

Webster Frank V.

The Newsboy Partners: or, Who Was Dick Box?



Frank Webster

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CHAPTER I JIMMY IS IN LUCK

"Wuxtry! Wuxtry! Full account of de big f-i-r-e! Here ye are! Wuxtry! *Woild, Joinal, Sun, Telegram!* Here ye are, mister! Git de latest wuxtry! Wuxtry! Wuxtry!"

Jimmy Small was only one of a dozen newsboys crying the same thing in City Hall Park, New York. The lads, ragged little chaps, were rushing at all in whom they saw possible customers, thrusting the papers in their very faces, a fierce rivalry taking place whenever two of the boys reached the same man at the same time. But of all who cried none shouted louder than this same Jimmy Small, and none was more active in rushing here and there with papers.

"Wuxtry! Wuxtry!" yelled Jimmy, for that was how he and the other boys pronounced the word "Extra."

"What's the extra about?" asked a well-dressed man, stopping Jimmy.

"Wuxtry! Big fire! Dozen people burned to death! Here ye are! Wuxtry! Full account of de big f-i-r-e!"

Jimmy could not stop long to talk. He must sell papers. He snatched one from the bundle under his arm, thrust it into the man's hand, took the nickel the customer gave him, handed the man four pennies in change, and all the while was yelling at the top of his voice his war-cry:

"Wuxtry! Wuxtry!"

Jimmy had secured his bunch of papers from one of the delivery wagons on Park Row – Newspaper Row, as it is sometimes called. He had dashed across the park toward Broadway, selling as he ran. He wanted to reach a certain corner at Broadway and Barclay Street, where he could be sure of finding many customers who would buy papers on their way to take the ferry over to New Jersey. Jimmy usually made that corner his headquarters.

As he hurried on he was stopped several times by men who, attracted by his loud shouts, wanted to buy papers to see what the extra was about. As it happened, there had been a disastrous fire in New York that day in which a number of per-

"Well, I ain't yer son. Ner I ain't no signpost either. D'ye want a pape?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I might take one," was the answer in drawling tones. "Are you selling papers?"

"Naw, I'm here fer me health. De doctor said I had t' stand here t' git fresh air," replied Jimmy with contempt in his tones, for he saw that the young man was from the country, unused to city ways, and, as a boy who had lived in New York all his life, Jimmy had not much use for country folks.

"You're something of a joker, aren't you?" asked the young man, good humor showing in his blue eyes. He did not seem to be offended at Jimmy's answer.

"Naw, I'm a newsie. Want a pape? *Sun, Woild, Joinal?* Wuxtry! All about de big fire!"

"Which is the best paper?" asked the young man with a smile.

"Aw, g'wan! T'ink I'm going t' play favorites? Dey is all alike t' me. One's de same as de udder. I ain't goin' t' knock any of 'em. I makes me livin' by sellin' 'em all, dat's what!"

"Then I guess I'll take a *Sun*. But could you tell me the way to the Brooklyn Bridge? I'm a stranger in New York."

"Oh, I kin see dat all right enough," replied Jimmy with a little kindlier feeling toward the man, now that he had proved to be a customer. "Youse from de country all right."

"How can you tell that?"

"'Cause youse talks so slow. Folks here ain't got time t' waste so much talk over deir woids. Ye got t' hustle in N'York."

"I believe you, from what little I have seen. You are right, I am from the country, and I'm on my way to visit an aunt in Brooklyn. I thought I'd walk over the bridge, for I've read a lot about it."

"Well, go up one block," said Jimmy, pointing toward Park Place, "den cut t'rough City Hall Park by de side of de post-office here an' foller de crowd. Youse can't miss it. But youse wants t' look out."

"What for?"

"If ye gits in de push youse'll be squeezed t' death. It's an awful mob dat goes t' Brooklyn dis time o' day."

"Well, I'll be careful. Do you live around here?"

"Who, me? Oh, yes, I lives around here," and Jimmy, with a wave of his hand, included nearly the whole of New York.

"What's your name?"

"Say, who are youse, anyhow?" inquired the newsboy, suddenly suspicious.

"My name is Joshua Crosscrab, and I'm from Newton, Vermont," replied the young man, still good-natured.

"Aw, I mean who be ye? Be youse a detective, er from some society what takes up kids fer sellin' papes on de street?"

"No, I'm not a detective. What makes you think so?"

"'Cause youse asks so many questions."

"I am interested. I never was in New York before, and I see so many things that are strange that I want to know about them. Up our way we believe in getting acquainted, so I thought I'd try it here. Every one I talked to, though, seemed to think I was a swindler, I guess."

"Dat's right. Youse has t' be careful who youse talk to in N'York," said Jimmy with a comical air of wisdom.

"But you haven't told me your name yet," persisted Mr. Crosscrab.

"Sure youse ain't none of them children sasiety detectives?" asked the newsboy.

"Sure. I'll give you my promise."

"Well, me name is Jimmy Small. Here ye are, sir! Paper! Wuxtry! All about de big fire! Thirteen killed!"

Jimmy had interrupted his information to dispose of a paper to a man.

"Jimmy Small," repeated the man. "Where do you live?"

"Oh, I've got a swell joint on upper Fifth Avenoo," replied the boy, with a wink, "but it's rented fer de season, an' I ain't livin' in it."

"No, I am serious," said Mr. Crosscrab. "I would really like to know."

"Honest? No kiddin'?" inquired Jimmy.

"No what?"

"No kiddin'. Is it de real goods? Youse ain't tryin' t' run up an alley on me, is yer?"

"I don't exactly understand you, but I am really asking because I am interested in you. I have a brother about your age, and I was wondering how he would make out if he had to sell papers for a living."

"Say, take it from me, mister," spoke Jimmy earnestly. "Don't let him do it. Dere's too many in de business now. Don't let him come t' N'York an' sell papers!"

"Oh, he's not very likely to. But you haven't told me where you live."

"Aw, most anywheres. Wherever I kin. If I'm flush wid de coin I takes a bed at de lodgin'-house. When I'm busted – on me uppers – cleaned out – nuthin' doin' – why, I takes a chance at a bench in de park when it's warm. If de cop don't see youse it's all right. Sometimes I hits up an empty box, an' I've done me turn in a hallway. Under a dock ain't so bad, only dere's too many rats t' suit me."

"You lead quite a varied sort of life, don't you?" inquired Mr. Crosscrab.

"Youse kin search me. I ain't got it," replied Jimmy with more good humor than he had previously shown. The man's talk was a little above him.

"I suppose you know your way around New York pretty well, don't you?" the countryman went on.

"Dat's right. Ye can't lose me."

"Are you here almost every day?"

"When I ain't in Wall Street investin' me millions I am."

"Still inclined to jokes, I see," murmured the man. "Well, I'd like to know more about you. You seem like a bright lad, and I may want to ask you some directions about getting around New York. I may see you to-morrow. Does your father allow you to work all day?"

"I ain't got no fader," said Jimmy. He did not speak sadly. He took it as a matter of course, for he had been so long without either father, mother or other relatives to care for him that parents were only a dim recollection to him. "I ain't got nobody," he went on. "I'm in business fer meself."

"Haven't you a mother or a sister or a brother?" asked Mr. Crosscrab, feeling a strong sympathy for the boy.

"Nixy. Not a one."

"How long have you been selling papers?"

"About two years. But say, mister, I don't want to be short wid youse, only I've got t' go an' git some more papes. I'm sold out, an' dis is me busy time. Stop around t'-morrer an' I'll tell ye all I know about N'York."

"That's all right," said Mr. Crosscrab, understanding the situation. "I didn't mean to keep you from your work. If I pass this way to-morrow I shall look for you. Here is something to pay you for your trouble."

He held out a coin to Jimmy, who promptly took it. It was a silver quarter.

"Crimps!" exclaimed Jimmy as he saw the money. "Say, youse is all right, that's what youse is! Ye kin ast me questions all day at dat rate."

Mr. Crosscrab, with a smile and a wave of his hand for good-by, passed on toward the Brooklyn Bridge, while Jimmy, hardly able to believe his good fortune, hurried after some more papers.

"I certainly am in luck t'-day," he murmured. "I wonder what ails dat guy? Maybe he's crazy an' believes in givin' all his money away. I wish he'd come by t'-morrer. Crimps! But dis is fine! I'll go see a show t'-night sure!"

CHAPTER II

JIMMY IS OUT OF LUCK

Jimmy bought another supply of papers and hurried back to his corner. But no sooner had he come in sight of it than he saw it was occupied by a large newsboy. The newcomer was a lad much bigger and stronger than our young hero, but in spite of that Jimmy was not going to be deprived of his place without a protest.

"Hey, Bulldog!" he exclaimed, giving the other newsboy the nickname by which he was known, "what ye doin' on my corner?"

"Your corner?" inquired the other, with an ugly grin on his big face, thereby showing two sharp teeth which gave him his name.

"Yep, my corner, Bulldog. I was here all de afternoon sellin' papes an' went t' git some more."

"An' I got it now," added Bulldog Smouder with a leer. "Here ye are, paper! Wuxtry!" he added as a man came up and bought a *World*. It made Jimmy angry to see profits that he thought should be his going into the pockets of his enemy, for Bulldog Smouder was an enemy to all the newsboys excepting those he could not whip. He was a fighter and a bully, and he lost no chance to impose on those weaker or younger than himself. Still, he had no particular grudge against Jimmy, and he would just as quickly have taken the place some other boy regarded as his own as he had preëmpted that recently occupied by our hero.

"Git on off there!" cried Jimmy. "Dat's me place, an' youse knows it."

"I don't know nuttin' but what I sees. I seen this corner an' nobody holdin' it down an' I took it. If youse wants t' keep a good place, what makes youse leave it?"

"I had t' git more papes."

"Den youse ought t' have a partner in business wid ye. He could go after papes while youse held de corner. I'll go in whacks wid ye if ye likes. But youse got t' give me half what youse made t'-day."

"I will like pie!"

It had been a good day for Jimmy, and with the quarter Mr. Crosscrab had given him he had more than he had possessed in a long time before. He was not going to divide with Bulldog, even if the latter, from a physical standpoint, was a desirable partner. For Bulldog was lazy. Jimmy knew if there was a union formed he would have to do all the work, while Bulldog would take half the profits and do nothing.

"Ain't ye goin' t' git off me corner?" demanded Jimmy again.

"Naw, I ain't. Now chase yerself. I want t' sell me papes an' go home. Skiddoo fer yours!"

"I'd like t' punch yer face in," muttered Jimmy.

"Try it," advised Bulldog with a grin. "I'll tie youse up in a knot if ye do."

"What's de matter, Bulldog?" asked another newsboy, coming up at that juncture. He had no papers.

"Aw, de kid says I swiped his corner."

"An' so ye did!" cried Jimmy.

"Why didn't ye stay here den?" asked Bulldog.

"I told youse. 'Cause I had 't go after papes."

"Well, youse know what I said. Git a partner."

"Don't youse give him de corner, Bulldog! Youse got as good a right t' it as he has."

"Sure I have, Mike, an' I'm goin' t' stay here, too."

All this time Bulldog was busy selling papers, while the new stock Jimmy had obtained was still undiminished.

"What ye buttin' in fer, Mike Conroy?" asked Jimmy of the newcomer. "It's none of your funeral."

"Aw, g'wan! Guess I kin speak t' Bulldog if I want t'. I'll punch yer nose fer ye if youse gits too fresh."

"I'd like t' see ye do it!" cried Jimmy, but at the same time he took good care not to get too near Mike, who was a worse bully than Bulldog. The latter would not attack smaller boys than himself without some provocation, but Mike Conroy used to beat and kick them every chance he got. He had often hit Jimmy.

"Wuxtry! Wuxtry!" cried Bulldog as the crowd of men hurrying to the ferry came past. He was kept busy selling papers. Poor Jimmy was out of it. His luck had turned, but it was destined to do so even more before the night was over. Still, he had sold a large number of papers. The trouble was he had bought another big supply, and unless he could quickly dispose of them the crowds would soon be gone, and he would have them left on his hands, to return to the offices, thus making no profit.

He sold a few on the outskirts of the throng about Bulldog, but as soon as the latter saw what was going on he made a rush at Jimmy. The latter fled, for he knew that in a fight he was no match for the larger lad.

"Where's your papes?" Bulldog asked Mike during a lull in the business of selling.

"I'm cleaned out. Sold 'em down in Wall Street. Guess I'll take in a theater t'-night. I kin afford it."

"Wish I could. Maybe I'll go wid ye."

"All right. Goin' t' de lodgin'-house?"

"Sure."

"Keep de kid away from here den till I gits sold out an' I'll go wid ye," said Bulldog.

Thus he and Mike formed an alliance against Jimmy. While Bulldog attended to his customers Mike saw to it that Jimmy did not approach the corner; thus the small lad lost what little chance he had of making sales. As he was thinking over the unfairness of it, and wondering where he had better go to dispose of his stock, he was hailed by another lad about his own size.

"Hello, Jim!" cried the newcomer. "What's the matter?"

"Hello, Frank. Aw, Bulldog Smouder run me off me corner. Dat's what he done."

"That's too bad," exclaimed Frank Merton, who, though a newsboy like Jimmy, was better educated. In fact, Frank had not been long in the business. Left an orphan at an early age, an aged aunt had tried to take care of him, but when she was taken ill he found it necessary to go on the streets selling papers, while his aunt was taken to an institution. During the lifetime of his parents he had been sent to school, and so he used better language than did his fellows. He was a bright-faced, pleasant lad, and often did errands, in addition to selling papers, so he could afford to have a regular room at the Newsboys' Lodging House. At night Frank went to evening school.

"Yep, it's tough luck," went on Jimmy. "I went an' bought a new stock, an' I ain't sold five yet."

"I'll help you," generously offered Frank. "I sold out some time ago. That big fire seemed to make every one want a paper. Suppose you give me half your stock, and we'll go over by the bridge entrance and see if we can't sell them. There's a big crowd there yet."

"Dat's a good idea. T'anks. Bulldog was sayin' I ought t' have a partner, an' now I've got one."

"Yes," remarked Frank musingly, "I suppose if two boys did go into partnership they could make more at it than two could working alone. I must think about that."

"Maybe you an' I'll go snooks," proposed Jimmy.

"We'll see," went on Frank. "Anyhow, we'll be partners to-night. Now come on before the crowd gets away."

The two boys hurried back across City Hall Park, and, mingling with the crowd that was hurrying toward Brooklyn, they soon disposed of their papers.

"Here's your money," said Frank, coming up to Jimmy and handing him the change.

"Keep ten cents fer yerself," proposed Jimmy generously, for he was a good-hearted youth in spite of his rather rough ways.

"Oh, no. I made a good profit to-day. I offered to help you, and I didn't expect any pay."

"Ah, g'wan! Take ten cents."

"If you have so much money to give away, why don't you start an account in the Dime Savings Bank?" proposed Frank.

"What's de use?" asked Jimmy. "I'd draw it all out ag'in when I was broke. Youse had better take de ten cents."

"No. I'd rather you'd keep it."

"Den come on an' take in a movin' picture show," proposed Jimmy. "Dere's a dandy on de Bowery. It's a prize-fight, an' ye kin see de knock-out blow as plain as anyt'ing, Sam Schmidt was tellin' me. Come on. I'll pay yer way in. It's only a nickel."

"No. I can't go to-night."

"Why not?"

"I have to go to evening school. The term closes this week."

"Aw, cut it out," advised Jimmy. "Come wid me. We'll have a bully time."

"No, I don't believe I will."

"Den I am. I'm in luck t'-day. Feller give me a quarter fer showin' him where de Brooklyn Bridge was. He was from de country. Guess he was bug-house."

"Bug-house? That's a new one on me."

"Sure, nutty – crazy, ye know, dippy in de lid – off his noodle."

"You certainly have a choice lot of slang," remarked Frank with a smile as he left Jimmy.

"Well, den, I'll have t' go t' de show alone," thought the lad. "Let's see how much I've got."

He counted over his change and found he had more than he expected.

"Dollar an' seventy-seven cents. Crimps! But I'll buy a pack of cigarettes an' have a swell time. Guess I'll git a bit of grub now, an' den I'll be ready fer de show."

"Grub" for Jimmy meant supper. He made a substantial meal on some beans, coffee and bread and what passed for butter in one of the cheapest of the Bowery eating-places. This cost him ten cents. He spent five cents for cigarettes, for Jimmy had learned to smoke them at an early age, and did not consider it wrong, as most of his companions indulged in the same habit.

Puffing on the cigarette, with his hands in his pockets and a comfortable feeling under his belt, Jimmy strolled up the Bowery toward the moving-picture show of the prize-fight. He found a number of persons, including some of his newsboy acquaintances, going in.

"Hello, Bricks," greeted a lad, giving Jimmy the nickname that had been bestowed on him because of his sandy hair.

"Hello yerself, Nosey," replied Jimmy, for the other boy had a very big nose which had earned him this title.

"Goin' in?"

"Sure."

"Take me; I'm broke."

"Come on," invited Jimmy generously, feeling like a small edition of a millionaire. "Have a cigarette?"

"T'anks. Say, youse must be flush wid de coin."

"Oh, I made a little t'-day."

The boys and many grown persons entered the amusement place. They were soon deeply interested in the moving pictures of the prize-fight, yelling and shouting as the photographs of the pugilists were thrown on the white screen.

There were many other moving pictures, the performance lasting over an hour. During a lull, when there was no picture on the screen, Jimmy looked around him. On a seat behind he saw Mike Conroy and Bulldog Smouder, his two enemies of that afternoon.

"Goin' t' punch me after de show?" asked Mike with a leer.

"Aw, cheese it," advised Jimmy. "I'll git square wid youse somehow."

There was no time for further talk, as another picture was shown and the boys were absorbed in that. Jimmy could hear Bulldog and Mike whispering back of him, but he paid no attention to them.

When the show was over and Jimmy was out in the street, Nosey having left him, he began to think of where he should spend the night. This was something he usually left until the last moment.

"Guess I'll treat meself t' a good ten-cent bed t'-night," he said, lighting another cigarette. "What's de use of havin' money if youse can't spend it?"

He put his hand in the pocket where he kept his change. To his surprise his fingers met with no jingling coins.

"Dat's queer," he remarked. "Where's me dough?"

He felt in another pocket. Then in all of them in turn.

"Stung!" he exclaimed. "Some guy has pinched all me coin an' I'm dead broke. I had a dollar an' fifty-two cents left an' now I ain't got a red. Me luck certainly has shook me. What's t' be done?"

CHAPTER III

A BOX FOR A BED

For some time Jimmy stood still in the street. The brilliantly-lighted Bowery stretched away in either direction; a throng of persons, mostly bent on such pleasure as the place afforded, were traveling up and down. No one paid any attention to the friendless newsboy.

"Well, dis is certainly tough luck!" exclaimed Jimmy. "An hour ago I had enough t' live on fer a week, an' now I ain't got enough t' git a cup of coffee. I'm hungry, too, an' I was goin' t' have a feed after de show. I wonder what happened t' me money, anyway?"

Once more he went carefully through his pockets. Some had holes in them, but the one where he had put the change was unturned.

"It couldn't 'a' fell out," mused Jimmy. "Dere ain't no hole, an' I didn't stand on me head. Say, I'll bet some one picked me pocket – dat's what dey did!"

Struck with this idea, he paused in his walk downtown, for he had started toward the lower end of the Bowery.

"Dat's it!" he went on. "Some one swiped me coin, an' I bet I know who done it. Dat Mike Conroy was settin' right back of me. I'll bet he reached over in de dark when I was lookin' at dem pictures an' he swiped it. I t'ought I felt some one pluckin' at me coat, but I didn't have no suspicion it was him. Wait till I see him in de mornin'. I'll go fer him!"

Then another thought came to the luckless lad. He knew he could not hope to force Mike into giving up the money even if he had stolen it. Nor would an appeal to a policeman do any good. In the first place, a bluecoat would not pay much attention to the complaint of a newsboy, as the lads were always fighting more or less among themselves. And, again, Jimmy had no proof against Mike.

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed our hero in his process of thinking out matters. "I had a cent wid a big hole in it. Dat was me lucky pocket piece, and dat's gone, too. Now if I could find out if Mike's got dat, I'd know if he picked me pocket. I wish I was a detective. I'd find out. He's a mean feller, t' take every cent I had. Now what am I goin' t' do fer a place t' sleep? I guess it's de docks or a box fer mine t'-night," he added with a sigh. "Dere ain't no tick at de bunk house, an' dere ain't no use askin' fer it. I've got t' do de best I kin."

It was not the first time Jimmy had been in such a fix. In fact, it was more frequently this way than any other. In the summer time, which is when this story opens, he often slept out in the open air from choice, and because it saved him the money he would have to spend on a bed. But to-night it was quite cool from the effects of a thundershower that day, and Jimmy thought a place in the lodging-house would be very acceptable.

He would not have cared so much, but he had set his mind on getting a ten-cent bed out of the money he had so unexpectedly received that day, and now it was a keen disappointment to him.

Jimmy frequently made quite a little sum by selling papers, particularly when there was a big accident, but he never thought of saving anything against hard luck or the proverbial "rainy day." He spent his money almost as fast as he earned it, and on several occasions, when in the evening he would have enough to get a bed, he would go to some show, buy cigarettes or play pool until he had nothing left, and would be forced to sleep wherever he could find a place.

He was in exactly this situation now, but through no fault of his own. Still the effect was the same.

"It's up t' me t' look fer a bed now, I s'pose," he went on. "If I saw some of de fellers dey might lend me enough t' git a bed – but what's de use? I ain't goin' t' ask 'em an' git de frozen face. Besides, I'll need somethin' t' stake me t' papes in de mornin', an' I can't afford t' borrow any fer a bed. Me credit ain't any too good."

This was a new thought. Jimmy knew he must have some capital to start him in business the next day or he would fare badly indeed. However, this did not worry him, as the newsboys were frequently in the habit of borrowing from each other enough to "stake" them, or enable them to buy a supply of papers from the publication office. But though nearly any newsboy would lend a companion money for this cause, lending it for a bed was another matter.

"I'll find a bunk some place," thought Jimmy as he plodded on. "It ain't so cold, an' it'll be warmer by mornin'. I know what I'll do, I'll go down t' dat alley where all de big empty boxes is. One of dem'll make a fine bed, an' it'll be warm. Crimps! I'm glad dat entered my head. It's almost as good as de bunk house. Well, anyway, I had a swell time, an' I kin go widout eatin' till I make somethin' in de mornin'. But it's tough luck; it sure is tough luck."

Having thus made the best of his ill-fortune, Jimmy started off toward the alley of which he had spoken. It was in the factory district, on what is known as the "East Side," among the tenements of New York, where the poor lived. Jimmy knew his way about the big city, and he was soon at the place.

It was an alley at the side of a big clothing factory, and piled up in it along the driveway were tiers of big packing boxes from which the contents had been taken and stored in the factory.

Jimmy first took a careful survey of the street before entering the alley, for he had two enemies for whom he must look out – the policeman on the beat and the night watchman of the factory. Both of these individuals objected to boys staying in the packing boxes, and Jimmy more than once had been detected and driven out just as he was ready to go to sleep.

But to-night neither the policeman nor the watchman was in sight. Still Jimmy proceeded cautiously. With a cat-like tread he entered the alley, peering about for a possible sight of the watchman.

"Guess he's inside," thought the boy. "Now if I kin find de box wid de old sacks in it I'll be all to de merry."

The box he referred to was one he had slept in on several other occasions when his funds were gone. He had discovered some old bags, and had piled them up in the packing case, making a rude bed. This box was near an angle of the alley, and the open side of it was up against the building, so that by moving it out a short distance, just wide enough to allow himself to crawl in, Jimmy would have quite a sheltered place.

He stole along, pausing every now and then in the dark alley to discover if the watchman was anywhere about. But all was still save for the whistles of the boats on the East River, for the factory ran down to the edge of the docks on the water front.

"All serene, I t'ink," mused the boy. "Now fer a good snooze."

He found the box he was looking for, and to his delight the pile of bags was not disturbed. Jimmy crawled in, shook up the "bed-clothes," stretched out on them and was soon sound asleep, all his troubles for the time being forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW BOY

Several hours later, just when it was getting daylight, Jimmy was awakened by hearing a strange noise close to his ear. At first he thought he was dreaming, but when the noise continued – a noise of some one groaning as if in pain – the newsboy sat suddenly up on the pile of bags and looked about him.

A little light came in between the packing box and the side of the factory, and by it Jimmy was startled to perceive that his lodging place had another occupant than himself.

"Hello! Who are youse?" asked Jimmy.

There was no answer save a cry of pain.

"What's de matter?" asked Jimmy again, putting out his hand, for he could not exactly tell whether the dark object was a human being or a big black dog.

"Oh! Oh!" murmured a voice. "My head! My head!"

"Why, it's a kid!" exclaimed Jimmy. "A kid! He must be down on his luck, too, an' crawled in here to bunk. Hey, kid," he went on, "what's de matter wid yer head?"

The new boy gave no answer. Jimmy turned back one of the bags which the stranger had partly pulled up over his shoulders. As he did so a glint of the rising sun struck in between the wall and the edge of the box, lighting up the interior more plainly.

"Why, it's a swell guy!" said Jimmy, as he saw that the boy was very well dressed. "He's got nobby clothes on. I wonder what he's doin' here? Maybe he's run away after readin' dem five-cent weeklies. Crimps! But dis is a go!"

He could now see the stranger distinctly. He was a boy about Jimmy's age, but his clothes were much different from the ragged garments of the newsboy.

"Hey, what's de matter wid youse?" inquired Jimmy, as he saw that the other made no attempt to get up.

"My head! Oh, how it hurts!" murmured the boy. His eyes were closed, and his face was very pale.

Jimmy looked more closely at him. Then, to his surprise, he saw there was quite a cut on the boy's forehead. The blood had dried on it, leaving a red streak on the white skin.

"Crimps! Some bloke swiped him one on de noddle!" cried Jimmy. "A nasty one, fer a fact. He's half dead from it. Wonder how in de woild he ever come here? Maybe dey robbed him an' chucked him in here so de cops wouldn't git on to it. I've got t' do somethin'. Hey, kid," he went on, "can't youse git up?"

The boy murmured something Jimmy could not understand.

"Mebby I'd better tell some one," thought the newsboy. "He might die in here. Den if I do dey may say I done it an' I'll git inter trouble. Crimps! But dis is a queer go!"

Kneeling there in the big packing box beside the injured boy Jimmy rapidly thought over the situation. He was considering, in his own way, what was the best thing to do. Finally he decided.

"I'll doctor him a bit meself first," he murmured. "Dat cut needs washin'. Den mebbly he'll rouse up a bit. It's early, an' I guess I can sneak out in de yard an' git some water from de faucet. Dat watchman will be tendin' to de fires now."

Peering cautiously out of the box, Jimmy saw no one in the factory yard. He knew where there was a faucet, near a trough where the horses were watered, and usually there was a pail beside it. He had often made his morning toilet there.

Running to it, he drew some water in the pail, and returning to the box, he shoved the receptacle from the wall and used his hand to wash the blood off the other boy's head as he knelt beside him.

At the first touch of the cold water the stranger sat up. His eyes opened in a wondering stare, and he exclaimed:

"Where am I?"

"Now take it easy, kid," advised Jimmy. "Ye're all right, an' ye're in a safe place – anyway, fer a while yet. Here, take a drink of dis; it'll do youse good."

Hardly realizing what he did, the boy drank from the big pail which Jimmy held up for him. This made the stranger feel much better.

"Where am I?" he repeated. "How did I come here?" and he looked about him in surprise as his eyes took in the narrow quarters of the box.

"Youse kin search me, kid," replied Jimmy frankly. "I come in here t' bunk 'cause some bloke swiped all me chink. When I wakes up I sees youse. First I t'ought youse was a dog, den I heard youse moanin' an' I sees de cut on yer head."

"Oh, my head! It hurts very much"

"Put some more cold water on it," advised the amateur doctor, and the boy did so.

"How's dat?" asked Jimmy.

"Better. I feel much better. But I can't understand how I came here."

"I can't needer. What's yer name?"

"Name?" repeated the other with a wondering stare.

"Sure. What do de odder kids call youse?"

"Oh! My name is Dick."

"Dick? Dick what? Youse must have two names, same's I have."

"Why, yes, of course I have. My name is Dick – Dick – er – I – I – why!" the new boy exclaimed, trying to get up on his knees, but finding he was too weak. "I – I can't remember what my other name is – it's gone from me – something seems to have happened. I remember my first name is Dick, but I can't think what my last name is. Can't you help me?" and he turned a piteous look on Jimmy.

"Dat's queer!" exclaimed Jimmy. "He's forgot his name! What am I up against?"

"Don't you remember my other name?" begged the boy.

"Me? No. How kin I remember it when I never seen youse before? Don't youse know yer own name?"

"I did, but it's gone from me. All I can remember is that they called me Dick."

"Yes, Dick; but Dick what?"

"I don't know." The sufferer tried hard to think what his other name was, but it was impossible to recollect.

"Can't ye remember anythin' else?" asked Jimmy. "Where'd youse come from?"

"I can't remember that, either. All I know is that I got hit on the head. Then it was all dark, and the next thing I recollect I saw you putting water on my head."

"Dis sure is a queer go," murmured Jimmy. "Here I am wid a kid dat can't even remember his own name, an' me dead broke. Oh, yes, dis is a nice state of affairs!"

CHAPTER V

DICK'S NEW NAME

For a minute or more Jimmy thought over the situation. He had been in many strange plights, even in his short life, but never had he known such a situation as this was. He hardly knew what to do.

"Where are we?" asked Dick, while he continued to bathe his head with the water.

"We're in a big box, in a factory alley, down by de East River," replied the newsboy. "Dis is me headquarters when I ain't got no coin."

"I think – I'm not sure – but maybe I have a little money," said Dick. "I remember having some. This place is so cramped I can't get my hand in my pocket."

"Lay down an' stretch out on yer back; den ye kin," advised Jimmy. "Dat's what I have t' do. Dis place ain't hardly big enough fer two."

The other lad did so, and when he put his hand in his pocket the musical jingle of change rewarded him.

"Dat's chink, sure enough!" decided the newsboy. "Now how much is it?"

Dick pulled out a handful of coins. With practiced fingers Jimmy counted the money.

"Two dollars an' fourteen cents," he announced. "Dat ain't so bad. Where'd ye git it? What d'ye work at?"

"I don't know. I can't seem to remember. I can't remember anything but that they called me Dick."

"Dat's queer. But we kin fix dat part of it."

"What part?"

"About de name."

"How do you mean? Do you know my other name?"

"No, but youse got t' have one. Everybody has t' have two names. I'll tell youse what I'll do. I'll give youse another name, an' youse kin keep it till youse gits yer own back."

The other boy looked a little doubtful of this proceeding.

"What will you name me?" he asked.

"I'll call youse Dick Box."

"Dick Box? That's a queer name."

"Well, dis is a queer go all around. Youse says yer first name is Dick. Well, I finds youse in a box, so I'll call youse Dick Box. See?"

"I suppose that will do as well as any other name for the present," agreed Dick, "Perhaps I can remember my other name when my head stops hurting."

"Does it hurt yet?"

"Quite a bit."

"Den let's git outer here," proposed Jimmy. "De watchman'll be along in a little while, and he'll kick us out anyhow. I kin take youse t' a hospital, if youse want's t' go. It don't cost nuttin'. I was dere once, when a cab-horse stepped on me foot. Dey treated me out of sight."

"Oh, I don't think my head is bad enough to go to a hospital for," said Dick. "Perhaps, when I get out in the air, it will feel better. It aches now, and I believe I'm hungry."

"Don't say a word. I am too," replied Jimmy. "But I ain't got de price. Here, better take yer chink, before it gits lost," and he handed Dick back the coins.

"Perhaps you'll – I mean – wouldn't you like to go with me and have some breakfast?" proposed Dick. "I'm a stranger here. By the way, what city am I in?"

"Say, does youse mean dat?"

"Mean what?"

"Don't youse know ye're in N'York?"

"New York? Is this New York? No, I had no idea where I was."

"Well, if dis ain't de limit!" exclaimed Jimmy. "It's gittin' wuss instead of better, Dick Box."

"What is?"

"Dis mystery about youse. Say, honest, youse ain't kiddin' me, is ye?"

"Kidding you? You mean fooling you? Of course not! All I know is that I started away from some place – I can't just remember where – and the next thing I knew I was in the box."

"Well, I guess it's straight goods," admitted Jimmy, with a sigh, "but it sure is a queer go. Youse must have come from some swell joint, den."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, yer clothes is all to de good. Ye're right in de latest style. Didn't nobody kidnap youse, did dey?"

"Not that I know of."

Dick passed his hand over his head with a bewildered air. It was close in the box, and, now that the sun was up, was getting quite warm.

"Come on; let's git outer here, an' den we kin talk better," proposed the newsboy. He peered out, and, seeing that the coast was clear, he crawled out of the box, followed by Dick.

"I guess we kin take a little scrub in me bathroom, an' den we'll git somethin' t' eat," proposed the street lad, as he led the way to the faucet over the horse-trough. Fortunately the watchman was inside the factory turning on the fires ready for the men who would soon arrive.

Jimmy gave himself a vigorous wash, and then said to Dick:

"Now it's your turn."

Dick appeared to hesitate.

"What's de matter?" asked Jimmy. "It ain't very cold. De cook fergot t' make de fire in de range last night, an' dere ain't no hot water. I'll bounce her if she does it ag'in."

"Why, there isn't any – any towel," said Dick.

"Towel? Well, I guess nixy. Pocket hankcheff's good 'nuff fer me. If ye ain't got none ye kin take mine. It's pretty clean."

"No, thank you, I have a handkerchief."

In spite of the fact that Dick had evidently been used to certain luxuries, he made the best of the improvised bathroom. He washed his face and hands, drying them on a handkerchief of fine quality, at the sight of which Jimmy's eyes opened wider than ever.

"He sure is some rich guy," he said to himself. "Dere's somethin' queer about dis. But I'll git t' de bottom of it, er me name ain't Jimmy Small."

"Where's yer hat?" asked Jimmy of Dick when the washing operations were over.

"That's so. I must have had one."

"Maybe it's back in de box. I'll go look."

He came back in a few seconds with a soft hat and placed it on Dick's head. As he did so he uttered a cry of astonishment.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick.

"Say, no wonder yer mind went back on youse. Dere's a lump as big as a baseball on de back of yer cocoanut. Dat's what made youse fergit yer name, I guess."

Dick felt of the back of his head. Sure enough there was a large swelling there, and it was very painful.

"Who done it?" asked Jimmy.

"I can't remember."

"Dat's funny. If some bloke fetched me a swipe like dat you bet I'd remember it. But come on, we'd better be makin' tracks outer her, 'fore de watchman spots us. I don't want him t' disturb me bed. I might need it ag'in."

"Suppose we go and get some breakfast?" proposed Dick.

"I'm broke, I told youse."

"But I have money enough for both of us."

"Goin' t' stand treat?"

"Why not? It would be a small return for what you did for me."

"Aw, dat's nuttin'. Well, den, come on. I knows a good joint where it's cheap. Have a cigarette?"

It was all the newsboy had to offer, and he meant it well, as he held out the box to Dick.

"No, thank you," replied the other lad. "I don't smoke."

"I'll learn ye," proposed Jimmy generously, "It's easy, an' it's lots of sport."

"I don't think I care for it."

"I didn't needer, first. Made me sick. But I got used to it. Well, I'll light up."

"Before breakfast?"

"Sure. Den I won't be so hungry."

"Oh, don't be afraid of your appetite. I guess I have enough for breakfast for the both of us."

"Dat's all right," Jimmy assured him, "but if dat's all ye got, ye can't live long on it. What youse goin' t' do when dat's gone?"

"That's so; I hadn't thought of it. I wonder what I am going to do? It's queer, but I can't seem to remember anything."

"I guess it is queer. But say, don't worry. I'll look after youse until yer memory comes back."

"Suppose it never comes back?"

Dick looked worried. He was trying to recall something about himself, but it was hard work. Try as he did to think, he could recollect nothing but that his name was Dick.

"Well, no use lookin' fer trouble," remarked Jimmy. "Let's go eat, an' den we'll see what's best t' be done."

The two boys, so strangely contrasted, one evidently from a rich home, to judge by his clothes and manner, the other a gamin of the streets, passed out of the factory yard. As they went the watchman saw them.

"Here!" he called. "Where you fellows going?"

"We're goin' out," replied Jimmy. "Why, did youse want us?"

"You young rascals! You'd better go!" cried the man, shaking his fist at them. "If I catch you trying to sneak in here again after wood, I'll set the police after you."

"He don't know we've been in dere all night," said Jimmy with a chuckle to his companion. "Oh, I fooled him all right."

Jimmy led the way to a cheap restaurant he knew of, and though Dick shrank back a little, at the sight of the not very clean place, he went in, for he was very hungry. The two boys made a substantial meal, and Dick paid for it.

"How do you feel now?" asked Jimmy.

"A little better, but I'm rather weak; as if I'd been sick for quite a while."

"Youse don't look very well. What youse needs is a place where ye kin lay down. I know what t' do. Come along."

"Where?"

"To de lodgin'-house. I knows a feller what's got a room dere, an' maybe he'll let ye stay in it t'-day when he's out sellin' papes."

"What do you do for a living, Jimmy?"

"Me? Oh, I sell papes, too, when I got de chink t' buy 'em. I've got t' git a stake dis mornin' an' start in. But I'll take youse t' dat room first. Come on."

Dick, walking with rather trembling footsteps, followed Jimmy, who led the way to the Newsboys' Lodging House. He hoped he would be in time to find Frank Merton, for he had decided to appeal to him to take Dick Box in for a few days.

CHAPTER VI

JIMMY ACTS AS NURSE

Frank Merton was just coming down the steps of the Newsboys' Lodging House as Jimmy and Dick reached it.

"Hello, Jimmy," greeted Frank.

"Hello," was the answer. "Where youse goin'?"

"To work. I've got a job doing some gardening for a man over in Brooklyn."

"Dat's a good ways off."

"Yes, but it will pay me better than selling papers. He is one of my regular customers, and when he asked me if I knew any one who would do some work around the garden I offered myself. But why aren't you out with your papers, Jimmy?"

"No chink."

"I'll lend you some money."

"Never mind, Frank. I kin get staked easy enough. I'm goin' t' ask annudder favor of youse."

"What is it?"

"Here's a friend of mine, Dick Box, an' he ain't got no place t' stay. He's sick."

"Dick Box? That's a queer name."

"I give him de last name. Found him in me box," and Jimmy told the circumstances of discovering Dick. During this conversation Dick, who was growing quite pale, sat down on the steps of the building.

"What do you want me to do, Jimmy?" asked Frank.

"I t'ought mebby ye'd let him stay in yer room wid youse fer a day or so, till he's strong. Dat blow he got on his cocoanut sort of knocked him out."

"Of course I will. You came at just a lucky time."

"How's dat?"

"Why, I'm going to stay over in Brooklyn for several days. The gentleman I am to work for is going to allow me to sleep in a spare room while I am weeding and fixing up his garden. I will not need my room, and you and Dick can use it just as well as not."

"Say, dat's de stuff!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Dat's all to de merry. Kin he go right up?"

"Yes, here is my key, and I'll explain to Mr. Snowden, the manager. You had better stay with Dick, Jimmy. He doesn't look well."

"I guess he ain't. I'll look out fer him. Say, Frank, ye're a good feller. I'll pay youse back some day."

"I'm not doing this for pay, Jimmy. Perhaps I will be in trouble myself, some time, and I will want help."

"Well, if youse does, jest call on yours truly," said Jimmy earnestly.

Matters were soon explained to the manager, who agreed to let Jimmy and Dick stay in Frank's room during the time he was away. At first Dick insisted on using what little money he had to hire a place, but Jimmy pointed out that, as a strange lad in a big city and sick as he was, he would need all the change he had.

"All right," agreed Dick wearily, for his head was aching greatly.

Frank and Jimmy put him in bed, after he had undressed, and then Frank had to go.

"Perhaps I'd better leave you some money," proposed Frank to Jimmy. "You might have to call a doctor."

"Say, youse must be rich," spoke Jimmy.

"No, but I have a few dollars saved up. You are welcome to some if you need it for Dick."

"Oh, I kin earn plenty, if I once git staked t' some coin fer papes," announced the young newsboy.

"Then let me stake you."

"I have some money left," murmured Dick. "Take that, Jimmy, and buy your papers. I'll not need it."

"Youse can't tell about dat. But I kin double it in a little while, if business is good."

"You had better let me loan you some," proposed Frank.

"No. I'll take his," decided Jimmy. "If he hasn't any room rent t' pay he'll not need any chink right away, an' I'll have some by t'-night. Much obliged, Frank."

"You had better stay here with him to-night," suggested Frank. "The room is big enough for two, and you are welcome to use it."

"T'anks. Mebby I will. But ye'd better skip over t' Brooklyn now, or youse might lose yer job."

"That's so. Do you think he'll be all right?"

"I guess so. He looks pretty sick, though."

"Oh, I'll be all right in a little while," murmured Dick, but the sight of his pale face, with the long red cut on the forehead, did not seem to bear out his words.

However, as Frank could do no particular good, and as he knew he was needed in Brooklyn, he left, bidding the two boys good-by.

"You needn't stay, Jimmy," said Dick. "Take my money, go out, and buy some papers."

"All right. I'm only jest borrowin' it, ye know. I'll pay youse back t'-night."

"That's all right."

Dick spoke in a very faint voice. His face became paler than ever, and his breathing was so strange that Jimmy became alarmed.

"Maybe he's dyin'," he thought. "Guess I'll tell de manager."

The head of the lodging-house came in response to the summons of the newsboy and looked at Dick.

"He ought to have a doctor," Mr. Snowden said. "I'll call in the district doctor."

This was a physician, paid by the city, to look after the poor, and he soon came in and examined Dick.

"The boy is suffering from shock," he said. "He needs rest and quiet, and some simple medicine. He'll be all right in a day or so."

"Will his memory come back?" asked Jimmy.

"I think so – yes. It is only gone temporarily."

He left some medicine for Dick, after giving him the first dose.

"Now I am up against it," remarked Jimmy to the manager, as the physician went away.

"What's the matter?"

"Why, I've got t' stay an' take care of him, an' I don't see how I'm goin' t' sell me papes."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, don't let that worry you. I think he'll be all right for a while, and I'll look in every hour or so. You go ahead and sell your papers."

The manager was a kind-hearted man and did all he could to help the boys.

"Dat'll be de stuff!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I'll hustle out, an' git t' work. I'll be nurse t' him t'-night. He's a queer kid, an' I'd like t' find out who he is an' where he come from."

"Probably you will, when he gets better," said the manager. "But you'd better hurry out now, if you expect to sell any extras to-day."

Taking a dollar of Dick's money to buy papers with, Jimmy started off. It was a good day for news, there being a number of sensational happenings and every one seemed to want to read about them. Jimmy sold more papers than he had disposed of before in a long time.

"Guess Dick Box must have brought me luck back t' me," he thought. "All de same, I'd like t' git hold of Mike Conroy an' see if he robbed me."

But the bully kept out of Jimmy's way, or else the latter did not see the youth whom he suspected of picking his pocket.

At noon time, having made a dollar and seven cents profit, Jimmy got some dinner and then hurried to the lodging-house to inquire about Dick, as, already, he felt a strong liking for the boy whom he had befriended.

"He's sleeping quietly," said the manager. "I think he is better. Don't worry about him. I'll look after him the rest of the day and you can take charge at night."

The afternoon was always a good time for Jimmy, as the extras were out then and were in great demand. He took his place at his old corner, determined not to leave it, to give Bulldog or any other of the boys a chance to take it away from him. He made arrangements with a bootblack to go after another supply of papers for him, when he sold out, and thus was able to maintain his place.

Toward the close of the day Bulldog appeared with a big bundle of papers under his arm. He intended to establish himself at Broadway and Barclay Street, but, fortunately, a policeman happened to be standing there when he came up and he dared not drive Jimmy away with the officer looking on.

"Dis is de time I fooled youse!" exclaimed Jimmy, as he shook his fist at Bulldog, behind the policeman's back. "Youse dasn't bodder me now."

"Wait till I catch ye!" threatened Bulldog, as then he moved on up Broadway, calling:

"Wuxtry! Wuxtry!"

Jimmy was soon sold out, and, having made nearly two dollars that day, something very unusual for him, but due to the extraordinary demand for papers, he returned to the lodging-house.

"Well, how is he?" he asked the manager.

"A little better, I think. I was up a while ago and he was asking for you."

"Here's where I play bein' nurse," announced Jimmy with a smile.

He found Dick awake and feeling much better. His head no longer ached.

"Kin youse remember who ye be now?" asked Jimmy.

"Not in the least," replied Dick with a sad smile. "It is as much a mystery as ever."

CHAPTER VII

JIMMY CONSIDERS MATTERS

Jimmy was quite disappointed. He had expected that, when Dick felt better, his memory would return, so that the boy could tell something about himself. Now, evidently, this was not to be.

"How did you make out to-day?" asked the lad in bed.

"Fine! Crimps! But everybody on de street seemed t' want a paper. Have a cigarette? I bought a new pack. Blowed meself on account of me good luck."

"No, I don't smoke. I shouldn't think you would."

"Why not? All de fellers does. It's sporty. Say, here's yer dollar back."

"Don't you need it?"

"Naw. I got plenty now. I'll make more t'-morrow."

"Then keep it to pay for what you have done for me."

"Not much! What d' youse t'ink I am? I'm a friend of yourn, an' I'm takin' care of ye; see?"

"Yes, but it costs money."

"Well, when I ain't got none I'll borrow some from youse. Now it's time fer yer medicine."

Dick took it, and soon afterward fell into a heavy doze. Jimmy went out, got some supper, and, returning, stretched out on the floor and was soon asleep.

Dick did not awaken until morning, and, when he saw the lad on the floor, he gave such an exclamation of surprise that Jimmy awoke.

"What's de matter?" he asked. "Feel worse?"

"No. But the idea of you sleeping on the floor, and me taking up the whole bed! It isn't right. Why didn't you wake me up and make me shove over?"

"Aw, I like sleepin' on de floor. It's like bein' in a hotel, after a night in me box. I'm all right. Feel hungry?"

"A little. I am much better than I was."

"T'ink of yer name yet?"

"No," and Dick shook his head, smiling a little sadly. "I can't seem to remember anything," he went on. "Perhaps, when this lump on my head goes down more, I can do better."

"Well, never mind," answered Jimmy cheerfully. "Youse kin have all de time youse wants."

"I wish I could get up, and help you," proposed Dick. "I think I am well enough."

"No, ye don't!" exclaimed Jimmy. "If youse gits up now youse'll have a perhaps, an' den where'll ye be?"

"A 'perhaps'?" repeated Dick, with a puzzled air.

"Yep. What sick folks gits when dey gits up too quick."

"Oh, you mean a relapse."

"Yep. Dat's it. It's de same t'ing. Now de t'ing fer youse t' do is t' lay quiet. I kin make enough money fer both of us, fer a while yet."

"But I want to help."

"Well, maybe when youse gits well I'll take ye in partnership," proposed Jimmy, with an air as if he was a millionaire.

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