

THE FLYAWAY HIGHWAY



By
NORMAN LINDSAY

THE FLYAWAY FUGGWAY

By
NORMAN LINDSAY



CONTENTS

THE ADVENTURE OF EGBERT TOMKINS AND THE BLOKE WITH COW'S HOOVES - - - -	1
THE PIG AND WHISTLE POST-CHaise ADVENTURE -	16
THE HERETIC MURDER MYSTERY ADVENTURE -	28
THE ADVENTURE OF THE KNIGHTLY DEED OF HIGH EMPRISE - - - - -	53
THE ADVENTURE OF THE SCREAM IN THE NIGHT -	61
THE ADVENTURE OF THE PLACE WHERE THERE WERE NO ADVENTURES - - - -	71
THE ADVENTURE OF THE BARONIAL RESTAURANT -	80
THE ADVENTURE OF GETTING ORLANDO BOOP OUT OF THE DONJON KEEP - - -	88
THE ADVENTURE OF HAVING A GO AT THE BEST MURDER MYSTERY FOOD - - -	97
THE ADVENTURE WHICH PROVED ALL THE OTHER ADVENTURES - - - - -	118

CHAPTER I

THE ADVENTURE OF EGBERT TOMKINS AND THE BLOKE WITH COW'S HOOVES

THE day was very hot.
Egbert Tomkins was very hot.

His thoughts were very sad. He was thinking about how ma would insist on buying carrots and cabbage and boiled beef and rice pudding when you could get ice-cream and lemon-cheese tarts and ginger beer for half the money. This is a madness about grown-ups that no one has been able to account for. They will buy the wrong food.

It was four o'clock, and Egbert was going home from school, and when he got home ma would only give him a bloomin' slice of bread and jam to eat. Bread and jam may be all right, but on a hot day what a bloke wants, supposin' a bloke can't get ice-cream and lemonade, is fruit.



It was a very funny thing that just as Egbert was thinking about fruit he was passing Jones's garden at the very identical moment that Jones's garden happened to have fruit in it.



Not that Egbert thought of climbing Jones's fence to have a go at the fruit. Climbing fences is burglary, and they could have you up for it. But the funny thing was that Jones's fence had a loose paling at the very spot where Egbert was standing, and there's no harm in a bloke having a try at squeezing through a small hen-sized hole just to prove he can do it.

Egbert was twelve and a stout lad for his age, but he went through that hole like a lizard. And the funny thing was that the Joneses had gone and put their raspberries exactly on the other side of that hole.



“Joneses wouldn’t mind a bloke having a go at their raspberries,” said Egbert. “They’d ask a bloke to have some.”

The raspberries were good, but the trouble was the Joneses had been having a go at them too and they were nearly all gone. Just up from the raspberries were the strawberries, and that is the fruit you require for hot days, blobbing sweetly on the tongue like a garden-grown ice-cream. The only trouble about strawberries is that they don’t grow high enough to hide behind. People can spot you having a go at them.

By a bit of good luck the Joneses had grown goosegogs along one side of the strawberries, so by doing a toad act under the goosegogs a bloke could get at the strawberries. At that very moment the bloke with cow’s hooves was squatting on the other side of the goosegogs, dozing in the sun and picking a goosegog now and

then in a bored sort of way, just to let them go pop in his mouth for something to do. Besides cow’s hooves he had hairy goat’s legs and a fine pair of horns sticking out of his head.

Egbert didn’t see him, being too busy reaching for the strawberries. This bloke didn’t expect Egbert to see him. Nobody had seen him for thousands of years. He was used to not being seen.

Well then, it absolutely happened that Egbert saw him. He hap-

pened to look over the gooseberry bushes just as this bloke was looking over them at him.

At first Egbert thought that a goat was looking at him on account of the horns, but when he saw that this goat had a fine conky nose and handsome curly whiskers, and was picking goosegogs with human hands, he let out one yell and bolted straight across the strawberry beds.



But the shock Egbert got at seeing this bloke was nothing to the shock this bloke got at being seen by Egbert. He turned head over heels three times in his anxiety to bolt after Egbert, shouting, “Stop— have another look at me. Convince me that you have absolutely seen me. One look, I beg—”

Egbert gave him one look and let out another yell, and sprinted over the fruit-garden fence into Jones’s shrubbery and ran straight into Murial Jane Jones who happened to be dawdling there, and bowled her over like a rabbit.

A nice uproar that was, with Egbert yelling and Murial Jane squealing and this cow’s-hooved bloke capering all over the place shouting, “No occasion for alarm—just have a good long look at me to assure us all that I am visible to the human eye.”

Egbert rolled over and over, grabbing up stones. His first shot



got this bloke fair in the stomach and sent him down behind the nearest bush, shouting, "Enough—no more visibility tests by stones are necessary."

Egbert wasn't taking any risks; he stood with another stone ready for throwing. Murial Jane stopped squealing and sat up with popping eyes, unable to believe what they had been looking at.

"Whatever is it?" she asked.

"It's a bloke or something with horns, and by cripes he nearly copped me," panted Egbert.



"But he's got cow's hooves and hairy legs," objected Murial Jane.

"Quite true, quite true," said this bloke from behind the bush. He was so pleased at being seen also by Murial Jane that he put his head out to say, "This is very satisfactory," just as Egbert bounced another stone off it, and sent him hastily under cover again. "Tut, tut!" they heard him say. "One demonstration is quite sufficient. I prefer to be seen without having stones bounced off me."

"Well, don't you come chasing a bloke," said Egbert.

"Not for worlds. I just wanted to be quite sure you saw me, without thinking you had the fantods or something. My idea is to come out and be looked at in a thoroughly practical manner, as if

I was your Uncle Dunklestone just dropped in for five minutes for a trifling loan of two-and-sevenpence."

"Well, don't you come farther than that bush," commanded Egbert.

"Agreed," said the cow's-hooved bloke, and skipped out briskly, at which Murial Jane said "Oooo!" and got hastily behind Egbert, who kept a stone handy in case of chasings. But this bloke only required them to look at him while he pointed out a few things about himself well worth looking at.

"Horns, you observe, in the handsomely curling style, sometimes imitated by rams. Hooves, hairy legs, strictly in order. A superb beard, frequently copied by kings. A nose of noble proportions, used by emperors. Taken side view, you get the effect in all its grandeur. I now hope all doubts about seeing me are completely removed."

"I see him easy" confessed Egbert.

"So do I," said Murial Jane.

"Good," said this bloke.

"Though all the same I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my very own eyes," said Murial Jane.

"Me either. Me, I'd have thought it was a bloke dressed up in cow's legs any day," said Egbert.

"Oh no, the legs are quite genuine," said this bloke, and cut a special caper to prove it, clicking his heels six times before landing, which was a fine sight and greatly interested Egbert.

"Do it again," he said.

"With pleasure."

He cut several more capers, bounding and turning double somersaults in the most brilliant manner, quite ravishing Egbert, who said: "Well, I got to own you're the champion jumper of the world."

"Pooh, that's nothing to what I can do," said this bloke. "Once I'm worked up I go on like that for days at a time."

"Why do you?" asked Murial Jane, who had a practical mind and liked to get her facts in order.

"Partly for pleasure and partly for procession practice."

"What's procession practice?"

"Practising grace and agility while bounding in processions."

"With bands and banners?" asked Egbert.

"No no, not one of those vulgar wharf-lumping affairs. Bottle



and grape processions with vine leaves and boozy faces and people falling down to be bounded on."

"Pooh, I don't think much of those processions," said Murial Jane. "My idea of processions is to have gollywogs and fairy bowers and girls in motor-cars with helmets on and flowers."

"H'm—not bad, those girl gollywog affairs," admitted this bloke. "Too much stiffly standing, though; not enough bounding—not enough bolero fandango whack-fallolder-toraladdity about them, if you take my meaning."

Well, there they were chatting away in this easy style as if horns and hooves were as common as cabbages. There was that about this cow's-hooved bloke—you got to know him in no time. Murial Jane had a severely practical mind, but she quite forgot to ask what he was doing in her garden. Or what Egbert Tomkins was doing there either. Murial Jane knew Egbert in a distant sort of way by meeting

him sometimes at parties, and sometimes having things sung out at her from a distance. Egbert was that sort—a whistler and singer out at girls, but pretending they were not there when close up, and loudly refusing to play postman's knock with them at parties. Murial Jane didn't think much of him as a rule, but just at present he appeared to forget about pretending that she wasn't there. All



this important conversation with a cow's-hooved bloke seemed to have improved his style.

"All the same, it must be a pretty good sight seeing this bloke bounding in processions," he said to Murial Jane.

"Superb," said this bloke. "As an authority on procession bounding, I may say that I have never seen a finer sight."

"Where do you do it?" asked Murial Jane.

"Oh, the general rule is to have them on the Flyaway Highway."

"Where's that?" asked Murial Jane.

"There," said this bloke.

Murial Jane and Egbert stared in astonishment at a fine wide road curving out of the fruit garden straight into the shrubbery. There was the garden as usual and this unheard-of road coming into it and going out of it for miles and miles across country. It took no notice of trees or houses that happened to be in its way, but just went on through them as though they were not there. Murial Jane's eyes popped like a possum's at such an impossible sight, while Egbert simply gaped and gave up thinking for the moment.

"How on earth did that road come into our garden?" demanded Murial Jane indignantly.

"It never came in at all," said this bloke.

"It did; it came in this very minute."

"How could it come in when it was in? It's been here all the while, of course."

"If that isn't an absolute lie," exclaimed Murial Jane. "I ought to know our garden better than you do and I never ever saw that road a single second before."

"You never saw me before either," this bloke pointed out. "And that raises the question, 'Do you see me or do I see you?' "

"Both are seeing each other," said Murial Jane.

"In that case the next question is, 'Can anybody else see you seeing me,' for if they can't see me they can't see you either."

"Why can't they?" demanded Murial Jane.

"Oh, that goes into algebra sums about x plus b equals two clocks on a railway line, and how dropping stones on five birds proves that when you were having breakfast last Thursday week it was really half-past twelve the day before yesterday, and all that

sort of rot. And here come some people to prove whether you can't be seen seeing me."

The people were Murial Jane's mama and Mrs Gosling, who had come into the garden for a private chat, and were now strolling through the shrubbery straight towards them. Murial Jane was very embarrassed at being caught talking to Egbert Tomkins and a person with cow's hooves, because of the trouble about introductions and questions about consorting with the wrong sort of people. Egbert was very embarrassed too at being caught by Mrs Jones in her garden, and pretended to look at birds' nests. But the cow's-hooved bloke wasn't a bit embarrassed and said carelessly, "I know their sort; they couldn't see an x plus b dead cat under their noses."

Which seemed to be true, for those two came strolling on without taking the slightest notice of anything, and talking away in strictly private voices. Mrs Jones was saying, "I said to her, 'Boiled rice is boiled rice and mush is mush and Mr Jones will not eat it, nor am I accustomed to be spoken to in that tone of voice,' upon which that girl said most insolently to my very face, 'If you don't like it you can lump it and I'll take a week's wages in place of notice.' "

"What did I tell you; not a blink out of either of them," said the cow's-hooved bloke.

He cut a caper right in front of Mrs Jones and pulled her nose and slapped Mrs Gosling's face, and neither took any notice of these rude pranks, but just went on quietly walking and talking out of the shrubbery.

"Cripes, what do you think of that?" said Egbert, whose brain refused to think anything about such an astonishing thing; while Murial Jane just took a helpless breath and said, "I give it up how it's done, must be magic or something—I can't believe my eyes."

"Pooh, just a simple trick of skipping two hours ahead of the clock, so that people can't see what's happening now because it hasn't happened yet. But enough of doing sums for to-day, and what about that procession?"

"I'm on," said Egbert.

"Three isn't enough for processions," objected Murial Jane.

"Small sized processions can be made twice as large by going



twice as fast," said this bloke. "It's done by taking two bounds to one and advancing in three directions at once while roaring with laughter in several different voices."

Murial Jane looked doubtful about this method of enlarging processions, but Egbert had had enough of serious conversations and required a little action. "Where shall we have it?" he asked.

"Oh, wherever the Highway happens to be going at the moment," said this bloke. "It never goes anywhere for long in any direction."

"Is that why it's called the Flyaway Highway?" asked Murial Jane.

"Well, partly for that reason and partly because it sounds well, just as you might call yourself the Lady Clarinda Belinda Poopenstomp, you know."

“I wouldn’t think of calling myself an awful name like Poopenstomp,” said Murial Jane indignantly.

“What sort of name would you call yourself?” asked this bloke.

“Murial Jane Jones, of course,” said Murial Jane.

“Anybody can be called a name like that,” said this bloke. “My advice is, go in for a bit of style and call yourself Jones Jane Murial.”

“I’ll do nothing of the sort,” said Murial Jane firmly.

“Well, there’s no accounting for tastes,” said this bloke. “Now this boy here, for instance, would simply insist on being called Aldobrand Fitz Gadget, if not Don Pomposo Colardo Meduro, for example.”

“By cripes, would I?” exclaimed Egbert indignantly. “My name’s Egbert Tomkins any day, so don’t you forget it.”

“I’d remember it better if it was Goozledanks Tomkins, or Mungobungo Tomkins, or even Mangelwurzels Tomkins,” said this bloke, but before Egbert could object to being called such names Murial Jane said coldly, “If you’re so important about names what’s your own?”

“Oh, I’ve got dozens of names,” said this bloke. “Whenever I come across a suitable name I use it till it’s worn out and then try another. Just at present I’m being called Silvander Dan. Now there’s a fine frank generous-spirited fellow’s name for you.”

“It’s got the Dan at the wrong end of it,” objected Egbert.

“There you go, letting names settle which end they begin with, instead of ending them to suit the sort of fellow you happen to be at the time. For instance, Silvander shows you at a glance to be a man of noble presence while Dan proves you to be a free and easy fellow, ready to have a chat with anybody. There you have me to the life. But that’s enough about names for the present or we’ll never have time for that procession.”

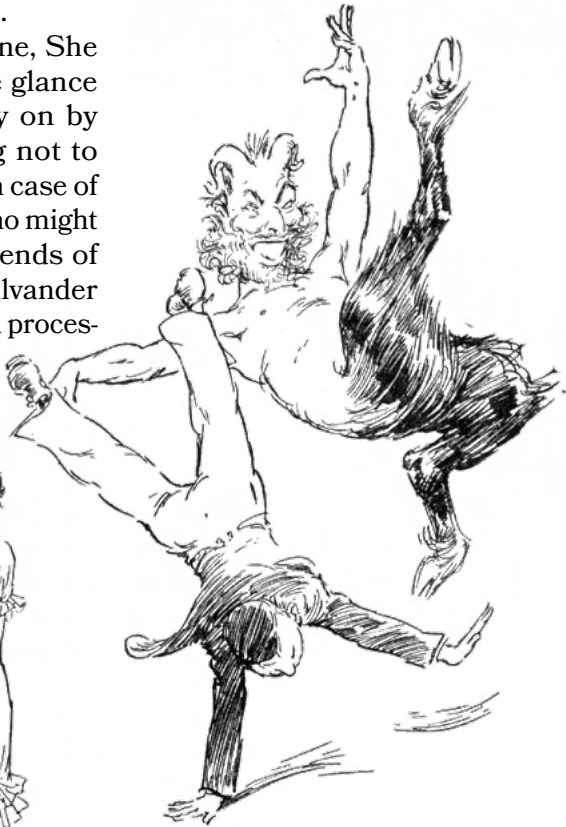
“If you must have it,” said Murial Jane.

“Then off we go,” said Silvander Dan.

And off he went, double somersaulting and high kicking, heel clicking and back flapping in all directions, and roaring with laughter all the while to show what splendid fun it was. Egbert came along in pretty good style too, cartwheeling and handspringing and hop-skip-and-jumping, and proving himself a very good procession

bounder for his age.

As for Murial Jane, She just gave them one glance and walked coldly on by herself pretending not to be aware of them, in case of meeting anybody who might think they were friends of hers. Seeing this Silvander Dan stopped being a proces-



sion and said severely, "Tut tut! You are not processing at all in the correct style."

"You may think it's the correct style but I think it's simply making an exhibition of yourself in public," said Murial Jane.

"But you wouldn't go to all that trouble to make an exhibition of yourself in private,"

Silvander Dan pointed out.

"I never make exhibitions of myself either in public or in private and I won't have anything to do with your sort of processions," said Murial Jane firmly.

"If you won't have processions the question is what will you have?" asked Silvander Dan.

"The question is what can you have?" asked Murial Jane.

"Anything you like," said Silvander Dan handsomely.

"How?" demanded Egbert.

"By strolling along the Highway and getting mixed up in anything that happens to come along, of course," said Silvander Dan.

"I don't call that anything I like. It might be something I don't like," protested Murial Jane.

"Well, considering that all the things that ever happened in books are always happening on that Highway, the things you'd like to happen must happen there too. About the only things that don't happen there are the things that haven't been put into books yet, but they'll come along the moment somebody has time to write them out."

"Adventures and all that?" suggested Egbert.

"Adventures on that Highway amount to a public nuisance," said Silvander Dan. "Personally I've given up using that part where the murder mysteries happen. You can hardly move a step without some noodle of a detective proving you did the crime because you were the only person in the book who couldn't have done it."

"All the same, it must be a pretty good Highway," said Egbert to Murial Jane, who wasn't so sure about that.

"It all depends on what sort of adventure you get mixed up in," she pointed out.

"The sort of adventure you get depends on the sort of road you happen to be on," said Silvander Dan. "It's entirely a matter of arranging the correct background. For instance, this present arrangement we happen to be on has been got up to go with curly bell-toppers and top-hats and pokebonnets and corkscrew curls."

Murial Jane and Egbert looked round with astonishment. The Highway no longer ran over the landscape they lived in, but had brought along its own landscape to run through. This was a pleasant wall-papery country-side of fields and hedges and poplar-trees, with little red farm-houses and haystacks and windmills all along the skyline.

"Where on earth has our garden got to?" demanded Murial Jane.

"Oh, it's just dodged round the corner for the moment, so as not to confuse things," said Silvander Dan. "You can't have two land-

scapes going on at the same time, unless you have the fantods and see your deceased Aunt Selina walking through the back parlour cupboard. As I was saying, this landscape is one of those Pig and Whistle Post-chaise Affairs. To be sure, there's your stone bridge over your stream for upsetting stagecoaches, and here's your stump for colliding with the off hind wheel of post-chaises. Oh yes, we can expect an adventure along here now at any moment."

"What sort of adventure?" asked Egbert with great interest.

"Oh, one of those runaway love-affairs pursued by enraged old fathers, with a general bust up of post-chaises at the bridge here."

"By jings, that will be worth seeing," said Egbert exultantly.

"Oh yes, very roaring, swooning, odds bodkin affairs they are as a rule," said Silvander Dan. "Let me see, is that a cloud of dust rapidly approaching along the road there? Yes, it is. As I expected, here comes one of them at this very moment."