

Round the Dule Tug.

"Boys is all alike, only you seem to be more so than others. Stop yer cryin', Bob—durn ye, chuck it, will yer! I can't stand cryin'—specially orphans. Come and have some breakfast, and ye can stop with me, both on ye, till they sends fur ye. None o' yer durned-fool Klondike expeditions, if I can stop it. I knows Mr. Struthers at Barnardo, and I'll get Mirandy to write him. Had a Barnardo boy myself until last spring. Left me to take up a quarter-section out near Dauphin. Good young feller he was, too. Comes to see me once in a while, and says he's doin' well (as he oughter) and getting things inter shape."

Alternately chatting and chaffing, he led them out of the stable, across the lot and into the kitchen, where breakfast was being laid by a buxom dame, who looked askance, yet not unkindly, at the two adventurers.

"A couple o' scallywags, Mother," said the farmer, by way of introduction. "This'n I come nigh stickin' the hay-fork inter, and this'n rolled out'n the hay-mow inter the rack, which comes o' sleepin' in the barn instead o' comin' to the house and askin' you to make 'em a shake-down in the parlour. Ye mind our Mirandy readin' in the papers about them crazy galoots as goes to the Klondike with great expectations and comes back in rags and remorse, when they'm lucky enough to get out alive? Eh? Yes. Well, here's a sample o' the juvenile breed of 'em. This'n's Bob and t'other's Mike. Stand up, you boys, and show yer pints, so's we can see what a real live pair o' Klondikers is like. Say, Bob, you look like a bright chap; did ye ever have the colic? No? Well, ye'll get it in the Klondike. Ever eat mock-turtle soup made o' old boots, with a hunk o' tobaccer to give it the right flavour? Ye never did? Wait till ye get to the Klondike. Ever know it to be so cold that the words 'ud freeze comin' out'n yer mouth, and sometimes break off in the middle of a sentence? Ye didn't? Ye oughter go to the Klondike. A man out there who was workin' a claim alone and got inter the habit o' talkin' to himself was found covered with icicles, and when they thawed him out, two men who couldn't swim was drowned in a flood of elerquance. Great country, that! Ever have scurvy, foot-and-mouth disease, heaves or spavin? Ye can have 'em all to once there. Well, did ye never pick up hunks o' gold in the middle o' the road and di'monds off'n gooseberry bushes? Ye haven't? No, nor ye never will, at the Klondike or anywheres else. Have ye got any idee how far 'tis to this here Klondike? I guess not. I don't know myself exactly; but ye can make up yer mind it's a couple o' thousand miles or so, and the worst kind o' walkin' ye ever put yer foot to. The rocky road to Dublin's a boulevard to it."

After what they had heard from the farmer, Bob was not a little taken aback when, grace being said before meat, "Amen" was followed by a long-winded supplication to the Father of the fatherless that He would forgive the lads for their fool-hardiness. The farmer, in his blunt, outspoken manner, did not choose his words. They didn't intend to make fools of themselves; they didn't know any better. O that He would give them *some* sense—a little horse-sense would do, if it were but enough to enable them to appreciate three square meals a day and a bed to sleep on. They were orphans; they were without a mother to guide them or a father to give them a good, soul-saving licking when they needed it. And the Lord knew they needed it then—*badly*. They were friendless and forlorn, because they had left their friends to go out into the wilderness and leave no stone unturned to prove what a pair of jackasses they were; and there was none to say them nay—no, not one. O that the Lord would turn them from the bleak and barren wilds into green pastures, where they might eat of the grass of the field, as did Nebuchadnezzar when he also was insane.

Mike was melted, and as he dropped crocodile tears into his porridge, whispered half aloud with an intensity of emotion that he wouldn't go to the Klondike, but would go right back and be a prodigal son. Bob, on the other hand, half amused and half ashamed, with a very red face, stole furtive glances at the farmer to see if he was not joking. But there was no mistaking his earnestness;