

We drove along, an' he was as merry as a bug; but I was trying to fit his real size with my idea of it. I had been looking for a six-footer with bulgy muscles an' a grippy jaw. This pink-checked boy didn't look like no athlete to me. He was so cute an' sweet that I felt like hangin' a string of coral beads around his neck an' callin' him my adopted daughter. I had just concluded to hand over the dish-washin' right at the start; but he fished up a pipe out of a case an' filled it an' begun to puff like a grown-up; an' then I savvied that dish-washin' wasn't one o' his hobbies.

"Any sport here?" sez he.
 "If you're good at dreamin'," sez I, "you kin have the time o' your life huntin' Chinamen. I never see a place yet where the huntin' was so good an' the Chinamen so scarce."

He got interested right at the start, an' told me that he had a ride an' a shotgun an' three revolvers.

"I wish I could write Chinese," sez I.
 "What fer?" sez he. "So I could put up a sign warnin' him away," sez I.
 "Why, if we'd all three get a bead on that Chinaman it'd take me a solid week to clean him off the lawn."

Ches an' me got along fine. He was a game little rooster, an' it used to tickle me half to death to hear him tell some of his college stories. I never would 'a' believed 'at a little feller could 'a' been a college athlete; but Ches had got his picture in the papers time an' again. At college they race in a boat about the size and shape of a telegraph pole, eight of 'em rowin' an' the coxswain perched up behind, passin' the tutt-frutti an' pickin' out the path. Ches sez that the coxswain is the most important man in the boat. 'I afterwards found out that this was his job. He showed me how to play football, too. It's a nice, exciting pastime, but too vigorous for a frail thing like me. He give me his cap to carry, an' told me to back off about twenty feet an' try to run over him er stick my stiff-arm in his face er dodge him—anyway at all to get by.

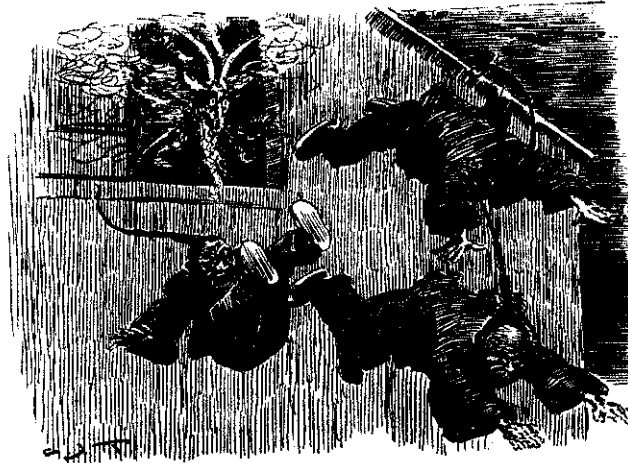
I backed off an' then I looked at him. He looked about as hard to get by as a toadstool, an' I sez: "Now, Ches, I don't want to have any blood on my head, so

if you've jest been jokin', why say so."

But no, nothing would do but I must try an' run him down. I never won much of a reputation fer bein' slow, an' I weighed one eighty-five when I'm ganted down to workin' trim. I took a breath and ailed into him. I intended

"but I'm about as near bein' in the coffin mood myself as I ever get at this time o' the year. What game did you say we was indulgin' in?"

"This is football," sez he.
 "Well, I'm glad to know it," sez I, "so that in the future when anyone



"An' then the devil himself poked his head out through that mow window."

to give a jump jest before I reached him, an' go clear above his head, but I lacked the time. Jest as I took my jump he gave a lunge an' wrapped a grip about my lower extremities, an' we sallied up among the tree-tops. All the way up I was trying to figure out how it had happened; but when we struck the earth again I didn't care. I knew it would never happen again; I'd shoot first.

We lit on the top of my face an' whirled around a few times an' then sort o' crumbled up in a heap, with him still shuttin' off the circulation in my legs. "Down!" sez he; "and now the ball is dead!"

"I can't answer for the ball," sez I,

issues an invitation for me to play football, I can make arrangements fer providing an alibi. If I had to play a game like this, I should choose to be the ball."

He was full of little ways like this and entertained me fine, but it was mighty hard to get any useful work out o' him. He used to take care o' the hosses, an' once in a while he'd dust; but when I pointed out to him that the garden needed weeding, an' that I had to bake some four-dough bread, he sez to me, "My motto is, 'Live an' Let Live'; I ain't no socialist." When I asked him what he meant, he told me that he didn't know of any exercise 'at would do me so much good as learnin' to think

fer myself; an' that's all I could get out of him.

But he was good about one thing. He jest about took the night trick off my hands. He would load himself down with firearms an' hunt Chinamen two or three hours every night, but he never had no luck. Several times the neighbours would ride by an' they told us that the 'was a gang breakin' into houses an' stealin', but they couldn't seem to git track of 'em.

One mornin' I was tryin' to find out what made the sewin'-machine drop stitches when he came rummin' in, his eyes stiek'n' out like a toad's. "He's been sleepin' in the barn," sez he. "Who?" sez I; "the horse?" thinkin' it was one of his jokes.

"No," sez he, "the Chinaman."
 Well, I looked at him, and he explained how his suspicions had been aroused, an' how he had made a practice o' stirrin' up the straw every day, an' then each mornin' they would be the print of a man's body in it; but that he had put tar on the ladder without gettin' any evidence.

I pricked up my ears at this, an' turned the sewin'-machine out on pasture fer a while. We went to the barn, an' there, sure enough, was the print of a man's body. Then we sat in the shade to study out a crafty plot. I had jest about made up my mind that the foxiest thing we could do was fer me to hide in the straw an' when he lay down to explode my gun against his rib. He had posted me a good bit, an' I never was partial to 'em now. All of a sudden, Ches rose to his feet an' slapped me on the shoulder.

"Happy," sez he, "are ya game?"
 I looked at him a while, an' then I sez gently: "Now, look here, mister, I ain't no hero, an' if you happen to have any more college games to introduce, why I'll have to own up to a yellow streak a foot wide; but I don't recollect jest what day it was that any livin' man ever accused me o' bein' downright pale-blooded. If you got any hair-raisin' projec' in your head, don't bother to break it gentle. Jest tell it right out, an' I'll lean up agin this tree, so as not to hurt myself should I faint."

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