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didn't know which way to look. After a while, however, they made up their minds to go on, and old Doble he reaches for another piece. I waited till he thought he was safe, and was just getting it in the cart, and then I sent it flying. At that old Doble jumped right in himself and grabbed the reins. Young Doble he stooped and picked up the tail-board, and was just going to throw it in the cart when I put a bullet through that, and sent it for yards. Then he gave a howl and jumped in beside his father, and the pair of 'em lammed into the horse something unmerciful, and went lick for smack down the hill through the trees. And from that day to this, the terror to law-breakers concluded, 'I've had no trouble. The Duffies is the Doble's cousins, and they know all about it—and the fear of me is better in this yard than forty bulldogs.'

Mister Paterson listened with tremendous interest to this graphic tale; and when it was finished spent a minute or so in deep reflection. Then he remarked: 'Well, if you could do that out in the forest, wot's to hinder you from sitting up some night in my shed with your Winchester? I'd give anything to see you and them young Duffies.'

'No,' Granfather broke in upon him; 'that wouldn't do at all. Why, if I was to stay out after dark, Emmer and Jerry would have all Tin boon out with lanterns looking for me. No, that wouldn't do at all; but if you really want to fix them young Duffies, I could put you up to a way of doing it.'

'Well, I do want to fix 'em,' Stringy replied, firmly; 'and if you can tell me how, I'll jolly soon do it.'

'All you've gotter do,' Granfather answered, with the unction of a school teacher in parting wisdom to a backward pupil, 'is to bore a hole in a likely log, stuff it full of gunpowder, and cork it up with a bit of clay. Leave the log where they can't help picking it up, and they'll do the rest.'

Stringy's gentle, round, rabbit eyes grew rounder than ever as he considered this of this novel scheme dawning upon him.

'Put, I say,' he cried presently, as a possible objection began to shape in his mind, 'a'pose the chin ley got blown up, how would it be then?'

'Serve 'em jolly well right!' Mr. Thickbroom replied, without hesitation. 'It'll learn 'em not to be shaking your wood.'

'Ye-es certainly,' Mister Paterson responded, uncertainly; 'but wot I was thinking of was, how would I stand in a court of law?'

A shade of something akin to impatience passed over the patriarchal countenance of Granfather Thickbroom, as he scornfully echoed Mister Paterson's words.

'Court of law! Court of law! Do you think them young Duffies would be sich ow-tray-shus fools as to summons you—when, to prove their case, they'd have to go into the dock and swear they stole your wood? Don't you believe it. They may be wood-shakers—them young Duffies—but they ain't wot you might call larvae under the hat—not by no means.'

Mister Paterson bowed submissively before this weight of reasoning and evident knowledge of the technicalities of the law.

'Then, by Jingo,' he said, with grim determination, 'I'll do it; only you have to promise me you'll never say anything about it.'

'I give you my word and honour,' Granfather responded, solemnly. 'That I'll never breathe a word to a living soul, no matter wot happens.'

People rise early in Tin-boon, and the sun was not yet up when Mister Paterson and Granfather Thickbroom met again at the fence. Inside their respective abodes the fires had been lit for some time, and Mrs. Paterson and Mrs. Thickbroom was busily preparing breakfast.

Mister Paterson's teeth were chattering in his head—though not with cold.

'Did you do it?' Granfather inquired. 'Yes, I did,' Stringy replied, in tones of dejection, not to say remorse. 'I bored a deep hole and rammed it full of blasting powder—and fixed it so as no one should know—unless they was looking for it.'

'And has the log been took?'

'It has,' Stringy answered, tremblingly. 'I just been to see, and I wish to goodness I never heard of sich a thing. I ain't had a wink of sleep all night thinking of wot might happen. How would it be if someone was killed?' he asked, in a hoarse whisper.



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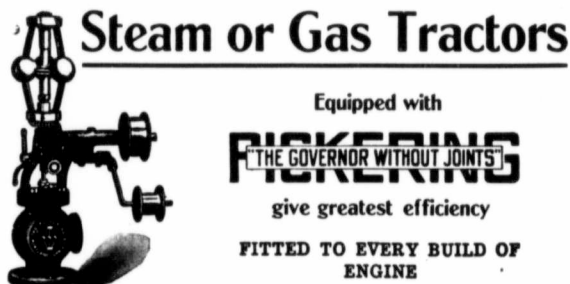
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