

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

September 5, 1942 10¢

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Norman
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THE TOUGHEST MAN IN WASHINGTON By FORREST DAVIS

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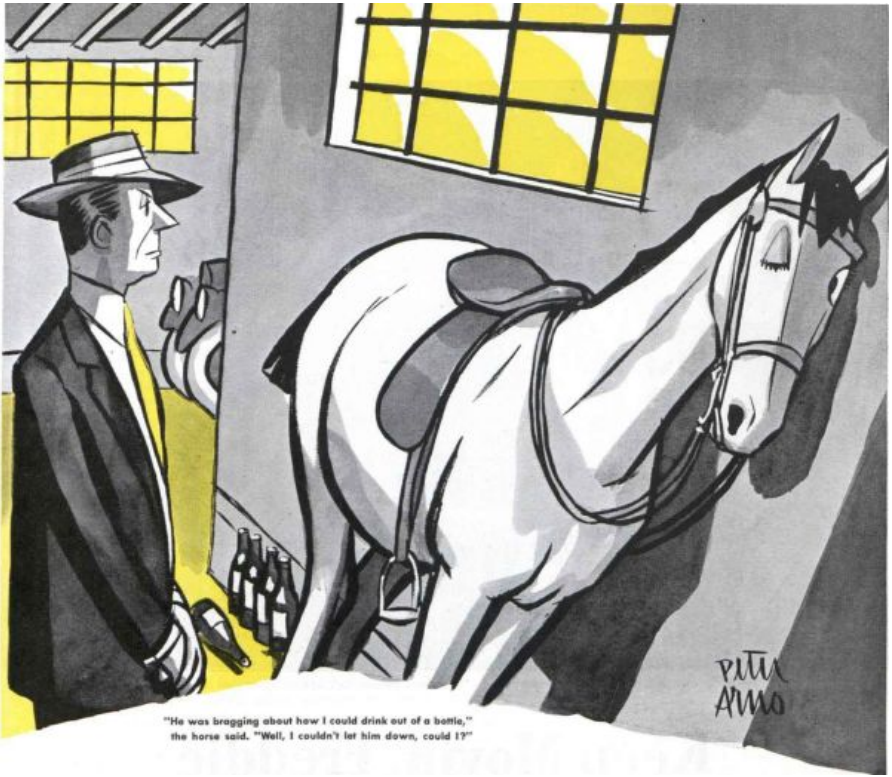
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BIRD IN THE BUSH

BY
WALTER BROOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER ARNO

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The Kimshaws' garden fete would have been just another party without Wilbur and Ed, the beer-drinking, talking horse.

All this Wilbur Pope had was an A card, and after Mrs. Pope had driven him down to the 8:15 and picked him up on the 5:48 five days a week there was hardly enough gas left on week ends to flood the carburetor. And of course Mrs. Pope was practically confined to the house, for although the Popes lived in Mt. Kisco their social activities ramified all over Westchester and even up into Connecticut. Mrs. Pope would have liked to give Mr. Ickes a piece of her mind. But as Mr. Ickes wasn't handy she gave it to Mr. Pope. She was part Spanish, and although the Spanish percentage only worked out to one eighth by extraction, it figured up to about nine eighths by temperament, and so Mr. Pope decided to be patriotic and ride his horse back and forth to the train.

This horse of Mr. Pope's was named Ed, and as far as looks go when you'd said he was a horse you'd said everything. I don't know but maybe you'd said a little too much. But he was better company than most horses because he could talk. It's true his conversation was a little vulgar at times, but Mr. Pope was broad-minded and made allowances. After all, Ed had been brought up in a stable. And since he never talked to anybody else, Mr. Pope didn't have to feel apologetic about him.

Well, Ed did not warm up to the idea of spending every weekday at the station waiting for the 5:48. "You make me sick, Wilb," he said. "You're out to get a big hand from everybody for being patriotic and self-sacrificing, but I'm the guy that does the sacrificing. Nine and a half hours—that's what times five?—forty-eight hours a week I stand around down at that hot station just so you can swell around and brag about what a good American you are."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pope; "I'm just saving a little gas so Carlotta can get out once in a while. Besides, the way the advertising business is today, I often get in on the 3:08, so I guess you'll come well under the forty-hour law. You could join the union, Ed, and still not have any complaint against me. I guess nothing could be more generous than that."

"That's very funny, that is," said Ed bitterly.

"I think it's kind of funny," said Mr. Pope. "But anyway, you'll be comfortable. I've fixed it up with Fred Leamy at the garage so you can stay in there."

"From what I've seen of those boys at the garage," said Ed, "they're not the kind of people you ought to leave me with. I'll probably learn a lot of bad words."

"Not with the kind of education you appear to have had," said Mr. Pope. "I'll cheerfully give you five dollars for every one you learn that you didn't know before."

"Welladay!" said Ed mournfully. "Oh, gosh, Wilbur, have a heart. Out here I have my comfortable stable, and the run of the grounds all week, and then on Saturdays and Sundays

we take our little rides and swap lies and drop in hither and yon for a beer, and it's a life we've got accustomed to. I ain't saying what you want to do is unreasonable, but I ain't conditioned for it. I'm too old to change. I'm just a homebody, Wilb. All I ask is to live quietly here in my little home, with all my treasures about me——”

“Don't be wistful,” said Mr. Pope; “it's not your type. Gosh, Ed, I thought you'd be delighted. Here at last the horse is coming into his own again, and I thought you'd want to be right at the head of the parade. The first horse to step out and take the right of way from the automobiles that drove him off the road a generation ago.”

Ed arched his neck and stamped a hoof. Then he shook his head. “You know me, Wilb,” he said, “I'm a sucker for phrases. Horse coming into his own, hey? That's a good one, that is. Yeah, I don't say it don't kind of strike a triumphant chord, but I'm getting a little deaf to the trumpet call. You got to make out a stronger case than that.”

“All right, I will,” said Mr. Pope. “Tomorrow morning you start taking me to the station.”

“I was afraid you'd say that,” said Ed.

Well, Ed was pretty sour when they started out next morning, but by the time he had raced three bicycles and disputed the right of way with a milk truck and won, he had begun to feel that perhaps the automobile was a vanishing species after all, and he pranced about in front of the station until Mr. Pope told him sharply to be his age. “That funny business with the milk truck,” said Mr. Pope, “might have netted you a busted leg, to say nothing about me.”

“Horse can't come into his own without running a few risks,” said Ed. “We got to show these four-wheeled stink buggies where they get off at.” And he reared and made a pass with a forefoot at a green coupé, driven by a Mr. Fessenden, which was about to cross in front of him.



A voice that might have been Mr. Lamson's: "You keep your long snout out of my affairs, Kimshaw!"

Mr. Fessenden swerved and fouled Jed Witherspoon's fender, and Jed got out and swore at Mr. Fessenden, and Mr. Fessenden got out and swore at Mr. Pope, and Mr. Pope rode on with dignity toward the garage, past a group of so-called friends on the platform, who shouted "Yoicks!" and "Tally-ho!" and other appropriate cries.

At the garage Mr. Pope unsaddled Ed and turned him over to Fred Leamy.

"You can tie him with this halter," he said. "Over in that corner, where it's cool. He won't be any trouble. Just give him a drink of water by and by."

Ed stamped and looked fixedly at Mr. Pope.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Pope; "about noon you can give him a bottle of beer. Just take the cap off—Ed can manage a bottle all right."

Ed stamped again. Mr. Pope looked doubtfully at him, and then he said, "Well, if he seems to be getting restless, you can give him another bottle."

"Gosh, I wish I was a horse," said Fred.

"Oh, get a bottle for yourself too," said Mr. Pope, and ran for his train.

Well, Mr. Pope had lunch that day with his nephew, Roger Boyden. Roger had dropped out of Princeton in the winter and enlisted, and was now on leave, waiting to be sent West for further training leading to a commission and wings. He was also trying hard to get engaged to a Miss Cicely Lamson, who lived some eight miles from the Popes, and as Miss Lamson was the daughter of Mr. Pope's boss—well, Mr. Pope didn't see any reason why he should strew boulders in the path of young love. So he invited Roger out for ten days.

Well, they got out on the 3:08, and I guess it was a good thing, for at the garage Fred Leamy was sound asleep at the desk in his little office with his nose on the blotter, and when they roused him he merely smiled up at them dreamily.

"'S some horse of yours, Mr. Pope," he said.

Mr. Pope had caught sight of a row of beer bottles inside the garage door, which hadn't been there in the morning.

He said, "Well, I suppose I asked for it. But I thought you'd know better, Fred, than to try to drink a horse under the table."

"Merely followed instructions," said Fred. "You said when he got restless. An' he begun to get restless before your train was out of the station. Before it had given a single toot. Before —"

"Skip it," said Mr. Pope. "We'll ration the beer from now on. Get a taxi to take my friend up to the house, will you?"

Ed seemed none the worse for his orgy, and he merely remarked when they were out on the road that it was no wonder the automobile was going out, if Fred was typical of the men who looked after them. "My gosh, Wilb," he said, "no old-time stablehand would begin to curl up at the edges after a couple of beers."

"A couple is good," said Mr. Pope. "I saw the line-up behind the door."

"Oh, well," said Ed, "we might have had five or six. You know me—I don't begin to count 'em till we get up to twenty."

"Well," said Mr. Pope, "you won't need to begin counting for another two weeks then, because two bottles a day is your quota."

Ed gave a snort. "That's you all over," he said. "I bet you grudge your car the gas you put into it, only you know you can't talk it out of using it. But me—I'm easygoing and good-natured, and——"

"Two bottles a day," said Mr. Pope.

Ed thought he'd better change the subject. "Who was that nice-looking guy in uniform?" he said. "Favored you a little, I thought."

So Mr. Pope told him.

"Why, you old slyboots!" said Ed. "I've heard of marrying the boss' daughter to get on in the world, but this lays all over it. You get her into the family without having to support her."

"Pshaw, Ed," said Mr. Pope; "such an idea never entered my head."

"I can believe that," said Ed. "I said it was smart. Who put you on to it?"

Mr. Pope said Ed had a vile, suspicious mind.

Well, both Ed and Fred Leamy were sort of subdued for the next day or two, and Ed jogged down to the 8:15 and back from the 5:48 without complaint, and even consented to let Mr. Pope rein him over to the side of the road when cars honked to pass them. Mr. Pope was pleased. For Roger's affair was going well too. At least he spent most of his time at the Lamsons', and Mrs. Pope, whom he had made his confidante, had the wedding present all picked out.

Then one afternoon Mr. Pope got off the train and went over to the garage. Fred wasn't around, and he went in to saddle Ed and ride home. The horse was leaning against the wall with his eyes shut.

"Hi, Ed," said Mr. Pope. "Wake up. Time to go home."

Ed opened one eye. "Go way," he said. "Get thee hence."

"O.K.," said Mr. Pope; "let's get us both hence. But why the classic speech?"

"The horse," said Ed, closing his eye again, "is a noble animal. His speech, therefore, should be classic in its purity. He is the scion of a great tradition. Since that first great horse who conquered proud Troy——"

"The Trojan horse," interrupted Mr. Pope, "was made of wood, and was full of Greeks. You are only partly wood and, as I perceive by the aroma, are full of beer. What's become of Fred?"

"They bore him home," said Ed dreamily. "A martyr to the generosity of his friends. Yes, I may truthfully say that they bore him home upon his bier." Ed opened both eyes and grinned. "Not bad, hey, Wilb?"

"Very funny," said Mr. Pope, throwing the saddle across Ed's back. "But if you think I'm going to pay——"

"Don't cost you a cent," said Ed hastily. "You see, Wilb, 'twas thus. Fred has a lot of friends, low fellows of the baser sort—honest, Wilb, you never saw such goofs—that hang around this dump, and he was bragging about how I could drink out of a bottle, and some bets were made, and—well, I couldn't let Fred down, could I? Hey, don't pull that girth so tight. I got what you'd call kind of a full figure this afternoon."

As Mr. Pope put his foot in the stirrup, Ed turned and looked at him. "Wouldn't you maybe like to walk home, Wilb?" he said. "The back way, through the pretty woods, getting some healthful exercise and picking the wee woodland posies?"

"No," said Mr. Pope firmly.

"O.K.," said Ed; "then hold tight. Professor, a little horror music, please." And paying no attention to the rein, he pranced out into the open space before the station, where commuters'

cars were backing out of their parking places into the stream of homeward traffic.

In two minutes, by rearing and whirling and dashing this way and that, he had so snarled traffic that it was brought to a complete standstill. Then he leaped the paling and cantered on up the now empty road.

Mr. Pope let go of Ed's neck and regained his stirrups. "Cut it out, Ed," he said. "I should think if you're such a noble animal you'd know that no gentleman ever takes more than he can hold."

"I'm no gentleman," said Ed, "and I take all I can get." And as a car came toward them from the other direction, he planted himself in the middle of the road and gave it what is vulgarly described as the bird.

The car swerved, and with two wheels in the ditch lurched past them and up onto the road again.

"Now, look here——" Mr. Pope began severely, but Ed broke in.

"Don't say it, Wilb," he said. "This is my day. The horse has come into his own, ain't he? Six months ago we couldn't have got onto this road. And now there ain't a car in sight. The heck with the back roads; we're taking over the concrete."

Mr. Pope said it was bad for his hoofs.

"It's good for my soul," said Ed, and he started at a trot down the road with his head in the air, and a high knee action that nearly jolted Mr. Pope's teeth out.

There wasn't much for Mr. Pope to do but hang on. Ed had the bit in his teeth and could neither be reined nor pulled out of the middle of the road. The cars from the station, which had gradually become untangled, were beginning to pile up behind them, but Ed refused to let them by, and their furious horn blowing delighted him.

"Boy, do I make 'em get into line!" he shouted. "Hey, you; get back there!" he yelled at a car that was trying to edge past. He lashed out with his hind feet at the hood, and the car dropped back.

Mr. Pope snatched off his hat and crushed it down over Ed's head so that the horse couldn't see. Then, bracing himself in the stirrups, he heaved on the reins, and Ed, unable to see the road, was pulled out of the way.

The cars streamed by. Most of them had formed an opinion of Mr. Pope and expressed it freely. When they were gone Mr. Pope put his hat on again.

"Well, of all the dirty tricks!" said Ed.

"There'll be dirtier ones if you can't behave yourself," said Mr. Pope. "You darn fool, do you want to ruin my reputation? Those people think it's me yelling at them."

"Oh, don't be so Victorian," said Ed. He snorted disgustedly, and then as another car came up behind and passed them, he gave it a good loud razzberry.

It was an open car, and the girl who was driving slowed down and turned around.

"Hi, beautiful!" yelled Ed, but Mr. Pope yanked savagely at his mouth, for the man beside the girl had also turned around.

"Blast you, Ed," whispered Mr. Pope. "Now you've done it! It's the Lamsons!"

"Judas!" said Ed. "The boss! Think of something quick, Wilb."

Mr. Pope did think of a lot of things. He thought of his job, which was none too secure at a time when the advertising agencies were bisecting and trisecting and practically vivisecting their staffs. He thought of Mr. Lamson's temper, and of his immense sense of dignity. He thought of the certain wrath of Mrs. Pope. But he did not think of any plausible explanation.

And all the time he was coming closer to the car. It was the only thing to do; he couldn't just turn and run.

"Hello, Mr. Lamson," he said, with a very unreasonable facsimile of nonchalance. "Hello, Cicely. Did you hear it too?"

"Drive on, Cicely," growled Mr. Lamson. Then he turned to Mr. Pope. His frown was so menacing that Mr. Pope swore afterward that lightning flickered across his forehead. "I just wanted to be quite certain that it was you, Pope," he said.

"But wait a minute," protested Mr. Pope, as Cicely reached for the gearshift lever. "You don't imagine——"

"I don't imagine anything," said Mr. Lamson. "You smell like a saloon. If you are sober enough to come to the office tomorrow, I shall have something to say to you. Cicely!"

The girl looked at Mr. Pope quizzically, then with a faint shrug, started the car.

On the way home Ed looked around several times and started to say something, and then his ears drooped and he turned back and plodded on. Even when a car horn sounded he didn't say anything, and when Mr. Pope unsaddled him in the stable, and put a measure of oats in the manger, Ed didn't seem to have any appetite. And it wasn't just the beer either. He felt pretty bad.

So Mr. Pope went up onto the terrace, and there were Mrs. Pope and Roger.

"Carlotta," said Mr. Pope, "examine me closely. In your opinion, am I under the influence of liquor?"

Roger looked startled, but Mrs. Pope laughed and said, "What an odd question! Why, no, Wilbur; you always give a slightly intoxicated effect, but I can't see that it's any more marked than usual. You must have a reason for asking such a question. What have you been up to?" And she looked at him sharply.

But just then Carrie came to the door and said Mrs. Pope was wanted on the phone, and she went in.

Well, in a minute she came out again, and I know that women don't turn white with anger any more on account of make-up, but maybe Mrs. Pope didn't use make-up because she was white all right.

She was beautiful when she was mad, and I suppose Mr. Pope should have admired her. But he didn't—he just shuddered.

"Oh," she said, "now I know why you asked that. No, Wilbur, I don't think you're drunk—I think . . . oh, I don't know what to think! A grown man acting like a street urchin!"

"I suppose that was Lamson," said Mr. Pope.

"Yes," said Mrs. Pope, "it was Mr. Lamson—your ex-boss."

"Ex?" murmured Mr. Pope.

"Emphatically ex," she replied. "He said he did not feel that he could keep in his employ a man who was capable of such erratic and vulgar conduct. He also not only refused to bring his wife and daughter over here to dinner Friday night, he has forbidden Cicely to see Roger again."

"What!" shouted Roger, jumping up.

"Come inside, Roger—we must talk about this," said Mrs. Pope. She gave Mr. Pope a look which assured him that it would have been better for him if he had been strangled at birth, and went in.

Well, the doghouse is a palace compared to what Mr. Pope was in for the next few days. His interview with Mr. Lamson was bad enough. Only a disembodied spirit or some acoustical

miracle could account for that insulting sound, and the vulgar “Hi, beautiful!” on an open road, and Mr. Lamson accepted no apparently supernatural fact that was not backed up with a large advertising appropriation. Mr. Pope stuck to it that he had not emitted those sounds, that he too had heard and been shocked. “And I wasn’t drunk,” he asserted. Mr. Lamson said that it made it even more inexcusable. And then he added that he had no wish to be harsh, and perhaps September first would be a good time for Mr. Pope to plan on severing connection with the agency.

But it was at home that the real gall and wormwood was dished out. “But, Carlotta,” he said, “what would I do such a thing for? Do you think I’m a damn fool?” And Mrs. Pope said “Yes.” He began to think maybe she did. She drew so much supporting evidence from his past that she almost convinced him.

Roger, on the other hand, said nothing but just looked reproachful. For Cicely wouldn’t see him.

So, although he was mad at Ed, Mr. Pope was thrown back on the horse for companionship and sympathy. Ed was remorseful, all right. He even refused a bottle of beer one day on the way home. “Off the stuff forever,” he said, raising his right forefoot. “But that don’t solve anything.”

And then came an invitation to the Kimshaws’ annual garden party. The Kimshaws were the cupola of an ancient, presuburban social structure, decried only by those not invited to share its dignity. Also, Mr. Kimshaw was president of Eastern Mutual, and a friend of Mr. Lamson’s—two facts which added up to a fat advertising appropriation, the commission from which Mr. Lamson now looked upon as an annuity. The actual handling of the account had for the past few years been done by Mr. Pope.

“I shall go and take Roger in the car,” said Mrs. Pope. “The Lamsons are sure to be there, and perhaps we can get a chance to talk with Cicely. I don’t suppose you’ll want to go?”

But Mr. Pope said he did.

Mrs. Pope shrugged. “You don’t think for a minute,” she said, “that you can take that account with you when you’re fired, do you?” she said.

“I’m not quite as stupid as to try that,” said Mr. Pope.

“Well, one never knows,” said Mrs. Pope vaguely.

“I’ll ride Ed over,” said Mr. Pope. “Then I can leave early.”

On the afternoon of the party, Mr. Pope and Ed cantered up the Kimshaw road. When they came in sight of the house, Ed paused.

“Wow!” he said. “Some palazzo!” Then he looked round doubtfully. “Are you sure it’s all right, Wilb?”

“What do you mean, all right?” said Mr. Pope.

“Well,” said Ed, “ain’t we kind of stepping out of our class? Shanty folks like us?”

“Pooh!” said Mr. Pope. “Nothing to it. This is just a tea party in the old Victorian tradition the Kimshaws were brought up in. All you do is take in a little tea and give out a little culture. Alternately, of course.”

“I bet you push a mean teacup,” said Ed. “I dunno about the culture. Well, it’ll be interesting to see how the other half lives. Moor me where I can see the battle, Wilb, and slip the butler a buck and have him bring me out a gold teapot full of Napoleon brandy, will you?”

Mr. Pope dismissed a footman who came out to take Ed, and rode on to where a bridle path went up into woods.

"I won't tie you," he said. "If you wander up past the swimming pool, there's a high hedge, and you can peek through it and see the whole performance. Nobody'll see you from this side if you stay among the trees."

Well, the party was under forced draught, and the roar of polite conversation could be heard for miles. Menaced by brandished teacups, Mr. Pope wandered through a jungle of the floppy garden hats which are *de rigueur* at such functions. Occasionally, through the monstrous growth, he caught glimpses of friends, and once of Roger, gazing with lovelorn eyes at some object invisible to Mr. Pope, but probably Cicely. And presently he came upon Mr. Kimshaw.

Well, this Mr. Kimshaw was the come-come-what's-all-this-nonsense type, and he cultivated what he conceived to be the frankness of the true aristocrat, which I guess is all right if you like it.

"Ah, Pope," he said, "hardly expected to see you here. Matter of fact, invitations got out before we'd heard."

"How I'm supposed to have insulted Mr. Lamson, you mean?" said Mr. Pope. "Well, I didn't, but I've no way of proving it, so let it go. I came because I wanted to ask you one thing."

"If it's about the Eastern account——" said Mr. Kimshaw.

"It isn't. It's about my nephew."

"Know the boy," said Mr. Kimshaw. "M'wife likes him."

"Well," said Mr. Pope, "I've always known you for a very fair-minded man, sir——"

"Yes, I'm fair-minded," said Mr. Kimshaw simply. "You——always done your best for Eastern. I'll hear what you have to say."

So Mr. Pope told him about Roger and Cicely. And having asserted his fair-mindedness, Mr. Kimshaw had to agree that Mr. Lamson was unjust.

"I'll say a word to him," he said. "Have some influence there, I think. Only understand——not doing it for you. Interests of justice." He scowled at Mr. Pope. "Incredible performance!" he snapped.

"Yes," said Mr. Pope. "Incredible. Yet you credit it. However——"

An eddy in the mob surrounding them forced them closer to the tall hedge by which they were standing. *Why, it's about where Ed would be stationed*, thought Mr. Pope. He scanned the hedge for an opening and a large brown sardonic eye, but couldn't see anything. And then through a swirl in the garden hats appeared Mr. Lamson.

"Speak to him now," said Mr. Kimshaw.

As Mr. Lamson gave him a curt nod, Mr. Pope tried to edge away. But he became entangled in a parasol handle, and was rescued and practically captured by an elderly lady named Miss Delphin. Miss Delphin was both lank and roguish—not a combination that appealed to Mr. Pope. But over her shoulder he could watch Mr. Lamson, who had been backed into the hedge by Mr. Kimshaw and was listening with evident impatience. So he replied with as much verve as he could command to Miss Delphin's sallies.

Mr. Lamson and Mr. Kimshaw were old friends, but they were both very positive characters and enjoyed quarreling with each other, so that it was hard to judge whether their apparent disagreement was over a technicality or a principle. Under pretense of adjusting Miss Delphin's parasol to a more fetching angle, he edged closer.

"No, Kimshaw," said Mr. Lamson, "the child's best interests are more important than some slight injustice. He seems a likable boy. But with insanity in his family——" He shook his

head.

Golly, they've got me crazy now! thought Mr. Pope.

Then their voices dropped lower. They seemed to be getting politely angry. Unselfish hope for Roger's bliss burgeoned in Mr. Pope's bosom, and he smiled with incautious eagerness into Miss Delphin's eyes.

And then a sudden loud and vulgar sound cut through the chatter of tongues and into the immediate horrified hush fell a voice that might have been Mr. Lamson's:

"You keep your long snout out of my affairs, Kimshaw!"

A cold wind agitated the garden hats, and seventeen teacups crashed to the ground. Mr. Kimshaw's face changed from red, to white, to blue, like a chameleon walking over the American flag.

"By gad, sir!" he exclaimed explosively.

"Kimshaw!" cried Mr. Lamson. "Where did that——" He turned and clawed at the hedge.

My gosh, the bird in the bush! thought Mr. Pope, then turned to find Mr. Kimshaw glaring at him.

"Come with me, Pope," said Mr. Kimshaw, and seized his arm.

"Kimshaw!" called Mr. Lamson. "Good heavens, you don't think that I——" But Mr. Kimshaw was gone.

When Mr. Pope came out of the house half an hour later the garden party looked no different. But the basic pitch had risen nearly an octave, and was now sibilant and shrill. An incredible vulgarity was a far choicer morsel than any of the comfits provided by the caterer, and the guests were savoring it. Mr. Lamson had publicly given Mr. Kimshaw the bird!

But the party had drawn its skirts aside from Mr. Lamson. Mr. Pope found him where he had left him, slightly green but indomitable, flanked by his wife and Cicely.

"Mr. Kimshaw has just offered me the Eastern account," said Mr. Pope.

"Do you wonder that I didn't believe you?" said Mr. Lamson; and added thoughtfully, "There was nothing but a horse behind that hedge."

"I told him," said Mr. Pope, "that I couldn't take it."

"Eh?" said Mr. Lamson. "Well, you'd better. He'll give it to Oppen if you don't."

"No," said Mr. Pope. "It's your account. And under the circumstances—well, we're in the same boat, aren't we?"

"I wish you'd come home, dear," said Mrs. Lamson. "All these malicious people——"

"No," said Mr. Lamson, "I'm going to get to the bottom of this."

"I hope you're more successful than I was," said Mr. Pope.

Cicely looked at her mother for a moment, then said to Mr. Pope, "Where's Roger?"

"With Carlotta somewhere," said Mr. Pope. "And since there's evidently insanity in both our families, I think your father's objection——"

"Go along, child," said Mr. Lamson, and then to Mr. Pope, "You're right, Wilbur. I owe you an apology."

"Forget it," said Mr. Pope.

Mr. Lamson said, "We've got to get that account back."

Mr. Pope said, "Yeah."

They were still trying to improve on this statement when Mr. Kimshaw came striding across the grass toward them.

Mr. Pope seized Mr. Lamson's arm. "Get his back to the hedge," he whispered. "I'll fix it." He stuck an arm through the hedge and beckoned, and felt his sleeve caught and twitched in

Ed's teeth. Then he moved away.

"See here, Lamson," said Mr. Kimshaw. "Friends for a long time, and all that. M'wife says great pity. Think so myself. Now if you'll apologize——"

"I'm damned if I will," said Mr. Lamson. "I didn't make that—that revolting noise, and I've nothing to apologize for."

But as he talked, he moved away from the hedge so that Mr. Kimshaw, turning to face him, had his back to it. And then for the second time that day, the rousing call of the bird rang through the garden. And a voice which might well have been Mr. Kimshaw's said, "Then get off my property, fathead!"

Miss Delphin started it. She broke into a high hysterical laugh, which later became roaring hysterics and had to be taken seriously. But at the moment it sounded very gay, and one or two others took it up. Mr. Kimshaw turned from his frenzied exploration of the hedge and glared at his guests. And then Mr. Lamson broke into a guffaw—which seemed to Mr. Pope to be echoed by a more raucous guffaw from behind the hedge.

"Damn you, Lamson," shouted Mr. Kimshaw; "is this a——" Then suddenly he broke down. He went over to Mr. Lamson and put an arm across his shoulder. "Somebody making a fool of us," he said. He looked at Mr. Pope.

Mr. Lamson also looked suspiciously at Mr. Pope. But Mr. Pope grinned. "Incredible performance," he said.

Their eyes dropped. "Yes," said Mr. Lamson. "Three of them." He smiled faintly. "Don't look at Pope, Kimshaw. He was the first."

"Right," said Mr. Kimshaw. "Well—come into the house. This tea——"

"You see, Wilb," said Ed, as they clumped home, "it's elementary. If you fall into the mud, it's no use trying to climb back. You're still filthy, and they won't touch you. The only thing is to stay there and yank the rest of them down. And, boy, did I yank them down for you!"

"You did fine," said Mr. Pope. "But don't forget that you pushed me down first."

"That's you all over," said Ed disgustedly. "Always carping. Couldn't even send out that butler, after all that I done for you, with a slosh of liquor."

"I thought maybe a little beer on the way home?" suggested Mr. Pope.

There was a car beside the road when they came out of Barney's an hour or so later, and a man was changing a tire.

"Get a horse, brother; get a horse!" yelled Ed.

Cicely's head came out of the car window, and Roger's head rose grinning above the rear fender. Roger looked at them a moment, and then said, "Why don't you get one yourself, Wilbur?"

"That's the way it is," said Ed dejectedly, as they went on. "Well, let 'em have their cars, then. I guess us horses can get along. And you wait till their rubber begins to go. They'll be coming to us on their bended knees and then will we give them the old horse laugh!" And after a minute he said, "Those two young squirts! Why, if they'd known what I did for them they'd ought to kiss me."

"Well, come on back," said Mr. Pope. "I'm sure Cicely would kiss both of us, just out of pure happiness."

"Nah," said Ed; "I guess I'll take another beer instead."