

The Blue Vase

"Well, I must admit Bill Peck can sell lumber," Mr. Skinner announced grudgingly. "He has secured five new accounts and here is an order for two more carloads of skunk spruce. I'll have to raise his salary at the first of the year."

"My dear Skinner, why the devil wait until the first of the year? Your pernicious habit of deferring the inevitable parting with money has cost of the services of more than one good man. You know you have to raise Bill Peck's salary sooner or later, so why not do it now and smile like a toothpaste advertisement while you're doing it? Bill Peck will feel a whole lot better as a result, and who knows? He may even conclude you're a human being, after all, and learn to love you."

"Very well, sir. I'll give him the same salary that Andrews was getting before Peck took over the territory."

"Skinner, you make it impossible for me to refrain from showing you who's boss around here. He's better than Andrews, isn't he?"

"I think he is, sir."

"Well, then, for the love of a square deal, pay him more and pay it to him from the first day he went to work. Get out. You make me nervous. By the way how is Andrews doing in the Shanghai job?"

"He's helping the telegram company pay its income tax. He telegraphs us about three times a week on matters he should decide for himself. Matt Peasley is disgusted with him."

"Ah! Well, I'm not disappointed. And I suppose Matt will be in here before long to remind me that I was the bright boy who picked Andrews for the job. Well, I did, but I call on you to remember, Skinner, when I'm assailed, that Andrew's assignment was temporary."

"Yes, sir, it was."

"Well, I suppose I'll have to look around for his replacement and beat Matt out of his cheap 'I told you so' triumph. I think Bill Peck has some marks of a good manager for our Shanghai office, but I'll have to test him a little further. He looked up humorously at Mr. Skinner. "Skinner, my dear boy, I'm going to have him deliver a blue vase."

Mr. Skinner's cold features actually glowed. "Well, tip the chief of

police and the proprietor of the store off this time and save yourself some money," he warned Cappy. "I don't envy Mr. Peck, and I have every hope that he'll give you less of a tangle than the rest of us." He walked to the window and looked down at the street. He continued to smile.

"Yes," Cappy said dreamily, "You'll have to agree with me, Skinner, that if he delivers the blue vase he'll be worth ten thousand dollars a year as our Asia manager?"

"I'll say he will." Mr. Skinner replied.

"Very well, then. Arrange matters, Skinner, so that he will be available for me at one o'clock, a week from Sunday. I'll attend to the other details."

Mr. Skinner nodded. He was still chuckling when he departed the office.

A week from the succeeding Saturday, Mr. Skinner did not come down to the office, but a telephone message from his home informed the chief clerk that Mr. Skinner was at home and someone ill. The chief clerk was to advise Mr. Peck that he, Mr. Skinner, had contemplated having a conference with him later that day, but his sickness would prevent this. Mr. Skinner hoped to be feeling much better tomorrow, and since he was anxious to talk with Mr. Peck before he left on his next sales trip, would Mr. Peck be good enough to stop by his house at one o'clock on Sunday afternoon? Mr. Peck sent back word that he would be there at the appointed time.

Promptly at one o'clock the following day, Bill Peck reported to the general manager's house. He found Skinner in bed, reading the paper and looking surprisingly well. He trusted Skinner felt better than he looked. Mr. Skinner did, and at once entered into a discussion of the new customers, other prospects he particularly desired Mr. Peck to approach, new business to be investigated and further details without end. And in the middle of this conference, Cappy Ricks phoned.

A portable telephone stood on a table beside Mr. Skinner's bed, so he answered it immediately. Mr. Peck watched Skinner listen attentively for fully two minutes, then heard him say:

"Mr. Ricks, I'm terribly sorry. I'd love to do this errand for you but I'm really under the weather. In fact, I'm in bed as I speak to you now. But Mr. Peck is here with me and I'm sure he'll be very happy to attend to the matter for you."

"By all means," Bill Peck hastened to assure the general manager. "Who does Mr. Ricks want killed and where will he have the body delivered?"

"Hah-hah! Hah-hah!" Mr. Skinner had a singularly annoying, mirthless laugh, as if he begrudged himself such an unheard-of indulgence. "Mr. Peck says," he informed Cappy, "that he'll be delighted to attend to the matter for you. He wants to know whom you want killed and where you wish the body delivered. Hah-hah! Hah-hah! Peck, Mr. Ricks will speak to you."

Bill Peck took the telephone. "Good afternoon, Mr. Ricks."

"Hello, old soldier. What are you doing this afternoon?"

"Final preparation for my sales trip tomorrow — after I conclude my conference with Mr. Skinner. Most everything is pulled together, but there are a few things that I'd like to put in order before I hit the road. By the way, he has just given me the most handsome boost in salary, for which I am most appreciative. I feel, however, that in addition to Mr. Skinner's graciousness, you have put in a kind word for me with him, and I want to thank you —"

"Tut, tut. Not a peep out of you, sir. Not a peep. You get nothing for nothing from Skinner and me. However, in view of the fact that you're feeling kindly toward me this afternoon, I wish you'd put aside your feelings for a few minutes and do a little errand for me. I hate to make a messenger out of you — er — ah — ahem! That is — ha-rumph-h-h—!"

"I have no false pride, Mr. Ricks."

"Thank you, Bill. Glad you feel that way about it. Bill, I was prowling around town this afternoon, after church, and down in a store on Sutter Street, between Stockton and Powell Street, on the right hand side as you face Market Street, I saw a blue vase in a window. I have a weakness for vases, Bill. I'm sharp on them, too. Now, this vase I saw isn't very expensive as vases go — in fact, I wouldn't buy it for my collection — but one of my dear friends has the mate to that blue vase I saw in the window and I know she'd be prouder than Punch if she had two of them — one for each side of her drawing room mantel, understand?"

"Now, I'm leaving from the Southern Pacific depot at eight o'clock tonight, bound for Santa Barbara to attend her wedding anniversary tomorrow. I forget what anniversary it is, Bill, but I have been informed by my daughter that this crazy little blue vase just fills the order. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. You feel that it would be most graceful on your part if you could bring this little blue vase down to Santa Barbara with you tonight. You have to have it tonight, because if you wait until the store opens on Monday, the vase will reach your hostess twenty-four hours after her anniversary party."

"Exactly, Bill. Now, I've simply got to have that vase. If I discovered it yesterday, I wouldn't be asking you to get it for me today, Bill. But, I've got to finish up some telegrams for our manager in the Shanghai office, and I don't see where I can find the time to do both."

"Please do not make any explanations or apologies, Mr. Ricks. You have described the vase — no you haven't. What sort of blue is it, how tall is it and what is, approximately, its greatest diameter? Does it set on a base or does it not? Is it a solid blue, or is it figured?"

"It's a Cloisonné vase, Bill — sort of old Dutch blue, or Delft, with some Chinese or Japanese doodads on it. I couldn't describe it exactly, but it has some birds and flowers on it. It's about a foot tall and four inches in diameter and sets on a teak-wood base."

"Very well, sir. You shall have it."

"And you'll deliver it to me in stateroom A, car seven, aboard the train at Third and Townsend Streets, at seven fifty-five tonight?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Bill. The expense will be trifling, I do know that. Collect it from the cashier in the morning and tell him to charge it to my account. " And Cappy hung up.

"At once Mr. Skinner took up the thread of the interrupted conference, and it was not until three o'clock that Bill Peck left his house and proceeded downtown to locate Cappy Ricks' blue vase.

He proceeded to the block in Sutter Street between Stockton and Powell Streets, and although he walked patiently up one side of the street and down the other, not a single vase of any description showed in any window, nor could he find a single shop where such a vase as Cappy had described might, perchance, be displayed for sale.

"I think the old boy has erred in the coordinates of the target," Bill Peck concluded, "or else I misunderstood him. I'll telephone his house and ask him to repeat them."

He did, but nobody was home except a butler, and all he knew was that Mr. Ricks was out and the hour of his return was unknown. He tried the telephone at the office, to no avail. So Mr. Peck went back to Sutter Street and scoured once more every show window in the block.

Then he scouted two blocks above Powell and two blocks below Stockton. Still the blue vase remained invisible.

So he transferred his search to a corresponding area on Bush Street, and when that failed, he went painstakingly over four blocks of Post Street. He was without results when he moved one block further west and one further south and discovered the blue vase in a huge plate-glass window of a shop on Geary Street near Grant Avenue. He surveyed it critically and was convinced that it was the object he sought.

He tried the door, but it was locked, as he had anticipated it would be. So, he kicked the door and raised a racket, hoping against hope that the noise might bring a watchman from the rear of the building. In vain. He backed out to the edge of the sidewalk and read the sign above the door:

B. Johnson's Art Shop

This was a start, so Mr. Peck limped over to the Palace Hotel and procured a telephone directory. By actual count there were nineteen B. Johnsons scattered throughout the city, so before commencing to call the nineteen, Bill Peck borrowed the city directory from the hotel clerk and scanned it for the particular B. Johnson who owned the art shop. His search availed him nothing. B. Johnson was listed as an art dealer at the address where the blue vase was reposed in the shop window. That was all.

"I suppose he's a commuter," Mr. Peck concluded, and at once proceeded to procure directories of the adjacent cities of Berkley, Oakland and Alameda. They were not available, so in despair, he changed a dollar into five cent pieces, sought a telephone booth and commenced calling up all the B. Johnsons in San Francisco.

Of the nineteen, four did not answer, three were temporarily disconnected, six replied in languages he couldn't decipher, five were not the B. Johnsons he sought and one swore that his name was actually Jolson and it was about time the telephone directory got it right.

The B. Johnsons resident in Berkley, Oakland, Alameda, San Rafael, Sausalito, Mill Valley, San Mateo, Redwood City and Palo Alto were next telephoned to, and when this long and expensive task was done, ex-Private Bill Peck emerged from the telephone booth wringing wet with perspiration and as irritable as a clucking hen. Once outside the hotel, he raised his face to heaven and dumbly inquired of the Al-

mighty what He meant by saving him from a quick death on the battlefield of honor only to condemn him to be talked to death by B. Johnsons in civilian life.

It was now six o'clock. Suddenly Peck had an inspiration. Was the name spelled Johnson, Johnsen, Jonson, Jansen, or Jonsen?

"If I have to take a city census again tonight, I'll die," he told himself desperately and went back to the art shop.

The sign read:

B. Jonson's Art Shop

"I wish I knew a bootlegger's joint," poor Peck complained. "I'm pretty far gone and a little alcohol wouldn't hurt me much now. Why, I could have sworn it was spelled with an H. It seems to me that I noted that particularly."

He went back to the hotel telephone booth and commenced calling up all the B. Jonsons in town. There were eight of them and six of them were out, one was drunk and the other was very deaf and shouted unintelligibly.

"Peace hath its barbarities no less than war," Mr. Peck sighed. He changed a twenty-dollar bill into nickels, dimes and quarters, returned to the hot, ill-smelling telephone booth and proceeded to lay down a barrage of calls to the B. Jonsons of all towns of any importance contiguous to San Francisco Bay. And he was lucky. On the sixth call he located the particular B. Jonson in San Rafael, only to be informed by B. Jonson's cook that Mr. Jonson was dining at the home of a Mr. Simons in Mill Valley.

There were three Mr. Simons in Mill Valley and Peck called them all before connecting with the right one. Yes, Mr. B. Jonson was there. Who wished to speak with him? Mr. Heck? Oh, Mr. Lake! A silence. Then — "Mr. Jonson says he doesn't know any Mr. Lake and wants to know the nature of your business. He is dining and doesn't like to be disturbed unless it is a matter of grave importance."

"Tell him Mr. Peck wishes to speak to him on a matter of very great importance," wailed the private.

"Mr. Metz? Mr. Ben Metz?"

"No, no, no. Peck — P-e-c-k."

"D-e-c-k?"

"No, P."

"C?"

"P."

"Oh, yes E. E — what?"

"C-k—"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Eckstein"

"Call Jonson to the phone or I'll go over there on the next boat and tell him you're the person who wouldn't get him to the phone when I called to tell him his store is on fire."

That message was evidently delivered for almost instantly Mr. B. Jonson was puffing and spluttering into the phone.

"Is this — the — fire — marshal?" he managed to articulate.

"Listen, Mr. Jonson. Your store is not on fire, but I had to say that in order to get you to the telephone, for which I apologize. I am Mr. Peck, a total stranger to you. You have a blue vase in your shop on Geary Street in San Francisco. I need to buy it and I need to buy it before seven forty-five tonight. What do I need to do for you to come across the bay and open the store and sell me that vase?"

"Such an emergency! Do you think I am crazy?"

"No, Mr. Jonson, I do not. I'm the only crazy man talking, I'm crazy for that vase and I've got have it right away."

"You know how much that vase costs?" Mr. B. Jonson's voice dripped syrup.

"No, and I don't give a hoot what it costs. I want what I want when I want it. Do I get it?"

"Well, lemme see. What time is it?" A silence while B. Jonson evidently looked at his watch. "It is now a quarter of seven, Mr. Eckstein, and the next train from Mill Valley doesn't leave until eight o'clock. That will get me to San Francisco at eight-fifty — and I am dining with my friends and I have just finished my soup."

"It will be worth your effort, Mr. Jonson. I want that blue vase."

"Well, I tell you, Mr. Eckstein, if you have to have it, call up my head salesman, Herman Joost, in the Chilton Apartments — Prospect 3249, and tell him I said he should come down right away and sell you that blue vase. If he needs to, he can call me here. Good-bye, Mr. Eckstein."

And B. Jonson hung up.

Instantly Peck called Prospect 3249 and asked for Herman Joost. Mr. Joost's mother answered. She was sorry because Herman was not at home, but vouchsafed the information that he was dining at the country club. Which country club? She did not know. So Peck procured from the hotel clerk a list of the country clubs in and around San

Francisco and started calling them up. At eight o'clock he was still being informed that Mr. Juice was not a member, that Mr. Luce wasn't in, that Mr. Coos had been dead three months and that Mr. Boos had played but eight holes when he received a telegram calling him back to New York. At the other clubs, Mr. Joust was unknown.

"Licked," murmured Mr. Peck, "but never let it be said that I didn't go down fighting. I'm going to heave a brick through that show window, leave a note and get the vase to Mr. Ricks if it kills me. I owe it to him."

He engaged a taxicab and instructed the driver to wait for him at the corner of Geary and Stockton Streets. Also, he borrowed from the chauffeur a ball-peen hammer. When he reached the art shop of B. Jonson, however, a policeman was standing in the doorway, violating the general orders of a policeman on duty by smoking a cigar.

"Better that he's here, since now I don't have the temptation to crack that window," the desperate Peck decided, and continued on down the street, crossed to the other side and came back, thinking about the choices that lay before him. It was now dark and over the art shop B. Jonson's name burned in small red, white and blue electric lights.

And lo, it was spelled B. Johnson!

Ex-private William E. Peck sat down on a fire hydrant and cursed with rage. His weak leg hurt him, too, and for some damnable reason, the stump of his left arm developed the feeling that his missing hand was itchy. It dawned on him that it was itchy for the paperwork on his desk back at Ricks Logging and Lumbering Company.

"The world is filled with obstacles," he raved furiously. "I'm tired and I'm hungry. I skipped lunch and I've been too busy to think about supper. And I've caught myself in two failed duties that I can't recover from."

He walked back to his taxicab and went to the office where, hope springing eternal in his breast, he picked up his papers while calling Prospect 3249 and discovered that the missing Herman Joost had returned to the bosom of his family. To him the frantic Peck delivered the message of B. Jonson whereupon the cautious Herman Joost replied that he would confirm the authenticity of the message by telephoning B. Jonson at Mr. Simon's home in Mill Valley. If Mr. B. Jonson or Johnson confirmed Mr. Kek's story he, the said Herman Joost would be at the store sometime before nine o'clock, and if Mr. Kek cared to, he might await him there.

Mr. Kek said he would be delighted to wait for him there. He knew just what to do to kill the time.

At nine-fifteen Herman Joost appeared on the scene. On his way down the street he had taken the precaution to pick up a policeman and bring him along with him. The lights were switched on in the store and Mr. Joost lovingly extracted the blue vase from the window.

"What's the cursed thing worth," Peck inquired.

"Two thousand dollars," Mr. Joost replied with out so much as the quiver of an eyelash. "Cash," he added, apparently as an afterthought.

The exhausted Peck leaned against the sturdy guardian of the law and sighed. This was the final straw. He had about ten dollars in his possession and ages until the next set of banker's hours.

"You refuse, absolutely, to accept my check?" he quavered?

"I don't know you, Mr. Peck," Herman Joost replied simply.

"Where's your telephone?"

Mr. Joost led Peck to the telephone where he called up Mr. Skinner.

"Mr. Skinner," he announced, "this is all that is left of Bill Peck speaking. I've got the store open and for two thousand dollars — cash — I can buy the blue vase that Mr. Ricks has his heart set upon."

"Oh, Peck, dear fellow," Mr. Skinner purred sympathetically. "Have you been all this time on that errand? I hope you finished up your work before —"

"I have. And I did. And I'm going to stick to this job until I deliver the goods. Could bring two thousand dollars down to me at B. Johnson's Art Shop on Geary Street near Grant Avenue? I'm too utterly exhausted to go up for it."

"My dear Mr. Peck, I haven't two thousand dollars in my house. That is too great a sum of money to keep on hand."

"Well, then come downtown, open of the office safe and release the money to me on Mr. Ricks' behalf."

"Time lock on the safe, Mr. Peck. Impossible."

"Well, then come downtown and identify me at hotels and cafes and restaurants so I can cash my own check."

"Is your check good, Mr. Peck?"

The flood of frustration that which had been accumulating in Mr. Peck's system all the afternoon was now ready to break its bounds. He wanted to scream at Mr. Skinner a blasphemous invitation to betake himself to lower regions.

"Tomorrow morning," he promised hoarsely, "I'll show you what a miserable, cold-blooded, untrusting slacker you are. Now, I've got other matters to tackle." He excused himself and hung up the phone with a slam.

He called up Cappy Ricks' residence next and asked for Captain Matt Peasley who, he knew, made his home with his father-in-law. Matt Peasley came to the phone and listened sympathetically to Peck's tale of woe.

"Peck, that's the worst outrage I ever heard of," he declared. "The idea of setting you to such a task. You take my advice and forget about that blue vase."

"I can't," Peck panted. "Mr. Ricks will feel mighty chagrined if I fail to get the vase to him. I wouldn't disappoint him for the only arm I've got left. He's been a good man to me, Captain Peasley."

"But, it's too late to get the vase to him, Peck. He left the city at eight o'clock and it is now almost half past nine."

"I know, but if I can secure legal possession of the vase I'll get it to him before he leaves the train at Santa Barbara at six o'clock tomorrow morning."

"How?"

"There's a flying school out at the marina and one of the pilots over there is a friend of mine. He'll fly me to Santa Barbara with me and the vase."

"You're crazy," Peasley said almost admiringly.

"I know it. Please lend me two thousand dollars."

"What for?"

"To pay for the vase."

"Now, I know you're crazy — or drunk. Why if Cappy Ricks ever forgot himself to the extent of paying two thousand dollars for a vase he'd bleed to death in an hour."

"Won't you let me have two thousand dollars Captain Peasley?"

"I will not, Peck, my friend. Go home and to bed and know you did your best. You've done more than enough."

"Please. You can cash your checks. You're known so much better than I and it's Sunday night —"

"And it's a fine way to disturb my one evening of peace and quiet," Matt Peasley said and hung up.

"Well," asked Herman Joost, "do we stay here all night?"

Bill Peck bowed his head. "Look here," he demanded suddenly, "do you know a good diamond when you see it?"

"I do," Herman Joost replied.

"Will you wait here until I go to my hotel and get one?"

"Sure."

Bill Peck limped painfully away. Forty minutes later he returned with a platinum ring set with diamonds and sapphires.

"What are they worth," he demanded.

Herman Joost looked the ring over lovingly and appraised it conservatively at twenty-five hundred dollars.

"Take it as security for the payment of my check," Peck pleaded. "Give me a receipt for it and after my check has cleared, I'll come back and get the ring."

Fifteen minutes later, with the blue vase packed safely in a box, Bill Peck entered a restaurant and ordered dinner. When he had dined he engaged a taxi and was driven to the Marina Airfield. From the night watchman he ascertained the address of his pilot friend and, at midnight, with his friend at the wheel, Bill Peck and his blue vase soared up into the moonlight and headed south.

An hour and a half later they landed in a stubble field in Salinas Valley and, bidding his friend goodbye, Bill Peck trudged across to the railroad track and sat down. When the train carrying Cappy Ricks came roaring down the valley, Peck twisted a Sunday paper into an improvised torch, which he lighted. Standing between the rails he swung the flaming paper frantically.

The train slid to a halt, a brake man opened the door and Bill Peck stepped wearily aboard.

"What do you mean by flagging this train?" the brakeman demanded angrily, as he signaled the engineer to proceed. "Got a ticket?"

"No, but I've got money for one. And I flagged this train because I wanted to change my method of travel. I'm looking for a man in stateroom A of car seven, and there's no way you can block me."

"Are you looking for that little old man with the Henry Clay collar and the white whiskers?"

"I certainly am."

"Well, he must have been looking for you just before we left San Francisco. He asked me if I'd seen a one-armed man with a box under his good arm. I'll lead you to him."

A prolonged ringing at Cappy's stateroom door brought the old gentleman to the entrance in his nightshirt.

"Very sorry to disturb you, Mr. Ricks," said Bill Peck, "but the fact is

there were so many Johnstons and Jonsons and Jolsons, and it was such a job to dig up two thousand dollars, that I failed to connect with you at seven fifty-five last night, as per orders. It was absolutely impossible for me to accomplish the task within the time limit set, but I was resolve that you would not be disappointed. Here is the vase. The shop wasn't with four blocks of where you thought it was, sir, but I'm sure I found the right one. It ought to be. It cost enough and was hard to get, so it should be precious enough to make a gift for any friend of yours."

Cappy Ricks stared at Bill Peck as if he had two heads.

"By the Twelve Ragged Apostles!" he murmured. "By the Holy Pink-Toed Prophet! We changed the sign on you and we stacked the Johnsons on you and we set a policeman to guard the shop to keep you from breaking the window and we made you dig up two thousand dollars on Sunday night in a town where you are practically unknown, and while you missed the train at eight o'clock, you overtake it at two o'clock in the morning and deliver the blue vase. Come in and rest your bad leg, Bill. Brakeman, I'm much obliged to you."

Bill Peck entered and slumped wearily down on the couch. "So, it was a setup?" he cracked and his voice trembled with rage. "Well, sir, you're an old man and you've been good to me, so I don't begrudge your little joke but, Mr. Ricks, I can't understand what would drive a decent person to put someone through that. My leg hurts and my stump hurts and my heart hurts — "

He paused, choking, and the tears of rage filled his eyes. "You shouldn't treat me that way, sir," he complained. "I've been trained to deliver on my promises, even when they seem foolish to me in hindsight. I've been trained to satisfy them — on time, if possible — but if impossible to satisfy them anyhow. I've been taught byalty to my chief — and I'm sorry my chief found it necessary to send me on a goose chase for his own amusement."

Cappy Ricks held Bill Peck's aching eyes with his own.

"Bill, it was cruel — damnably cruel, but I had a big job for you and I had to find out things about you before I entrusted you with that job. So, I arranged to give you the Degree of the Blue Vase, which is the supreme test of the go-getter. It's a job that many before you have handed off to one of the messengers at the office, thinking that it was beneath them. It's a job that many have walked away from at the first sign of an obstacle. You thought you carried into this stateroom a two thousand dollar vase, but between you and I, what you carried in here

was a ten thousand dollar job as our Shanghai manager.”

“Wha — what?”

“Every time I have to pick out a permanent holder of a job worth ten thousand dollars, or more, I give the candidate the Degree of the Blue Vase,” Cappy explained. “I’ve had only three men out of thirty deliver the vase, Bill. I’m sure you can guess who two of them are, and why they gave you the advice they did today, as cruel as it may have seemed at the time.”

Bill Peck had forgotten his rage, but the tears of his recent fury still glistened in his bold blue eyes. “Thank you, sir. I’ll make good in Shanghai.”

“By the way, Bill, if you never want to see that blue vase again, give it to the porter in the morning. I paid fifteen cents for it in a five, ten and fifteen cent store. Meanwhile, hop into that upper berth and help yourself to a well-earned rest.”

“But, aren’t you going to a wedding anniversary at Santa Barbara, Mr. Ricks?”

“I am not. Bill, I discovered a long time ago that it’s a good idea for me to get out of town and play golf as often as I can. Besides which, prudence dictates that I remain away from the office for a week after the seeker of the blue vase fails to deliver the goods and — by the way, Bill, what sort of golf game do you play? Oh, forgive me — I forgot about your left arm.”

“Say, look here, sir,” Bill Peck retorted, “I’m big enough and cocky enough to play one-handed golf.”

“But, have you ever tried it?”

“No, sir,” replied Bill Peck, seriously. “But, it shall be done!”