

A Bo and a Bulldog

by Emmet F. Harte



"WHO'D HAVE THUNK IT? HAVE A PIECE OF PIE? IT'S PUMPKIN."

THE fact that I sat dozing in the shadow of a ramshackle corn-crib at York, Nebraska, does not signify that I was ditched, because I wasn't. I was doing window-glass signs at the time in that section of the State, and had cleaned up a very genteel little stake at that particular county seat.

Under such circumstances you'd think I would have bought a ticket for Grand Island, whither I was bound, and rode in on the red plush along with the law-abiding and otherwise uninteresting traveling public—but not me. A minion of the B. and M. once

swindled me out of two dollars due for arduous labor as a section-hand under the rules and regulations, down at Red Cloud.

In redress thereof I don't pay over no money of mine to that company for railroad fare. I bide my time until the effacing shadows of nightfall envelop the surroundings, and then effect a hiatus per the blind, the trucks, or the breeze-fanned Pullman-roof, and save my money.

Thus, true to conviction and unharassed by either hunger, conscience, or weather, I sat nodding until four hours should

elapse and the west-bound train should potter along as scheduled. There always intrudes a note of discord, however, into every serene and poetic languor of mine.

A local rattled in a while before sundown, a local pulled by an antiquated dinner-maker rigged with a blower, and they coughed, buzzed, and sputtered around there, switching up and down past my shed for half an hour, making much disturbance of my peace. Finding, finally, that I couldn't sleep, I sat up, looked about me and there, not ten feet away, I saw Fitz Souders in the company of a white bulldog, the two of them engaged in the eating of a pie.

I've known Fitzhugh Souders for years and years, but the bulldog was an entire stranger. Fitz is a bo of the unabashed stripe. A few of us pretend to have some means of support; he don't.

He's hobo, true to name and warranted, flotsam pure and simple, and not ashamed to approach the grandest dame that ever made swishing sounds along a cement sidewalk, in the garish light of high noon, to ask genially for a dime or a quarter. I threw in my clutch and honked over to renew affiliations.

"Well, well!" he said, in recognition. "Wich way, bo? Who'd have thunk it? Have a piece of pie? It's pumpkin."

"Thanks!" I said. "I'm headed for Grand Island. Where'd you get hold of the pup?"

"That," he remarked, "is another story. Sit down and make yourself at home. Happen to have any makings? Ah!—" a pause; silence broken by the snuffling of a nose, the hurried exhaust of the freight-engine kicking a car off some distance away, the crash of draw-heads when it hit a fellow victim, then Fitz struck a match, lit up, and resumed:

"He's an English bull; thoroughbred, pedigree from A to Izzard, with a line of ancestors to make our great American first

families sky-blue with envy. Look at him, don't he show up select?"

"He's stumbled into grievous bad company," I commented.

"True 'tis, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true," quoted Fitz, unruffled, "but it might be worse. In fact, it has been worse, as I was goin' to tell.

"You ought to seen the bunch that had him in tow when I got him. Box-car thieves, depot-sneaks, and suit-case-lifters, that was the kind of company he was in then; and a kick in the slats when he didn't wag his tail to suit; eh, Bench?"

The dog flicked his ears and turned an adoring eye in Fitz's direction.

"It was down in St. Jo," continued the narrator, "Jesse James's town; a tolerable—like village, with aspirations, and boastful of being the healthiest speck on the map, but smudged with some of the worst two-for-a-nickel thieves from Sioux City to St. Louis.

"I hung around there almost a week. The coppers are an easy-going lot of peace-promoters, having a grudge at only two kinds of people, namely, gun-tooters and lid-lifters.

"Once in a great while they catch a stick-up artist or a porch-climber; just to show their versatility; or a cycle-sleuth chases an automobile up a telephone-pole or into the river for exceeding six miles an hour; but, on the whole, St. Jo isn't boisterous.

"Its river-front and frame-shanty districts are, as I said before, pretty considerably frequented by a class of light-fingered gentry, however, who steal everything they can from the railroads, from the coal that scatters off in the yards, to the wheels off of the passenger-coaches. There was a regular gang operating in and around the place.

"They would secrete themselves into box cars of merchandise in the yards. Then when the train pulled out through the edge of town, they'd slide the door open and heave out

caddies of tobacco, cases of canned goods, cigars, tomato-catsup, shoes, bananas, kegs of bad booze, and bales of cotton piece, to be picked up by other members of the association who were waiting for that purpose, and hauled to town in a wagon.



"NOTHING BUT AN OLD WOMAN, BLIND IN ONE EYE."

"Easy, wasn't it? Huh! It was like gathering manna on a bumper-crop year of that commodity! It was a cinch!

"All this I found out later. I stumbled on the thing by accident—as good a way as any, I guess.

"I was loafing on a hickory settee opposite the baggage-room of the Union station, one dusk, arguing with myself whether to go to Omaha or K. C, when I saw a man frisk this pup here from the baggage-room and make his getaway without a soul seeing him but me, I do believe. The dog was tethered to the handle of a trunk by the door, and the party with the sticky fingers just sidled along, clipped the cord and slipped across the street between a trunk-van and a streetcar, leading the dog, ducked into a cross street, and did the vanishing skiddoo.

"I whipped up and took his trail. It wasn't hard to follow the guy; a blind man could have done it. He went toward the river a ways, then he turned and took down the

Terminal tracks along the bank.

"I kept him in sight until he finally went into a house somewhere down southeast of the bridge. Then I sized up the same as to locality and general aspects, so I'd be able to find it again if necessary.

"I went back the way I had come, concluding to stay over another night. The morning papers would probably have an ad in the Lost and Founds: 'Ten dollars reward for the return of a white bull pup and no questions asked,' which would look good to me.

"I had an inkling in my own mind as to what I'd do if such proved to be the case. While I was going along cogitating with myself about the matter. I fell in with another bo. He was a stranger to me, though he was evidently an old-timer in the profession, for he was seedy, sloppy, and shy several shaves.

" 'S'y, friend,' he said, 'c'd yeh stake meh to a match?' I could, would, and did. In return for the favor he asked about freight-trains, outgoing, north, east, south, and west. He wasn't seemingly particular about w'ich way he went.

"You've got me faded," I told him. "I only ride passengers. No freights for mine. I couldn't tell you within six hours of the leaving time of any one of them, because I don't know."

"That seemed to interest him considerably. He studied it over. Then we talked on a while about this, that, and the other, and the first thing I knew the man was pumping me.

"Quite a sweater he was, too; doing it in a roundabout way, mixed in with other conversation of no moment, and a few stories, strictly new, clean, and well told. As soon as I tumbled to the catechism game I played dead and told him the history of somebody else's life, acknowledging the same modestly as mine. We went over and sat on the river-bank and made friends each with each, quite chummy and good-humored, for two hours or

more.

"The upshot and outcome of my nice little story of hard luck, which he snaked out little by little, was that he told me his name and address, and also revealed his line of business. He was a 'Q.' detective. Andy Byers was his handle, and he needed some assistance, he said, to get a line on a bunch of box-car robbers who were doing a land-office business in that community.

"Night after night cars were broken into, either at the freight-houses or in the yards, and stuff of all kinds carried off. It was getting fierce—the company was getting about all they wanted of it.

"I suggested that maybe employees of the road themselves were doing the frisking ; but he rather thought not, as he said he had been watching the daily life and habits of every man and his family to the third and fourth generation, who ever even applied for a job with their company. No, he thought it was a gang of home-talent pilferers who did but little else and had it down to a fine system.

"What he wanted me to do was this: if I would beat my way back and forth, night after night, between St. Jo and Rushville on the south, and Amazonia on the north, keeping both eyes peeled for the thieves, it would give him more time to watch the yards.

"It was strictly a commission contract, he said; no catch-a the t'ief, no make-a the mon', but if I happened to get next to a clue that would lead to the identity of the rascals he'd undertake to say that the company would do the right thing by me.

"I didn't much like the idea of riding freights but there was nothing else for it, so I hired to him for a week and got my assignment—a train then making up in the lower yards for the Southwest. It was a clear, warm night—only three weeks ago, you know—we drilled over and took a prospect along the train for broken seals or suspicious characters loitering around, if we could find

any; at the same time keeping out of the sight of railroad employees.

"Everything looked all correct and regular. We examined every car; nothing doing.

"Byers told me where I could find him if anything turned up, and rambled for the Hannibal yards to inspect a train going out over there. I ensconced myself in an empty on a parallel track then, and did some heavy sleuthing.

"Fitz Souders, secret service! That was me. And, Aunt Annie! Didn't I have the good luck that night?

"Why, bo, it was all cut and hung on the line, for me! It was too-nice for anything.



"When the train started I slipped out of the empty and slid in under a car, and I'll make you a jurat that we didn't go a distance of twenty car lengths until a man hopped up out of the dark onto the very car I was stowed away under, and began to juggle with the door. By moving along the rods a few feet I could have reached out and grubbed him.

“He clung on while they were creeping out of the sidings, and then he drew up his legs and disappeared. I guessed he had got the door open and crawled inside. Offal business, wasn’t it?”

“All I had to do was watch out for the first package that bumped the ballast; if he threw anything out, get off and camp by it till somebody came after it, then see where it went. If he didn’t throw anything out, then I would simply go on and on to see what he did do. It was an easy voyage either way for Hawkshaw Souders.

“Along down the bottom, a little ways below the yard-limit post, my pirate began to get busy. He heaved out a box of canned tomatoes or lemon extract or something, and the minute I heard it bump the gravel I gathered myself together to follow it.

“Ever get out from under a box car going a pretty good hickory? It’s hard on the features. I guess that train wasn’t running over twelve or fifteen miles an hour, as they had a fair string of loads and only one engine, but I plowed up the road-bed with my nose just the same.

“I tried to light clear of the ballast and did, all spraddled out in the raspiest lot of weeds I ever mowed. Didn’t, break anything, though, by good fortune, so I crawled a little farther into the tall timbers and laid low.

“The pick-up party must have been ready and waiting, for it wasn’t more than five minutes before two fellows came sneaking along the side of the track looking for spoils. Hist-sh-sh! *Sherlock*, that was me! “D’rectly they came back carrying a box between ’em, and I slipped along behind on their trail.

“There was a wagon road a short distance back, and there they had a horse hitched to a delivery wagon, waiting. I burrowed under a near-by culvert and hid while they loaded up the rest of the stuff.

“The fellow who had thrown the loot out of the car evidently got off himself with

the last box, for there were three of them when they finally drove off. I hope he had better luck getting off than I did. If he didn’t lie lost some hide, I’ll bet.

“I loped out after them when they started, keeping far enough behind to be out of sight in the darkness and close enough to not lose them. They didn’t go up through South Town; they went round back of the packing-houses along a by-road through the river-bottoms, striking the end of South Fourth Street. We didn’t meet very many people, and it was dark enough so that what few we did meet didn’t likely see me, and I never lost that grocery wagon not for one minute.

“Try dog-trotting six miles over a country road once. Phew! *Hawkshaw*, was pretty much all in when they landed up at last in an alley quite a ways up in the village, but it was great sleuthing for an amateur. Fine!

“And say! Where do you think they stopped? It was the same place the guy had sloped to with the white dog.

“I was just naturally too tired to wiggle my little finger when I got that far, and the thought of drilling away beyond Sixteenth Street to see Byers, and report, was beyond me. I couldn’t do it; at least, not then, and I didn’t have the price of a car ride.

“The chances were that he wouldn’t be there, anyhow. So I dragged myself over in the lee of a foundry or something close by, made me a bed on some scrap-iron and went to sleep.

“Did I sleep? Huh! It was sun-up when I woke up. I had quite a nap, and I was so stiff and sore that I squeaked and whined in the joints like a load of wood in Arkansas.

“Aunt Annie! Railroad detecting is wearing on the human frame. I was flat broke and hungry as wolves and she-bears, but I crippled over to Byers’s boarding-house and they said he was there, but had gone to bed.

“I said I had important news from the front and demanded entrance. I suppose they

thought I was a Black-Hand envoy from the looks of me, but they finally permitted me to go up to his room. Byers, himself, didn't know me at first, as I had disguised myself in the face considerably when I fell off the train, but he got a shove on himself when he heard me tell my little story.

"I related the whole thing, including the stealing of the dog. w'ich he hadn't heard about before, and it made a hit with him throughout.

"That's the checker!' he said, rolling out and getting into his clothes. 'We'll go right over and pinch the whole works. You're there in a thousand different places. Bully!'

"Here now,' I said, somewhat raucous, 'what do you think I am? A tin soldier? How much breakfast do you think I've had? And how much money do you think I've got?' I turned my pockets inside out to demonstrate my embarrassed condition, financially, and he rallied like a man coining out of a stage faint.

"Etta,' he bellowed down the stairway, 'get this man a square meal on the table about as quick as you ever did anything in your life, and send the kid to the saloon after a can.' That was sounding something more like it, then he said to me:

"By George, I never thought but what you'd had your breakfast. You'll have to excuse me this time.'

"I couldn't do otherwise, and I'll let you guess what I did to that breakfast; and that bucket of beer. Afterward I felt different.

"We took a car for police headquarters and got a couple of plain-clothes cops to help round-up the pirates. I piloted the party to the place, and we descended from all directions at once on the said stronghold of lawlessness.

"What do you think we captured? Huh! Nothing but an old woman, blind in one eye, who took on most pitiful; said she was. a poor widow and had only one son, who worked for the street-railway company, laying

track.

"We ransacked the house from cellar to shingles, and the only thing we found was the white bulldog tied in the coal-shed. He was black and blue from kicks and cuffs, and the old woman said he had come there several days before as a stray.

"Her son wanted to keep him for a watch-dog, she said, as they'd been losing their coal out of the shed. The whole neighborhood gathered around, as is usual, and testified to the old woman's tale and said slighting things about the mullet-headed minions of the law in general for descending on a poor widow woman in any such fashion.

"The plain-clothes men began to look sideways at me like they thought I was a candidate for the insectorium, and if it hadn't been for the bulldog it wouldn't have taken much argument to convince me I'd dreamed the whole plot myself. There wasn't a thing the least bit suspicious, even.

"Anyway, we took the dog and went over to the Union Station. Had they lost a white bull pup? You bet they had. "He belonged to Miss Gladiola Godiva, of the Blue-bell Burlesquers, and, according to reports already received, there had been a row when he showed up missing. He was a registered dog, with a pedigree as long as a dry Sunday; worth mints of money, they said, and were awful much obliged for him being returned.

"But the cops said no; he might be needed for evidence against the thieves, so they'd better take him to the station and consult the chief first. In the meantime the railroad company could wire the young lady and let her know about it—if they so desired; there wasn't any harm in that.

"On the way to the police-station, I made friends with the dog. It was a case of affinities with him and me; love at first sight.

"While the cops were out looking for the son that worked on the street railway,

Byers and I loafed around the station and I doctored the bulldog up with some liniment for his bruises, and rustled him some bones to gnaw. That's the way to get on the oozy side of man or beast; get 'em something to eat.



"HE DID IT SIMPLY TO GET SQUARR 'FOR A FEW KICKS!' HE'D RECEIVED PREVIOUSLY."

"When they finally brought in the fellow we were waiting for, the white dog and I were side partners. You ought to have seen him growl and show his teeth at the guy. It was plain that he didn't like him.

"As for me, I'd never seen the fellow before. He wasn't one of the three in the grocery wagon, I could swear to that; neither was he the rooster that swiped the dog from the baggage-room. I told them so as soon as they brought him in.

"Under the circumstances they couldn't do anything else but turn the fellow loose after asking him a few questions. His

version of how he got the dog tallied with his mother's story straight enough, so-they let him go.

"Byers hadn't been mixed up in it at all while they had the man under fire. He'd kept himself out of sight; so when the fellow walked out of the station, Byers sauntered after him, giving the rest of the push the wink.

"As for me, I didn't know just exactly what to do next myself. It was considerably past eat-time; I was broke, and nobody seemed to be falling over themselves to invite me out to lunch.

"I was getting more disgusted every minute. Finally I got up to take a saunter out into the residence district on a small matter of business, when I heard the desk-cop talking to somebody over the phone.

"Says he don't want the dog, eh? Oh, her husband! I see. D'you fellows want him down there? No; we've got no use for him. I don't know about that. No. Yes. Well, all right.' Then he turned around to me and, seeing I was interested, said:

"They got a wire from that showgirl's husband, and he says he's glad the dog's lost; hopes he'll stay lost. Says his wife hasn't got the slightest use for a dog anyhow, and he's more bother than he's worth.

"He asks us to ditch him on the quiet, and he'll consider it a favor. The baggage outfit don't want him, nor anybody around here, so I guess it's the soap grease for his.'

"Give him to me,' I said. 'I'll take him.'

"Sure thing,' he said gladly. 'Take him along and welcome.' And that's how I happened to have another mouth to feed in my family.

"Bench was the name engraved on his collar, and he wagged his piece of a tail when I called him by it, and went with me like he'd already made up his mind about the matter. We drifted out around town a while, acquiring thirty-five cents in real money during the same

by means of the usual confidences confided to the right parties. Some gave up easy, an' some didn't.

"Then we entered the odoriferous confines of a chile-bazaar, and once more stayed the maddening pangs. Somewhere along about six o'clock we ran across Byers.

"I've been looking all over town for you, man," he said. "Where've you been? How'd you vamose with the dog?"

"I told him how it was, and asked for news. Nothing doing.

"I followed that man all afternoon," he said; "and, by George, if he's crooked, he's a slick one. First he went home and had his dinner. He was still there when the one-o'clock whistles blew, so I supposed he wasn't going to work in the afternoon.

"I had it sized up that he'd slip some word to the gang, if he's mixed up in it in any way, so I hung around in the neighborhood. He came out finally and slouched over to Sixth Street to a saloon, where he loafed the rest of the time, playing cards with the bunch of rounders that hang out there; nothing suspicious about that. It looks like he's what he claims to be."

"You go ahead with your regular work around the yards," I said to Byers, "and I'll camp on the trail of these people. I've got nothing else to do. I know that's where the wagon stopped that night, at least."

"And, by the way," I mentioned casually, "you couldn't loan a poor devil a dollar, could you, till pay-day? This detecting business is the most appetizing line I've been in lately."

"I'll make it a five," he said, grinning; "and good-by, if I never see you again."

"I suppose he thought that, with that much money in my possession, I wouldn't lose any time catching a steamer for Europe or some other seaport for the idle rich.

"Good-by," I said. "Leave your address, so I can write you the particulars

when I jug the pirates."

"Bench is the boy that really did the work, though, and he did it simply to get square for a few kicks he'd received previously. That same night, about midnight, we two of the secret service were nosing around in the alley back of the place under suspicion, when Bench began to growl.

"He didn't bark, I should say not; he's got too good blood in him for that. He just bristled up his bristles and rumbled in his chest and prowled off up the alley.

"I chased along behind him, and three back yards away he slid under the fence and pounced onto a man who was drawing some water out of a well. There was a succession of noises, growls, curses, and grunts, and I hurried through the gate to pull the dog off.

"I thought he was overdoing the sleuthing business a little. Just then another guy came out of the kitchen door of the shanty, and in the light from a lamp inside, w'ich streamed out, I recognized him as one of the pirates in the wagon I'd followed up-town the night before.

"What do you think? Before I even stopped to consider the consequences, I bustled up and swung at the fellow's head; and I'll never tell the truth again as long as I live if I didn't catch him just right, and down he went like a log. I'd knocked him out.

"Aunt Annie! Wouldn't that give you a start? I didn't stop at that, though; I sailed right into the other one, and Bench and I between us had him down and begging for mercy in short order.

"He was a good deal too noisy about it, so I choked him till his tongue stuck out. I took it for granted that there wasn't any more of 'em in the house, or they'd have come out by that time; so between Bench and me we dragged and worried the guy into the kitchen, where the first thing I saw was a piece of rope clothes-line, with which I tied his hands and feet. Not until he was tied good and solid did

that persevering dog let up chewing on him either, and him bawling murder.

"Then I left Bench licking his chops and standing guard, while I went out and brought in the other victim. Him I roped up also, and the trick was done. Slick work, wasn't it? Hawkshaw Souders to the good! Modest blushes.



"The place was a two-room shack with not much furniture in it: a wooden bedstead, a table made out of a goods-box, a coal-oil lamp, and some rickety chairs. There was a thirty-two caliber revolver on the table, and what was left of a can of beer.

"I attended to both; then I searched the pirates. They didn't have much on them; some small change, pocket-knives, and makings for cigarettes.

"I was up against it, now after I'd caught the rascals. I was afraid to leave them to go after a cop, and afraid to start with them to the station for fear they'd get away.

"I knew I couldn't hit the side of a warehouse with a pistol, and they looked mighty good to me, tied hand and foot, after I'd cooled down a bit. Mighty good!

"We didn't hold any conversation. The only thing said was after the one I'd slugged woke up and began to enjoy himself once

more by looking around—the one Bench had it in for—and remarked:

"I wish I'd a killed that dog last night instead of listenin' to you an' Sam.'

"Aha! So Sam wasn't so innocent after all. Sam was the old woman's son. That was all that was said. They just looked the rest of the time. Bench laid himself down contentedly and went to sleep.

"About three o'clock somebody drove up out in front with a wagon, kind of quietly. The pirates heard it and exchanged looks.

"It's all off now,' I thought to myself. 'Here comes probably eight or ten more, and they'll eat the said Hawkshaw and his dog Bench alive.'

"I sneaked to the window and looked out. It was as dark as black cats, and I couldn't see but one man. He was just coming in.

"I shoved Bench back with my foot, and laid low behind the door with the gun. When the guy lifted the latch, both of the pirates in the kitchen sung out to him to look out, but it was too late. Too late for the newcomer, for I'd already whanged him across the coco with the barrel of the pistol, and down he went like a steer under the hammer.

"I must have been pretty scared and hit him a little too vicious, for it took the city physician the biggest part of the next day to bring him out of it. I didn't take any risks then, though; I tore up a sheet and tied him up, too.

"In mussing up the bed thereby, I found some of the loot, silks and laces and things, stowed under the covers. There were also several cases that looked like canned goods on the floor underneath. I had the right parties all right, you bet.

"Along about then I had an idea, and before it got cold I put it into execution. I'd load up the works and take 'em in the wagon to the police-station.

"Before I had time to think it over and

back out, I had muzzled the three with rags tied around their faces to keep them from yelling and disturbing the neighborhood, and had two of 'em loaded on. Then I put Bench on the wagon-seat to stand guard, while I got the last victim and what odds and ends of the plunder I could load up in a hurry.

"Were they surprised to see us when we drove in to headquarters? Aunt Annie! You ought to have seen 'em.

"It ain't often that somebody drives up with a wagon-load of pirates, all tied and muzzled, that he has caught with the assistance of a lone bulldog. I was considered the prize-winning fool for luck; either that, or a thief-catcher.

"When the news reached Byers, he wouldn't believe it; but when they went over to the shanty and found a cellar full of robbers' loot, he thought it was about the hottest catch of the season. The guy who had brought the wagon turned out to be a fellow that operated a small store, and had always been considered respectable. He disposed of the most of the stuff at regular prices, and they

had been enjoying quite a nice business.

"They're all three in the hoe business now, down at Jeff City. The old woman and her son Sam couldn't be proven guilty of any part in it; and if there were any more of the pirates, they got away.

"We got three of them and scared off the rest. Byers put it pretty strong to the company, I guess, for they came back as substantial as I could have expected, and then some.

"They also offered me a steady job, sleuthing, and I took 'em up. That's what I'm doing now, together with Bench here.

"Bench can smell a crook across a country. Shake hands with Bench Souders, late of the Bluebell Burlesquers."

I made overtures to pat the white bulldog on the head, at which his bristles rose noticeably and he mumbled something in his throat.

"Excuse me!" I said with some trepidation; "I think I hear my train coming. I reckon I'd better be hiking."