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# The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

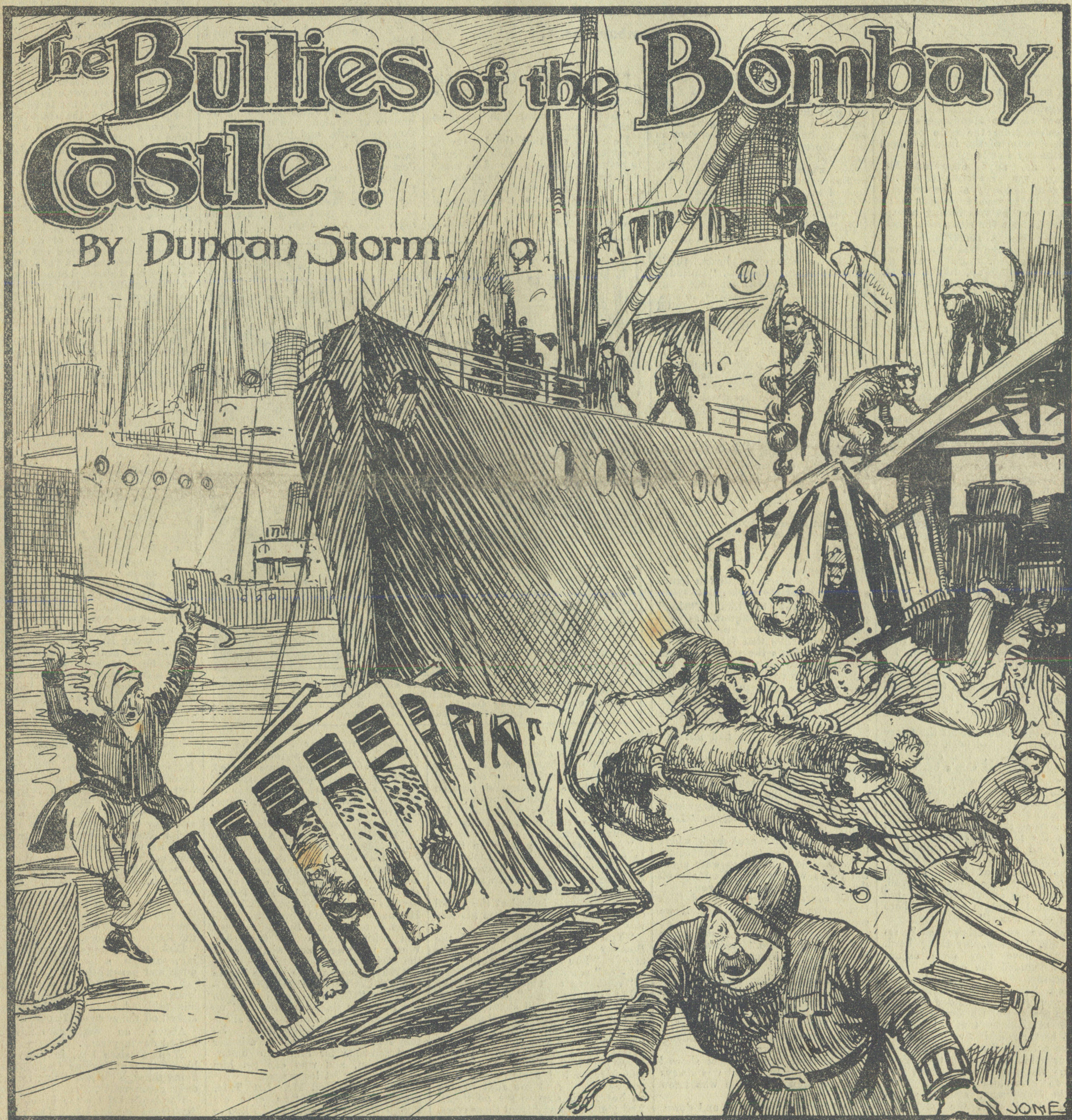
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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

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SIMPLY RIPPING—THIS ADVENTURE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST!



Tricking the Cowpunchers!

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

Baldy Bubbin finds that he has made a big mistake when he tries to trick the cowpunchers.

The 1st Chapter. Hard Lines!

Baldy, the cook, stood in the doorway of the cookhouse at Windy River and looked out on the ranch. Baldy's fat face was dewed with perspiration and corrugated by a frown.

Evidently Baldy was dissatisfied. The scene he looked upon was cheery enough.

"Morning, Baldy!" called out Jimmy Silver.

The fat cook grunted. "Anything wrong?" asked Jimmy, coming over to the cookhouse.

He rather liked Baldy. Baldy Bubbin was, perhaps, every known kind of a duffer; but he was a wonderful cook, and he was generally as good-tempered as he was fat.

"Oh, nothin'!" said Baldy. He had a frying-pan in one fat hand and a greasy rag in the other.

"Fed up!" he added by way of explanation. "Why, what's the matter?" asked Jimmy.

Baldy frowned more darkly. "It's too bad," said Jimmy sympathetically, though he could not help smiling.

The Windy River outfit had not forgotten that Baldy had hidden under a bed when the rustlers raided the ranch. Poor Baldy was cast in an heroic mould, so far as his imagination went.

Any other man in the outfit who had shown a want of so common a quality as courage would have been ridiculed and hooted off the ranch.

They did not realise how poor Baldy felt it. Indeed, they would not have expected a poltroon to have any feelings at all.

ruthlessly. Sometimes, by way of diversion, the 'punchers would lead him on to tell one of his thrilling tales of great deeds done at some other time, in some other place, and Baldy would quite enjoy himself, till he was interrupted by a roar of laughter, when his listeners could keep serious no longer.

"Jest figger it," Baldy would say. "There was me with me back agin the wall and six greasers with knives coming right at me. And what do you reckon I did?"

And then a roar would drown the rest of Baldy's narrative. And all the time Baldy was a paladin for courage, if only his fat nerves would not fail him in the

me fur a second, so he calls out, 'Where are you, Baldy? Is that galoot hiding under a bed agin?'"

"And I never did hide under that bed, young Silver," said Baldy. "I was—was jest taking cover. You know that, don't you, as you was on the spot?"

"Do you know it, or don't you?" snorted Baldy.

"Well, I know you were found under the bed, old man," said Jimmy. "You know that I didn't show the white feather!" said Baldy, almost imploringly.

Jimmy Silver coughed. He hated to hurt poor Baldy's feelings; but the



AN AMAZING RESCUE! As Jimmy Silver and Skitter Dick arrived at the bank of the stream they started back in amazement at what they saw. Baldy Bubbin, streaming with water, was dragging a drenched form through the shallows to the bank!

fact was absolutely indisputable that Baldy had not only shown the white feather, but shown it in the most flagrant manner. "You ready, Jimmy?" came Arthur Edward Lovell's voice, and it was a welcome interruption.

"Here I am," called back Jimmy Silver. "So-long, Baldy!" Baldy grunted. Jimmy Silver walked away to join Lovell and Raby and Newcome, and the four Rookwooders led their horses out.

He rubbed at the frying-pan till it glittered in the sunshine. "I guess I'm fed up!" he grunted. "There'll be trouble hyer, young Silver. I shall break out."

The 2nd Chapter. Baldy's Chance!

Slum Hookey approached the Windy River cookhouse cautiously. A long career as a "hobo" had taught Mr. Hookey caution.

Slum Hookey was a tramp, or, in Western parlance, a hobo. For more years than he could remember Slum Hookey had tramped the plains and the hills and the streets of cities, like a lion seeking what he might devour.

Like a gentleman of leisure, Slum Hookey spent his winters in the south, picking up the crumbs that fell from rich men's tables at holiday resorts in Florida, or annexing precarious meals at free-lunch counters in Texas.

A delicious scent floated from the cookhouse, and Mr. Hookey's nostrils dilated as he drew it in.

Baldy was cooking, ready for the boys when they came in from the range, forgetting his troubles for the moment in his art, as it were.

Hospitality in the Canadian West is great; but so flagrant a specimen of the hobo as Mr. Hookey was

before, and he was not to be taken in with fainting-fits and convulsions and a little soap lather on the lips.

Slum Hookey jumped up. His first dodge had failed, but Mr. Hookey was unabashed.

"Cut it!" said Baldy. "I give you one second to clear." "What about a meal?" Baldy paused.

"Squat on that bench, and I'll find you something," said Baldy, throwing down the barrel-stave. Mr. Hookey squatted, Baldy handed him a tin plate with a pile of victuals upon it, and Mr. Hookey started in.

Slum Hookey put away an enormous meal. He also put away various fragments in recesses of his rags, for future use.

"You're a gentleman, sir, you are!" he said. "Cut it," said Baldy. "Anything to drink?" "Plenty!"

Mr. Hookey's face brightened under its layers of loam. "Now you're talking," he said cheerily. "Where is it?"

Slum Hookey's face fell. It was not water that he wanted to drink. "Nothing else?" he groaned.

"I guess not. Alberta's dry," Mr. Hookey winked.

"I've tramped through every dry State in the Union," he said. "They was always wet in places."

"You'd better tramp back to the Union, then," said Baldy, "and I guess you'd better get a move on. Mr. Smedley don't like hoboes round his ranch."

Mr. Hookey sighed. "I guess it will have to be water," he said dejectedly.

And Baldy good-naturedly gave him a pannikin of that fluid, which was ever so much better for Mr. Hookey's inside than liquor would have been, but which he drank without enjoyment, all the same.

"I dessay you've got some baccy," he remarked.

"Cut it!" said Baldy again. He had no tobacco to waste on a tramp.

Then his fat good-nature overcame him again, and he cut a chunk from his plug and handed it to the hobo. It disappeared whole into Mr. Hookey's mouth, and he chewed with enjoyment.

Baldy turned to his work, leaving him chewing.

Mr. Hookey leaned back against the wall behind the bench and chewed tobacco, and rested his weary limbs. Baldy had been so good-natured that Slum wondered whether he could "touch" him for a dollar or so.

But the good-natured expression left Baldy's fat face, and he turned away from the stove, and went to the doorway for a breath of clear air.

He was thinking again! Soon the cowpunchers would come riding in, and Baldy knew that dinner would not pass off without some of the chipping that made him wince so bitterly.

If only some ferocious rustler would have ridden up to the ranch just then, revolver in hand, Baldy felt that he would have had his chance. He would have seized the frying-pan and rushed upon the rustler, smitten him down, and kept him a prisoner for the boys to see when they came in.

But, of course, no rustler would come just when he was wanted. And perhaps, deep down in Baldy's fat mind, there was a consciousness that, at the sight of a "bad man" he would have bolted like a rabbit for cover.

He turned a discontented stare on Slum Hookey.

Even Baldy was not afraid of a hobo, and he could have taken the barrel-stave and chased Mr. Hookey off the ranch. That would have been an exploitation with a few touches of Baldy's fertile fancy, it would have grown into a much greater exploit, to be related to the outfit.

(Continued overleaf.)





