

Bangs John Kendrick

Half-Hours with Jimmieboy



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I.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT JIMMIEBOY'S

It had been a long and trying day to Jimmieboy, as December 24th usually is to children of his age, who have great expectations, and are more or less impatient to have them fulfilled. He had been positively cross at supper-time because his father had said that Santa Claus had written to say that a much-desired velocipede could not be got down through the chimney, and that he thought Jimmieboy would have to wait until the chimneys had been enlarged, or his papa had built a new house with more commodious flues.

"I think it's just too bad," said Jimmieboy, as he climbed into bed an hour later. "Just because those chimneys are small, I can't have a philocipede, and I've been gooder than ever for two weeks, just to get it."

Then, as his nurse extinguished the lamp and went into the adjoining room to sew, Jimmieboy threw himself back upon his pillow and shed a tear. The tear crept slowly down over his cheek, and was about to disappear between his lips and go back again to where it had started from, when a voice was heard over by the fire-place.

"Can you get it down?" it said.

Jimmieboy sat up and peered over toward the spot whence the voice came, but could see nothing.

"No. The hind wheels won't go through the chimney-pot, and even if they would, it wouldn't do any good. The front wheel is twice as big as the hind ones," said another voice, this one apparently belonging to some one on the roof. "Can't you get it in through the front door?"

"What do you take me for – an expressman?" cried the voice at the fire-place. "I can't leave things that way. It wouldn't be the proper thing. Can't you get a smaller size through?"

"Yes; but will it fit the boy?" said the voice on the roof.

"Lower your lantern down here and we'll see. He's asleep over here in a brass bedstead," replied the other.

And then Jimmieboy saw a great red lantern appear in the fire-place, and by its light he noticed a short, ruddy-faced, merry-eyed old gentleman, with a snowy beard and a smile, tip-toeing across the room toward him. To his delight he recognized him at once as Santa Claus; but he didn't know whether Santa Claus would like to have him see him or not, so he closed his eyes as tightly as he could, and pretended to be asleep.

"Humph!" ejaculated Santa Claus, as he leaned over Jimmieboy's bed, and tried to get his measure by a glance. "He's almost a man – must be five years old by this time. Pretty big for a small velocipede; still, I don't know." Here he scratched his beard and sang:

"If he's too large for it, I think,
'Twill be too small for him,
Unless he can be got to shrink
Two inches on each limb."

Then he walked back to the fire-place and called out, "I've measured."

"Well, what's the result?" queried the voice on the roof.

"Nothing,' as the boy said when he was asked what two plus one minus three amounted to. I can't decide. It will or it won't, and that's all there is about it."

"Can't we try it on him?" asked the voice up the chimney.

"No," returned Santa Claus. "That wouldn't prove anything; but we might try him on it. Shall I send him up?"

"Yes," came the voice from above, much to Jimmieboy's delight, for he was quite curious to see what was going on up on the roof, and who it was that owned the other voice.

In a moment Jimmieboy found himself in Santa Claus's arms, cuddled up to the warm fur coat the dear old gentleman wore, in which position he was carried up through the chimney flue to the roof. Then Jimmieboy peeped out between his half-opened eyelids, and saw, much to his surprise, that instead of there being only one Santa Claus, there were two of them.

"Oh dear!" he said in astonishment; "I didn't know there were two of you."

Both the Santas jumped as if some one had let off a cannon cracker under their very noses.

"Well, I declare!" said the one that had carried Jimmieboy up through the chimney. "We're discovered. Here I've been in this business whole centuries, and I've never been discovered before."

"That's so," assented the other. "We know now how America must have felt when Columbus came sailing in. What'll we do about it?"

"We'll have to take him into partnership, I guess," rejoined the first. "It'll never do in this world not to. Would you like to be one of our concern, Jimmieboy?"

"Oh, indeed I would," said Jimmieboy.

"Well, I say we let him help us this time anyhow," said the roof Santa Claus. "You're so fat, I'm afraid you can't get down some of these small chimneys, and Jimmieboy is just about the right size."

"Good scheme," said the other; "but he isn't dressed for it, you know."

"He can get a nice black soot down in the factory chimney," said the roof Santa Claus, with a wink.

"That's so; and as the factory fires are always going, it will be a nice warm soot. What do you say, Jimmieboy?" said the other.

"It's lovely," replied the boy. "But how did there come to be two of you?"

"There had to be," said the first Santa Claus Jimmieboy had seen. "The world is growing so fast that my work has nearly doubled in the last twenty years, so I had to get an assistant, and he did so well, I took him into partnership. He's my brother."

"And is his name Santa Claus, too?" asked Jimmieboy.

"Oh no, indeed. His name is Marmaduke. We call him Marmy for short, and I can tell you what it is, Jimmieboy,

"He is as fine a fellow
As ever you did spy;
He's quite as sweet and mellow,
Though not so fat as I."

"And that's a recommendation that any man has a right to be proud of," said Marmy Claus, patting himself on the back to show how proud he felt. "But, Santa, we must be off. It would not do for the new firm of Santa, Marmy, and Jimmie Claus to begin business by being late. We've got to leave toys in eighteen flat-houses, forty-two hotels, and an orphan asylum yet."

"That's a fact," said Santa, jumping into the sleigh and grasping the reins. "Just help Jimmieboy in here, Marmy, and we'll be off. We can leave his things here on our way back."

Then, before he knew how it happened, Jimmieboy found himself wrapped up warmly in a great fur coat, with a seal-skin cap on his head, and the dearest, warmest ear-tabs over his ears, sitting in the middle of the sleigh between the two huge, jolly-faced, members of the Claus family. The long

lash of the whip snapped in the frosty air, at the sound of which the reindeer sprang forward and dragged the toy-laden cutter off on its aerial flight.

At the start Santa drove, and Marmy prepared the toys for the first little boy they were to visit, handing Jimmieboy a lot of sugar-plums, to keep him from getting hungry, before he began.

"This is a poor sick little fellow we are going to see first," he said. "He wanted a set of choo-choo cars, but we can't give them to him because the only set we have is for you, Jimmieboy. Your application came in before his did. I hope he won't be disappointed, though I am afraid he will be. A fish-pond isn't half so much fun as a set of choo-choo cars."

"That's so," said Jimmieboy. "But, Mr. Marmy, perhaps, if it's going to make him feel real bad not to get them – maybe – perhaps you might let him have the cars. I don't want them too much." This wasn't quite true, but Jimmieboy, somehow or other, didn't like to think of the little sick boy waking up on Christmas day and not finding what he wanted. "You know, I have one engine and a coal car left of my old set, and I guess maybe, perhaps, I can make them do," he added.

Marmy gave the little fellow an affectionate squeeze, and said: "Well, if you really feel that way, maybe we had better leave the cars there. Eh, Santa?"

"Maybe, perhaps," said Santa.

And it so happened; and although he could not tell exactly why, Jimmieboy felt happier after leaving the cars at the little sick boy's house than he ever thought he could be.

"Now, Jimmieboy," said Santa, as Marmy took the reins and they drove off again, "while Marmy and I are attending to the hotels and flat-houses, we want you to take that brown bag and go down the chimney of the orphan asylum, and leave one toy for each little child there. There are about a hundred little orphans to be provided for."

"What's orphans?" asked Jimmieboy.

"Orphans? Why, they are poor little boys and girls without any papas and mammas, and they all have to live together in one big house. You'll see 'em fast asleep in their little white cots when you get down the chimney, and you must be very careful not to wake them up."

"I'll try not to," said Jimmieboy, softly, a lump growing up in his throat as he thought of the poor children who had no parents. "And I'll make sure they all get something, too."

"That's right," said Marmy. "And here's where they live. You take the bag now, and we'll let you down easy, and when we get through, we'll come back for you."

So Jimmieboy shouldered the bag full of toys, and was lowered through the chimney into the room where the orphans were sleeping. He was surprised to find how light the bag was, and he was almost afraid there would not be enough toys to go around; but there were, as he found out in a moment. There were more than enough by at least a dozen of the most beautiful toys he had ever seen – just the very things he would most have liked to have himself.

"I just guess I'll give 'em one of these things apiece, and keep the extra ones, and maybe perhaps they'll be for me," he said.

So he arranged the toys quietly under the stockings that hung at the foot of the little white beds, stuffing the stockings themselves with candies and apples and raisins and other delicious things to eat, and then sat down by the fire-place to await the return of Santa Claus and Santa's brother Marmy. As he sat there he looked around the dimly lighted room, and saw the poor thin white faces of the little sleeping orphans, and his heart stirred with pity for their sad condition. Then he looked at the bag again, and saw the extra dozen toys that were so pleasing to him, and he wondered if it would make the orphans happier next morning if they should wake and find them there, too. At first he wasn't sure but that the orphans had enough; and then he thought of his own hamper full of dolls, and dogs, and tin soldiers, and cars, and blocks, at home, and he tried to imagine how much fun he could get out of a single toy, and he couldn't quite bring himself to believe that he could get much.

"One toy is great fun for an hour," he said to himself, "but for a year, dear me! I guess I won't keep them, after all. I'll just put them in the middle of the room, so that they'll find them in the

morning, and maybe perhaps – Hello!" he added, as he took the extra toys out of the bag; "they were for me, after all. They've got my name on 'em. Oh, dear! isn't it love – I don't know, though. Seems to me I'd better leave them here, even if they are for me. I can get along without them because I have a papa to play with, and he's more fun than any toy I ever had; and mamma's better'n any doll baby or choo-choo car I ever saw. Yes, I will leave them."

And the little fellow was true to his purpose. He emptied the bag to the very last toy, and then, hearing the tinkling bells of Santa's sleigh on the roof again, he ran to the chimney, and was hauled up by his two new friends to the roof.

"Why, you've left everything except the bag!" cried Marmy, as Jimmieboy climbed into the sleigh.

"Yes," said Jimmieboy, with a little sigh; "everything."

"But the bag had all your things in it, and we haven't a toy or a sugar-plum left for you," said Santa.

"Never mind," said Jimmieboy. "I don't care much. I've had this ride with you, and – al – together I'm – pret – ty well – satis – fi – "

Here the little assistant to the Claus brothers, lulled by the jingling of the bells, fell asleep.

It was morning when he waked again – Christmas morning – and as he opened his eyes he found himself back in his little crib, pondering over the mysterious experiences of the night. His heart was strangely light and happy even for him, especially when he thought of the little orphan children, and tried to imagine their happiness on waking and finding the extra toys – his toys – in addition to their own; and as he thought about it, his eyes wandered to the chimney-place, and an unexpected sight met his gaze, for there stood the much-wished-for velocipede, and grouped around it on the floor were a beautiful set of choo-choo cars exactly like those he had left with the sick boy, and a duplicate of every one of the extra toys he had left at the asylum for the orphans.

"They must have been playing a joke on me," he cried, in delighted tones, as he sprang out of bed and rushed over to where the toys lay. "I do believe they left them here while I was in the asylum. The – dear – old – things!"

And then Jimmieboy was able to measure the delight of the orphan children and the little sufferer by comparing it with his own; and when he went to bed that night, he whispered in his mamma's ear that he didn't know for sure, but he thought that if the orphans only had a papa and a mamma like his, they would certainly be the happiest little children in all the world.

II

THE DWARF AND THE DUDE GIANT

The day had not yet dawned, but Jimmieboy was awake – wide awake. So wide awake was he, indeed, that the small bed in which he had passed the night was not broad enough by some ten or twelve feet to accommodate the breadth of his wakefulness, and he had in consequence crawled over into his father's bed, seated himself as nearly upon his father's neck as was possible, and was vociferously demanding a story.

"Oh, wait a little while, Jimmieboy," said his father, wearily. "I'm sound asleep – can't you see?"

"Tell a story," said Jimmieboy, poking his thumbs into his father's half closed eyes.

The answer was a snore – not a real one, but one of those imitation snores that fathers of boys like Jimmieboy make use of on occasions of this sort, prompted no doubt by the maker's desire to convince a persistent enemy to sleep that his cause is hopeless, and of which the enemy is never to be convinced.

"Tell a story about a Giant," insisted Jimmieboy, a suggestion of tears in his voice.

"Oh, well," returned the sleepy father, sitting up and, rubbing his eyes vigorously in a vain effort to get all the sleepiness out of them. "If you must have it, you must have it, so here goes. Let's see – a story of a Giant or of a Dwarf?"

"Both," said Jimmieboy, placidly.

"Dear me!" cried his father. "I wish I'd kept quiet about the Dwarf. Well, once upon a time there was a Giant."

"And a Dwarf, too," put in Jimmieboy, who did not intend to be cheated out of a half of the story.

"Yes. And a Dwarf, too," said the other with a nod. "The Giant was a Dude Giant, who cared more for his hats than he did for anything else in the world. It was quite natural, too, that he should, for he had a finer chance to show them off than most people have, because he had no less than four heads, which is very remarkable for a Dude Giant, because dudes who are not giants very rarely have even one head worth mentioning. Hats were about the only things the Dude Giant cared for at all. He used to buy every style of head-gear he could find, and it took almost all of the salary he received at the Museum where he was on exhibition to pay for them; but he was particularly fond of silk hats. Of these he had twenty-eight; four for each day of the week, those for Sunday being especially handsome and costly.

"Now it happened that in the same exhibition with the Dude Giant there was a Dwarf named Tiny W. Littlejohn – W standing for Wee, which was his middle name. He was a very good-natured fellow, Tiny was, and as far as he knew he hadn't an enemy in the world. He was so very nice that everybody who came to the exhibition brought him cream cakes, and picture books, and roller skates, and other beautiful things, and nobody ever thought of going away without buying his photograph, paying him twenty-five cents extra for the ones with his autograph on, which his mother wrote for him. In this way the Dwarf soon grew to be a millionaire, while the Dude Giant squandered all he had on riotous hats, and so remained as poor as when he started. For a long time everything went smoothly at the Exhibition. There were no jealousies or quarrels of any sort, except between the Glass Eater and the man who made Glass Steamboats, and that was smoothed over in a very short time by the Glass Eater saying that the Glass-blower made the finest crystal pies he had ever tasted. But contentment and peace could not last forever in an establishment where one attraction was growing richer and richer every day as the Dwarf was, while another, the Dude Giant, was no better off than the day he joined the show, and when finally the Dwarf began to come every morning in a cab of his own, drawn by a magnificent gray horse with a banged tail, and to dress better even than the

proprietor of the Museum himself, the Dude Giant became very envious, and when the Dude Giant gets envious he is a very disagreeable person. For instance, when no one was looking he would make horrible faces at Tiny, contorting his four mouths and noses and eight cheeks all at once in a very terrifying manner, and when he'd look cross-eyed at the Dwarf with all eight of his eyes poor Tiny would get so nervous that he would try to eat the roller skates and picture books, instead of the cream cakes people brought him, and on one occasion he broke two of his prettiest teeth doing it, which marred his personal appearance very much.

"Tiny stood it as long as he could, and then he complained to his friend, the Whirlwind, about it, and the Whirlwind, who was a very sensible sort of a fellow, advised him not to mind it. It was only jealousy, he said, that led the Dude Giant to behave that way, and if Tiny had not been more successful than Forepate – as the Dude Giant was called – Forepate wouldn't have been jealous, so that his very jealousy was an acknowledgment of inferiority. So Tiny made up his mind he wouldn't pay any attention to the Dude Giant at all, but would go right ahead minding his own business and making all the money he could.

"This made Forepate all the more angry, and finally he resolved to get even with the Dwarf in some other way than by making grimaces at him. Now, it happened that Forepate's place was over by a window directly opposite to where the Dwarf sat, and so, to get near enough to Tiny to put his scheme against him into execution, he complained to the manager that there was a terrible draft from the window, and added that unless he could sit on the other side of the room he was certain he'd catch cold in three of his heads anyhow, if not in all of them.

"Very well,' said the manager. 'Where do you wish to sit?'

"You might put me next to Littlejohn, over there,' said the head with red hair.

"But,' said the manager, 'what shall we do with that stuffed owl with the unicorn's horns?'

"Put him by the window,' said another of the Dude Giant's heads.

"Yes,' said the third head. 'No draft in all the world could give a stuffed owl a cold.'

"That's so,' replied the manager. 'We'll make the change right off.'

"And then the change was made, though Tiny did not like it very much.

"To disarm all suspicion, the Dude Giant was very affable to the Dwarf for a whole week, and to see him talking to Tiny no one would have suspected that he hated him so, which shows how horribly crafty he was. Finally the hour for his revenge arrived. It was Monday morning, and Forepate and Tiny had taken their places as usual, when, observing that no one was looking, Forepate took his biggest beaver hat and put it over Tiny, completely hiding him from view. Poor Tiny was speechless with rage, and so could not cry out. Forepate kept him under his hat all day, and whenever any one asked where Littlejohn was, one of his heads would say, 'Alas! Poor Tiny, he has mysteriously disappeared!' And another head would shake itself and say 'Somebody must have left the door open and the wind must have whisked the dear little fellow out into the cold, cold world.' Then the other two heads would blubber, at which the Dude Giant would take out his handkerchiefs and wipe his eight eyes and shake all over as if he were inconsolable, and Tiny, overhearing it all, grew more and more speechless with indignation.

"That night, of course, Forepate had to release him, and Tiny hurried away fairly howling with anger. When he arrived at home he told his mother how he had been treated and how he had been done out of a whole day's cream cakes and picture books and roller skates, and she advised him to go at once to the Whirlwind and confide his woe to him, which he did.

"Forepate ought to be ashamed of himself,' said the Whirlwind, when Tiny had told his story.

"But he never does what he ought to do unless somebody makes him,' said Tiny, ruefully. 'Can't we do something to make him ashamed of himself?'

"Well, I'll see,' said the Whirlwind, with a shake of his head that meant that he intended to do something. 'What does the Dude Giant do with himself on Sundays?'

"Shows off his best hats on Fifth avenue," returned the Dwarf.

"Very well then, I have it,' said the Whirlwind. 'Next Sunday, Tiny, we'll have our revenge on Forepate. You stand on one of the stoops at the corner of Fifth avenue and Thirty-fourth street at midday, and you'll see a sight that will make you happy for the rest of your days.'

"So, on the following Sunday the Dwarf climbed up on one of the front stoops on Fifth avenue, near Thirty-fourth street, and waited. He hadn't been there long when he saw Forepate striding down the avenue dressed in his best clothes, and wearing upon his heads four truly magnificent beavers, which he had just received from London, and of which he was justly proud.

"I wonder where the Whirlwind is,' thought the Dwarf, looking anxiously up and down the avenue for his avenger. 'I do hope he won't fail.'

"Hardly were the words out of his mouth when Forepate reached the crossing of Thirty-fourth street, and just as he stepped from the walk into the street, bzoo! along came the Whirlwind, and off went Forepate's treasured hats. One hat flew madly up Fifth avenue. A second rolled swiftly down Fifth avenue. A third tripped merrily along East Thirty-fourth street, while the fourth sailed joyously into the air, struck a lamp-post, and then plunged along West Thirty-fourth street. And then! Dear me! What a terrible thing happened! It was perfectly awful – simply dreadful!"

"Hurry up and tell it," said Jimmieboy, jumping up and down with anxiety to hear what happened next.

"Then," said his papa, "when the Dude Giant saw his beloved hats flying in every direction he howled aloud with every one of his four voices, and craned each of his necks in the direction in which it's hat had flown.

"Then the head with the auburn hair demanded that the Giant should immediately run up Fifth avenue to recover its lost beaver, and the giant started, but hardly had he gone a step when the head with the black hair cried out:

"No! Down Fifth avenue after my hat.'

"Not at all!' shrieked the head without any hair. 'Go east after mine.'

"Well, I guess not!' roared the head that had curly hair. 'He's going west after mine.'

"Meanwhile the Giant had come to a stand-still. He couldn't run in any direction until his heads had agreed as to which way he should go, and all this time the beautiful hats were getting farther and farther away, and the heads more frantic than ever. For five full minutes they quarreled thus among themselves, turning now and then to peer weepingly after their beloved silk hats, and finally, with a supreme effort, each endeavored to force the Giant in the direction it wished him to go, with the result that poor Forepate was torn to pieces, and fell dead in the middle of the street."

Here papa paused and closed his eyes for a minute.

"Is that all?" queried Jimmieboy.

"Yes – I believe that's all. The Dude Giant was dead and the Dwarf was avenged."

"And what became of Tiny?" asked Jimmieboy.

"Oh, Tiny," said his father, "Tiny – he – he laughed so heartily at the Dude Giant's mishap that he loosened the impediment to his growth, – "

"The what?" asked Jimmieboy, to whom words like impediment were rather strange.

"Why, the bone that kept him from growing," explained the story teller. "He loosened that and began to grow again, and inside of two weeks he was as handsome a six-footer as you ever saw, and as he had made a million and a half of dollars he resigned from the Exhibition and settled down in Europe for a number of years, had himself made a Grand Duke, and then came back to New York and got married, and lived happy ever after."

And then, as the getting-up bell rang down stairs, Jimmieboy thanked his father for the story and went into the nursery to dress for breakfast.

III.

JIMMIEBOY'S DREAM POETRY

If there is anything in the world that Jimmieboy likes better than custard and choo-choo cars, it is to snuggle down in his papa's lap about bedtime and pretend to keep awake. It doesn't matter at all how tired he is, or how late bedtime may on special occasions be delayed, he is never ready to be undressed and "filed away for the night," as his Uncle Periwinkle puts it.

It was just this way the other night. He was as sleepy as he possibly could be. The sandman had left enough sand in his eyes, or so it seemed to Jimmieboy, to start a respectable sea-beach, and he really felt as if all he needed to make a summer resort of himself was a big hotel, a band of music, and an ocean. But in spite of all this he didn't want to go to bed, and he had apparently made up his mind that he wasn't going to want to go to bed for some time to come; and as his papa was in an unusually indulgent mood, the little fellow was permitted to nestle up close under his left arm and sit there on his lap in the library after dinner, while his mamma read aloud an article in one of the magazines on the subject of dream poetry.

It was a very interesting article, Jimmieboy thought. The idea of anybody's writing poetry while asleep struck him as being very comical, and he laughed several times in a sleepy sort of way, and then all of a sudden he thought, "Why, if other people can do it, why can't I?"

"Why?" he answered – he was quite fond of asking himself questions and then answering them – "why? Because you can't write at all. You don't know an H from a D, unless there's a Horse in the picture with the H, and a Donkey with the D. That's why."

"True; but that's only when I'm awake."

"Try it and see," whispered the Pencil in his papa's vest pocket. "I'll help, and maybe our old friend the Scratch Pad will help too."

"That's a good idea," said Jimmieboy, taking the Pencil out of his papa's pocket, and assisting it to climb down to the floor, so that it could run over to the desk and tell the Scratch Pad it was wanted.

"Don't you lose my pencil," said papa.

"No, I won't," replied Jimmieboy, his eyes following the Pencil in its rather winding course about the room to where the desk stood.

"I have to keep out of sight, you know, Jimmieboy," the Pencil said, in a low tone of voice. "Because if I didn't, and your papa saw me walking off, he'd grab hold of me and put me back in his pocket again."

Suddenly the Pencil disappeared over by the waste-basket, and then Jimmieboy heard him calling, in a loud whisper: "Hi! Pad! Paddy! Pad-dee!"

"What's wanted?" answered the Pad, crawling over the edge of the desk and peering down at the Pencil, who was by this time hallooing himself hoarse.

"Jimmieboy and I are going to write some dream poetry, and we want you to help," said the Pencil.

"Oh, I'm not sleepy," said the Pad.

"Neither am I," returned the Pencil. "But that needn't make any difference. Jimmieboy, does the sleeping and dreaming, and you and I do the rest."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, then, I don't mind; but – er – how am I ever going to get down there?" asked the Pad. "It's a pretty big jump."

"That's so," answered the Pencil. "I wouldn't try jumping. Can't the Twine help you?"

"No. He's all used up."

"Then I have it," said the Pencil. "Put a little mucilage on your back and slide down. The mucilage will keep you from going too fast."

"Good scheme," said the Pad, putting the Pencil's suggestion into practice, and finding that it worked beautifully, even if it did make him feel uncomfortably sticky.

And then, arm in arm, they tip-toed softly across the room and climbed up into Jimmieboy's lap. So quietly did they go that neither Jimmieboy's mamma, nor his papa noticed them at all, as they might have had the conspirators been noisy, although mamma was reading and papa's head was thrown back, so that his eyes rested on the picture moulding.

"Here we are, Jimmieboy," said the Pad. "Pen here tells me you're going to try a little dream poetry."

"Yes," said Jimmieboy. "I am, if you two will help."

"Count on us," said the Pencil. "What do you do first?"

"I don't exactly know," said Jimmieboy. "But I rather think I take Pencil in my hand, Pad in my lap, and fall asleep."

"All right," said the Pad, lying flat on his back. "I'm ready."

"So am I," put in the Pencil, settling down between two of Jimmieboy's fingers.

"All aboard for sleep," said Jimmieboy, with a smile, and then he fell into a doze. In about two minutes he opened his eyes again, and found both Pad and Pencil in a great state of excitement.

"Did I write anything?" asked Jimmieboy, in an excited whisper.

"Yes," said the Pad. "You just covered me up with a senseless mass of words. This isn't any fun."

"No," said the Pencil. "It's all nonsense. Just see here what you've got."

Jimmieboy looked anxiously at the Pad, and this is what he saw:

I seen since,
memory's wrong,
They both dressed
couple walked

And straightway change
upstairs with me,
"I think it's
"If that's the case,"

catch the early in."
to leave the shop,
for it's pla
Polypop.

two weeks yesterday."
haven't uttered
Oh, Polypop, I
ersnee, "See here,

He didn't pay
moon was shining bright.
To see the
Polypop came down

"Dear me!" he said. "Why, that doesn't mean anything, does it?"

"No. There isn't much in dream poetry, I guess," said the Pad. "I'm going back home. Good-by."

"Oh, don't go," said the Pencil. "Let's try it again – just once more. Eh?"

"Very well," returned the Pad, good-naturedly, tearing off one of his leaves. "Go ahead, Jimmieboy."

And Jimmieboy dozed off again.

"Wake up, wake up!" cried the Pencil in about three minutes. "We've got something this time." But they were all disappointed, for, when they looked, all that they could see was this:

have not them
And if my not
were in chintz;
With that the along;

your vest."
For you to go
Replied best,
the Snickersnee,

And tra
I hadn't time
"My reason in;
"I know it," said the

Since
You one small cheer,
say,
Then quoth the Snick

his fee.
And as the
Snickersnee,
The one night,

"Rubbish!" said the Pad, indignantly. "There's two leaves of myself wasted now on your old dream poetry. I think that's enough. I'm off. Good-by."

"Don't be hasty, Pad," retorted the Pencil. "That's a great deal better than the other. Why, there's one part there with all the lines beginning with capitals, and when that happens it's generally a sign that there's poetry around."

"There isn't much there, though," said Jimmieboy, a little disappointed by the result. "I guess Pad's right. We'd better give it up."

"Not yet," pleaded the Pencil. "There's luck in odd numbers, you know. Let's try it just once more."

"Shall we, Jimmieboy?" asked the Pad.

"Yes. Let's," assented Jimmieboy, as he dropped off to sleep for the third time.

This time he must have slept five minutes. When he opened his eyes he saw the Pencil staring blankly at the Pad, on which was written nothing more than this curious looking formula:

2
2
—
4

"How aggravating!" said Jimmieboy.

"Abominable!" ejaculated the Pad.

"I believe it's a key to what has gone before," said the Pencil, shaking his rubber wisely. "Two and two make four – two and two make four. Ah! I know. You've got to put two and two together to make four. If we put those two leaves of nonsensical words together, maybe we'll have a poem. Let's try."

"It'll use me up, I'm afraid," sighed the Pad.

"Oh, no. It won't take more than a half of you," said the Pencil, putting the two leaves on which Jimmieboy had first written together.

"It looks like a poem," he said, when he had fitted the two together. "Let's see how it reads.

"I have not seen them since.
And if my memory's not wrong,
They both were dressed in chintz,
With that the couple walked along;"

"That doesn't mean a blessed thing," said the Pad.

"It's nonsense," said Jimmieboy.

"Just wait!" said the Pencil, beginning to read again:

And straightway change your vest."
For you to go upstairs with me,
Replied, "I think it's best
"If that's the case," the Snickersnee

And catch the early train."
I hadn't time to leave the shop
"My reason for it's plain;
"I know it," said the Polypop;

"Since two weeks yesterday."
You haven't uttered one small cheer
Oh, Polypop, I say,
Then quoth the Snickersnee, "See here,

He didn't pay his fee.
And as the moon was shining bright,
To see the Snickersnee,
The Polypop came down one night

"Ho!" jeered the Pad. "That's elegant poetry, that is. You might get paid five cents a mile for stuff like that, if you wanted to sell it and had luck."

"I don't care," said the Pencil. "It rhymes well."

"Oh, I know what's the matter," said Jimmieboy, gleefully. "Why, of course it's poetry. Read it upside down, and it's all right. It's dream poetry, and dreams always go the other way. Why, it's fine. Just listen:

"The Polypop came down one night

To see the Snickersnee,
And, as the moon was shining bright,
He didn't pay his fee."

"That is good," said the Pad. "Let me say the next:

"Then, quoth the Snickersnee, 'See here,
Oh, Polypop, I say,
You have not uttered one small cheer
Since two weeks yesterday.'"

"I thought it would come out right," said the Pencil. "The next two verses are particularly good, too:

"I know it,' said the Polypop;
'My reason for it's plain;
I hadn't time to leave the shop
And catch the early train.'

"If that's the case,' the Snickersnee
Replied, 'I think it's best
For you to go upstairs with me,
And straightway change your vest.'"

"Now altogether," cried the Pad, enthusiastically. "One, two, three!" And then they all recited:

"With that the couple walked along;
They both were dressed in chintz;
And if my memory's not wrong,
I have not seen them since."

"Hooray!" cried Jimmieboy, as they finished – so loudly that it nearly deafened the Pad, which jumped from his lap and scurried back to the table as fast as it could go.

"What's that cheer for?" asked papa, looking down into Jimmieboy's face, and grabbing the Pencil, which was on the point of falling to the floor.

"It's for Dream Poetry," murmured Jimmieboy, getting drowsy again. "I've just dreamed a lot. It's on the Pad."

"Indeed!" said papa, with a sly wink at mamma. "Let's get the Pad and read it."

The little fellow straightened up and ran across to the desk, and, grasping the Pad firmly in his hands, handed it to his father to read.

"H'm!" said papa, staring at the leaf before him. "Blank verse."

"Read it," said Jimmieboy.

"I can't to-night, my boy," he answered. "My eyes are too weak for me to see dream writing." For between you and me that was the only kind of writing there was on that Pad.

IV. A SUBTERRANEAN MUTINY

It seemed rather strange that it should have been left there, and yet Jimmieboy was glad that in grading his papa's tennis-court the men had left that bit of flat rock to show up on the surface of the lawn. It had afforded him no end of pleasure since he had first discovered it. As a make-believe island in a raging sea of grass, he had often used it to be cast away upon, but chiefly had he employed it as a vantage ground from which to watch his father and his father's friends at their games of tennis. The rock was just about large enough for the boy to sit upon and pretend that he was umpire, or, as his father said, mascot for his father's opponents, and it rarely happened that a game of tennis was played upon the court that was not witnessed by Jimmieboy seated upon his rocky coigne.

The strangest experience that Jimmieboy ever had with this bit of stone, however, was one warm afternoon last summer. It was at the drowsy period of the day. The tennis players were indulging in a game, which, to the little onlooker, was unusually dull, and he was on the point of starting off in pursuit of something, it mattered not what, so long as it was interesting enough to keep him awake, when he observed a most peculiar thing about the flat stone. It had unquestionably become transparent! Jimmieboy could see through it, and what he saw was of most unexpected quality.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated, "how very queer. This rock is made of glass."

Then he peered down through it, and saw a beautiful marble staircase running down into the earth, at the foot of which was a great door that looked as though it was made of silver, and the key was of gold. At the sides of the staircase, hanging upon the walls, were pictures of strange little men and women, but unlike the men and women in other pictures, they moved about, and talked, and romped, and seemed to enjoy themselves hugely. Great pictures were they indeed to Jimmieboy's mind, because they were constantly changing, like the designs in his kaleidoscope.

"I must get down there," he said, softly, to himself. "But how?"

As he spoke the door at the foot of the steps opened, and a small creature, for all the world like the goblin in Jimmieboy's fairy book, poked his head out. The goblin looked all about him, and then turning his eyes upward until they met those of the boy, he cried out:

"Hullo! Are you the toy peddler?"

"No," replied Jimmieboy.

"Then you are the milk broker, or the potato merchant, and we don't want any milk or any potatoes."

The goblin slammed the door when he had said this, and with such a bang that all the little people in the pictures ran to the edge of the frame and peered out to see what was the matter. One poor little fellow, who had been tending sheep in a picture half-way up the stairs, leaned out so far that he lost his balance and tumbled out head over heels. The sheep scampered over the hill and disappeared in the background of the painting.

"Poor little shepherd boy!" said Jimmieboy. "I hope you are not hurt!"

The shepherd boy looked up gratefully at the speaker, and said he wasn't, except in his feelings.

"Is there any way for me to get in there?" asked Jimmieboy.

"No, sir," said the shepherd boy. "That is, not all of you. Part of you can come in."

"Ho!" said Jimmieboy. "I can't divide myself up."

"Yes, you can," returned the shepherd boy. "It's easy enough, when you know how, but I suppose you don't know how, not having studied arithmetic. You can't even add, much less divide."

"Maybe you can tell me how," said Jimmieboy.

"Certainly, I can," said the shepherd boy. "The part of you that can come in is your eye, and your ear, and your voice. All the rest of you must stay out."

"But how do I get 'em in?" asked Jimmieboy.

"They are in now," said the other. "You can see me, you can hear me, and I can hear you."

"But I can't see what's beyond that door."

"Oh, we'll fix that," said the little shepherd. "I'll knock on the door, and when it is opened you can tell the goblin that you want to see what he's got, and he'll show it all to you if you tell him that your father is the man who didn't blast the rock out."

The shepherd boy then went softly down the stairs, knocked on the door, and before it was opened had flown back to his duties in the picture. Then, as he had intimated, the goblin opened the door again, and poking his head out as before, cried:

"Is that you, milk broker?"

"No," answered Jimmieboy. "I am the son of the man who didn't blast away the flat rock, and my eye and my ear and my voice want to come in."

"Why, certainly," said the goblin, throwing the door wide open. "I didn't know you were you. Let 'em walk right in."

Jimmieboy was about to say that he didn't know how his eye or his ear or his voice could walk anywhere, but he was prevented from so doing by the sudden disappearance of the staircase, and the substitution therefor of a huge room, the splendor of which was so great that it for a moment dazzled his eyes.

"Who comes here?" said a voice in the corner of the room.

"The eye and the ear and the voice of the son of the man who did not blast the flat stone," observed the goblin, and then Jimmieboy perceived, seated upon a lustrous golden throne, a shriveled-up dwarf, who looked as if he might be a thousand years old, but who, to judge from the crown he wore upon his head, was a king.

The dwarf was clad in garments of the richest texture, and his person was luminous with jewels of the rarest sort. As the goblin announced the visitor the king rose up, and descending from the throne, made a courtly bow to Jimmieboy.

"Thrice welcome, O son of the man who did not blast the flat rock," he said. "It is only fitting that one who owes so much to the father should welcome the eye and the ear and the voice of the son, for know, O boy, that I am the lord of the Undergroundies whose kingdom would have been shattered but for your father's kindly act in sparing it."

"I suppose that blasting the rock would have spoiled all this," said Jimmieboy's voice, as his eye took in the royal magnificence of the place, while to his ears came strains of soft and sweet music. "It would have been dreadful!"

"Much more dreadful than you imagine," replied the little king. "It would have worked damage that a life-time could not have repaired."

Then the king turned to a tall, pale creature in black who sat writing at a mahogany table in one corner of the throne room, and commanded him to recite into Jimmieboy's ear how dreadful it would have been.

"Compose, O laureate," he said to the tall, pale creature, "compose a song in which the dire effects of such a blast are fully set forth."

The laureate rose from his seat, and bowing low before the king and Jimmieboy's eye, began his song, which ran in this wise:

"A half a pound of dynamite
Set in that smooth, flat stone.
Our palace would quite out of sight
Most certainly have blown.

"It would have blown our window-panes

To high Gibraltar's ledge,
And all our streets and country lanes
It would have set on edge.

"It would have knocked our royal king
As far up as the moon;
Beyond the reach of anything —
Beyond the best balloon.

"It would have taken all our pears,
Our candy and our toys,
And hurled them where the polar bears
Indulge in horrid noise.

"It would have spoiled the music-box,
And ruined all our books —
Knocked holes in all our woolen socks,
And ruined thus their looks.

"'T would have destroyed our chandeliers,
To dough turned all our pie;
And, worst of all, my little dears,
It would have injured I."

"Is that dreadful enough?" asked the laureate, turning to the king.

"It suits me," said the king. "But perhaps our friend Jimmieboy would like to have it made a little more dreadful."

"In that case," said the laureate, "I can compose a few more verses in which the blast makes the tennis-court over us cave in and bury all the cake and jam we have in the larder, or if he thinks that too much to sacrifice, and would like a little pleasure mixed in with the terribleness, the cod-liver oil bottle might be destroyed."

"I wouldn't spoil the cake and jam," said Jimmieboy's voice, in reply to this. "But the cod-liver oil might go."

"Very well," said the laureate, and then he bowed low again and sang:

"But there is balm for our annoy,
For next the blast doth spoil
Six hundred quarts – O joy! O joy! —
Of vile cod-liver oil."

"I should think you would have liked that," said Jimmieboy's voice.

"I would have," said the king, "because you know the law of this country requires the king to consume a bottle of cod-liver oil every day, and if the bottles were all broken, perhaps the law, too, would have been crushed out of existence. But, after all, I'd rather be king with cod-liver oil than have my kingdom ruined and do without it. How would you like to see our gardens?"

"Very much," said Jimmieboy. "I'm fond of flowers."

The king laughed.

"What a droll idea," he said, turning to the laureate. "The idea of flowers growing in gardens! Write me a rhyme on the drollness of the idea."

The laureate sighed. It was evident that he was getting tired of composing verses to order. "I hear and obey," he replied, shortly, and then he recited as follows:

"To think of wasting: any time
In raising flowers, I think,
Is worse than writing nonsense-rhyme,
Or frying purple ink.

"It's queerer really than the act
Of painting sword-fish green;
Or sailing down a cataract
To please a magazine.

"Indeed, it really seems to me,
Who now am very old,
The drollest bit of drollery
That ever has been drolled."

"But what do you raise in your gardens?" asked Jimmieboy, as the laureate completed his composition.

"Nothing, of course," said the king. "What's a garden for, anyhow? Pleasure, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Jimmieboy's voice, "but –"

"There isn't any but about it," said the king. "If a garden is for pleasure it must not be worked in. Business and pleasure are two very different things, and you cannot raise flowers without working."

"But how do you get pleasure out of a garden when you don't raise anything in it?"

"Aren't you dull!" ejaculated the king. "Write me a quatrain on his dullness, O laureate."

"Confound his dullness!" muttered the laureate. "I'm rapidly wearing out, poetizing about this boy." Then he added, aloud: "Certainly, your majesty. Here it is:

"He is the very dullest lad
I've seen in all my life;
For dullness he is quite as bad
As any oyster-knife."

"Is that all?" asked the king, with a frown.

"I'm afraid four lines is as many as I can squeeze into a quatrain," said the laureate, returning the frown with interest.

"Then tell this young man's ear, sirrah, how it comes that we get pleasure out of a garden in which nothing grows."

"If I must – I suppose I must," growled the laureate; and then he recited:

"The plan is thus, O little wit,
You'll see it in a minute;
We get our pleasures out of it,
Because there's none within it."

"That is very poor poetry, Laury!" snapped the king.

"If you don't like it, don't take it," retorted the laureate. "I'm tired of this business, anyhow."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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