prided himself that he could ride any boat that an Indian could, and bragged that he had never got his feet wet in his forty years as a duck shooter; but this morning he had gone out in a boat, before anybody was up about the house, and when he was not looking, a wave tipped the boat up on one side, filled it with water, and had gone down with him before he could say Jack Robinson, and he had floundered around in mud and water up to his armpits, singing "A life on the ocean wave," and yelling for somebody to come and tie him loose.



"A life on the ocean wave."

A neighbor had come with a boat, and dragged him ashore, and he had taken off his wet clothes, hung them on the fence to dry, put on some dry clothes, and he was smoking his pipe and wringing the water out of his wet pants, when the red-headed boy came out to inquire into the marine disaster.

“Getting your washing out pretty early in the morning, Uncle Ike,” said the boy, as he lifted a wet sweater off the fence, and took some wet cartridges out of the pockets. “Is it healthy to go in swimming with so many clothes on? How did this thing happen, anyway?”

“Now, don't get gay,” said Uncle Ike, “and I will tell you. It was blowing a hurricane, and the wind took the boat up in the air about ten feet, and it dove down head first, and what could I do but get out? A cramp took me in the leg, and I stood on t'other leg, but I wasn't afraid. I didn't yell, but just said to a man who was about half a mile away, says I, 'Kindly assist me to land,' and he took me by the shirt collar and escorted me to the shore.”

“I see,” said the boy; “you whispered to him, when he was half a mile away, but did not yell for help. Oh, you're a mark, trying to make believe you are young enough to enjoy sport. Say, you ought to have a shawl strap on you, so your rescuer can have something to take hold of; and if I were in your place, I would get the dimensions of Noah's ark, and have one made to fit me. You better buy your ducks, and stay on land. But now that the Prodigal Uncle has got back, I am going out to kill a fatted calf, and we will have a calf banquet. Say, Uncle Ike, did you ever read about the Prodigal Son? We had it in our Sunday-school lesson last Sunday. They didn't do a thing to him, did they?”

“Yes, I have read about the Prodigal Son, and I give it to you straight—he was the greatest chump mentioned in the Bible, and sometimes I think you are a dead ringer for him!” and the old man laughed at the boy.

“Oh, I don't know,” said the boy, as he poured some water out of Uncle Ike's rubber boots, that hung on the fence; “you and Noah size up about right. If you had been running that ark, you would have spilled the whole outfit, and nobody ever would have got ashore. But that Prodigal Son makes me tired. He was a regular jay. He run away from home, and got in with a terrible crowd, and they pulled his leg for all the money he had. They steered him up against barrel houses, and filled him with liquor that would burn a hole in a copper kettle, got him mixed up with queer women, and he painted the towns red; and when his money was all gone, they kicked him out with a case of indigestion and a head on him that hurt so he could not wink without thinking there was an earthquake. Say, Uncle Ike, do you know that fellow had some sense after all? When he found that all his new-found friends wanted was his money, and to help him spend it, and that they shook him when it was gone, he had a right to be disgusted with the world; and if he had been like some of our present day prodigals, he would have turned tramp, or held up a train, or stolen a horse and been lynched; but he just tumbled to

himself and took the first job that came along, herding hogs, but he didn't live high. He worked for his board and furnished his own husks. Do you know, I can't help thinking the man that hired Prod. to drive hogs was in a trust, and made all the money there was in the deal. But he was repaid for all his suffering. When he thought of the old folks at home, and drew his wages and started back, without clothes enough on him to wad a gun, thinking maybe they would stick up their noses and say he smelled bad, and quarantine him, and make him take a bath, but, instead of doing so, they just fell on his neck and wept, and set up a calf lunch for him, he must have thought the world was worth living in. Uncle Ike, were you ever a prodigal son?" and the boy turned over the wet clothes so the sun would dry the other side.

"Yes, sir, I have been a prodigal son, and every boy who goes away from home to make his own living is a prodigal son, in a way," and he and the boy sat down under a tree, the one to talk and the other to listen. "When a boy decides to leave the old roof tree at home to go out into the world, it is most always against the wishes of his parents; but he argues with them, and finally prevails on them to let him go. It is what he amounts to after he gets away that makes him either a prodigal or a thoroughbred. If a boy goes into bad company, and thinks the world is made to spend unearned money in, instead of to earn money in and save it, it is only a matter of time when he comes back home a prodigal son, either alive and needing a doctor and a mother's care, or he comes in a box to be buried, his father to pay the express charges. On the other hand, if he gets a job, doing something, anything, masters the business, and becomes a valuable citizen, maybe in time at the head of his profession or business, some day he comes home to the old folks, and there are smiles instead of tears, a brass band instead of the singing by the funeral choir, and he pays the mortgage on the old homestead, instead of having his father pay express charges on the remains. That is the difference. All boys can be prodigals if they have the prodigal bacillus in their systems when they go out into the world; but if they have the get-there-Eli microbe concealed in their pajamas when they go away, they can laugh at the traps and nets that are thrown out to catch them, stand off the alleged friends who try to induce them to go into the red paint business, use the red liquor to rub on bruises and strained muscles on the outside, instead of taking it internally to build fires that never quench. Which kind of a prodigal nephew you want to be—one who comes home with a suit of clothes and a bank account, the glow of health on your cheek, and a love of life and all that goes with it; or a prodigal with a blanket, a haversack full of husks that the hogs won't eat, all the diseases that are going in the set you have moved in, and a desire to die on the doorstep of the old home before they can cook the calf? Which you want to be, boy?"

"I'll tell you, Uncle Ike," said the boy, laying his head in the old man's lap, as they sat under the tree; "I am going to be the kind of a prodigal who comes home with the good health, and the money, and the appetite for calf; and when you are old, Uncle Ike, you sha'n't get wet any more, for I will buy you a duck boat that can't be tipped over with jackscrews, that you can't break with an ax, and that has air chambers in both ends, so

it couldn't be sunk if loaded with railroad iron; and I will buy you a pump gun that will shoot ducks without your aiming it, and you shall have a picnic as long as you live. That is the kind of prodigal nephew I am going to be"; and the old man stroked the red hair on the head that lay in his lap, and the tears stole down his cheeks as he thought what a difference there was in prodigals. He thought of his own prodigal days, when he went out from the home roof tree to make his way in the world; how he worked on a farm from long before daylight in the morning, till all the rest had gone to bed, and his back ached so he could not sleep; how he jumped the farm when he found his wages decreased as the work became harder and the weather colder, and he went into the city and worked at many different trades, and finally became a printer, and grew up to be an editor, made money and went back home a grown man, with a moustache that actually had to be combed; and how the girls that would not speak to him when he was a dirty, freckled boy, wanted to give parties in his honor, and how he shook them; and now he regretted, old bachelor that he was, that he had not allowed them to entertain him, so he might have picked out the best one of them for his wife; and he sighed, and got up and wrung some more water out of his wet clothes hanging on the fence, and wondered how in the world he could have allowed himself to be tipped over in a boat, and if he actually did make a fool of himself when he was there in the water, wishing he hadn't gone hunting at all.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PECK'S UNCLE IKE AND THE RED HEADED BOY ***

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