

Red Cow roaming through the world looking for a star to stick on her horn.

"So do I," said Michael as, at the sound of Mary Poppins's returning footsteps, he hurriedly pulled down the blind. . . .



BAD TUESDAY

(Revised version)

IT WAS NOT very long afterwards that Michael woke up one morning with a curious feeling inside him. He knew, the moment he opened his eyes, that something was wrong but he was not quite sure what it was.

"What is today, Mary Poppins?" he enquired, pushing the bedclothes away from him.

"Tuesday," said Mary Poppins. "Go and turn on your bath. Hurry!" she said, as he made no effort to move. He turned over and pulled the bedclothes up over his head and the curious feeling increased.

"What did I say?" said Mary Poppins in that cold, clear voice that was always a Warning.

Michael knew now what was happening to him. He knew he was going to be naughty.

"I won't," he said slowly, his voice muffled by the blanket.

Mary Poppins twitched the clothes from his hand and looked down upon him.

"I WON'T."

He waited, wondering what she would do and was surprised when, without a word, she went into the bathroom and turned on the tap herself. He took his towel and went slowly in as she came out. And for the first time in his life Michael entirely bathed himself. He knew by this that he was in disgrace, and he purposely neglected to wash behind his ears.

"Shall I let out the water?" he enquired in the rudest voice he had.

There was no reply.

"Pooh, I don't care!" said Michael, and the hot heavy weight that was within him swelled and grew larger. "I *don't* care!"

He dressed himself then, putting on his best clothes, that he knew were only for Sunday. And after that he went downstairs, kicking the banisters with his feet—a thing he knew he should not do as it waked up everybody else in the house. On the stairs he met Ellen, the housemaid, and as he passed her he knocked the hot-water jug out of her hand.

"Well, you *are* a clumsy," said Ellen, as she bent down to mop up the water. "That was for your father's shaving."

"I meant to," said Michael calmly.
Ellen's red face went quite white with surprise.

"*Meant* to? You *meant*—well, then, you're a very bad heathen boy, and I'll tell your Ma, so I will——"

"Do," said Michael, and he went on down the stairs.

Well, that was the beginning of it. Throughout the rest of the day nothing went right with him. The hot, heavy feeling inside him made him do the most awful things, and as soon as he'd done them he felt extraordinarily pleased and glad and thought out some more at once.

In the kitchen Mrs. Brill, the cook, was making scones.

"No, Master Michael," she said, "you *can't* scrape out the basin. It's not empty yet."

And at that he let out his foot and kicked Mrs. Brill very hard on the shin, so that she dropped the rolling-pin and screamed aloud.

"You kicked Mrs. Brill? Kind Mrs. Brill? I'm ashamed of you," said his Mother a few minutes later when Mrs. Brill had told her the whole story. "You must beg her pardon at once. Say you're sorry, Michael!"

"But I'm not sorry. I'm glad. Her legs are too fat," he said, and before they could catch him he ran away up the area steps and into the garden. There he purposely bumped into Robertson Ay, who was sound



asleep on top of one of the best rock plants, and Robertson Ay was very angry.

"I'll tell your Pa!" he said threateningly.

"And I'll tell him you haven't cleaned the shoes this morning," said Michael, and was a little astonished at himself. It was his habit and Jane's always to protect Robertson Ay, because they loved him and didn't want to lose him.

But he was not astonished long, for he had begun to wonder what he could do next. And it was no time before he thought of something.

Through the bars of the fence he could see Miss Lark's Andrew daintily sniffing at the Next Door lawn and choosing for himself the best blades of grass. He called softly to Andrew and gave him a biscuit out of his own pocket, and while Andrew was munching it he tied Andrew's tail to the fence with a piece of string. Then he ran away with Miss Lark's angry, outraged voice screaming in his ears, and his body almost bursting with the exciting weight of that heavy thing inside him.

The door of his Father's study stood open—for Ellen had just been dusting the books. So Michael did a forbidden thing. He went in, sat down at his Father's desk, and with his Father's pen began to scribble on the blotter. Suddenly his elbow, knocking against the inkpot, upset it, and the chair and the desk and the quill pen and his own best clothes were covered with great spreading stains of blue ink. It looked dreadful, and fear of what would happen to him stirred within Michael. But, in spite of that, he didn't care—he didn't feel the least bit sorry.

"That child must be ill," said Mrs. Banks, when she was told by Ellen—who suddenly returned and discovered him—of the latest adventure. "Michael, you shall have some syrup of figs."

"I'm not ill. I'm weller than you," said Michael rudely.

"Then you're simply naughty," said his Mother. "And you shall be punished."

And, sure enough, five minutes later, Michael found himself standing in his stained clothes in a corner of the nursery, facing the wall.

Jane tried to speak to him when Mary Poppins was not looking, but he would not answer, and put out his tongue at her. When John and Barbara crawled along the floor and each took hold of one of his shoes and gurgled, he just pushed them roughly away. And all the time he was enjoying his badness, hugging it to him as though it were a friend, and not caring a bit.

"I *hate* being good," he said aloud to himself, as he trailed after Mary Poppins and Jane and the perambulator on the afternoon walk to the Park.

"Don't dawdle," said Mary Poppins, looking back at him.

But he went on dawdling and dragging the sides of his shoes along the pavement in order to scratch the leather.

Suddenly Mary Poppins turned and faced him, one hand on the handle of the perambulator.

"You," she began, "got out of bed the wrong side this morning"

"I didn't," said Michael. "There is no wrong side to my bed."

"Every bed has a right and a wrong side," said Mary Poppins, primly.

"Not mine—it's next the wall."

"That makes no difference. It's still a side," scoffed Mary Poppins.

"Well, is the wrong side the left side or is the wrong side the right side? Because I got out on the right side, so how can it be wrong?"

"Both sides were the wrong side, this morning, Mr. Smarty!"

"But it has only one, and if I got out the right side——" he argued.

"One word more from you——" began Mary Poppins, and she said it in such a peculiarly threatening voice that even Michael felt a little nervous. "One more word and I'll——"

She did not say what she would do, but he quickened his pace.

"Pull yourself together, Michael," said Jane in a whisper.

"You shut up," he said, but so low that Mary Poppins could not hear.

"Now, Sir," said Mary Poppins. "Off you go—in front of me, please. I'm not going to have you

stravaiging behind any longer. You'll oblige me by going on ahead." She pushed him in front of her. "And," she continued, "there's a shiny thing sparkling on the path just along there. I'll thank you to go and pick it up and bring it to me. Somebody's dropped their tiara, perhaps."

Against his will, but because he didn't dare not to, Michael looked in the direction in which she was pointing. Yes—there *was* something shining on the path. From that distance it looked very interesting and its sparkling rays of light seemed to beckon him. He walked on, swaggering a little, going as slowly as he dared and pretending that he didn't really want to see what it was.

He reached the spot and, stooping, picked up the shining thing. It was a small round sort of box with a glass top and on the glass an arrow marked. Inside, a round disc that seemed to be covered with letters swung gently as he moved the box.

Jane ran up and looked at it over his shoulder.

"What is it, Michael?" she asked.

"I won't tell you," said Michael, though he didn't know himself.

"Mary Poppins, what is it?" demanded Jane, as the perambulator drew up beside them. Mary Poppins took the little box from Michael's hand.

"It's mine," he said jealously.

"No, mine," said Mary Poppins. "I saw it first."

"But I picked it up." He tried to snatch it from her hand, but she gave him such a look that his hand fell to his side.

She tilted the round thing backwards and forwards, and in the sunlight the disc and its letters went careering madly inside the box.

"What's it for?" asked Jane.

"To go round the world with," said Mary Poppins.

"Pooh!" said Michael. "You go round the world in a ship, or an aeroplane. I know that. The box thing wouldn't take you round the world."

"Oh, indeed—wouldn't it?" said Mary Poppins, with a curious I-know-better-than-you expression on her face. "You just watch!"

And holding the compass in her hand she turned towards the entrance of the Park and said the word "North!"

The letters slid round the arrow, dancing giddily. Suddenly the atmosphere seemed to grow bitterly cold, and the wind became so icy that Jane and Michael shut their eyes against it. When they opened them the Park had entirely disappeared—not a tree nor a green-painted seat nor an asphalt footpath was in sight. Instead, they were surrounded by great



The compass

boulders of blue ice and beneath their feet snow lay thickly frosted upon the ground.

"Oh, oh!" cried Jane, shivering with cold and surprise, and she rushed to cover the Twins with their perambulator rug. "What *has* happened to us?"

Mary Poppins sniffed. She had no time to reply, however, for at that moment a white furry head peered cautiously round a boulder. Then, a huge Polar Bear leapt out and, standing on his hind legs, proceeded to hug Mary Poppins.

"I was afraid you might be trappers," he said. "Welcome to the North Pole, all of you."

He put out a long pink tongue, rough and warm as a bath towel, and gently licked the children's cheeks.

They trembled. Did Polar Bears eat children, they wondered?

"You're shivering!" the Bear said kindly. "That's because you need something to eat. Make yourselves comfortable on this iceberg." He waved a paw at a block of ice. "Now, what would you like? Cod? Shrimps? Just something to keep the wolf from the door."

"I'm afraid we can't stay," Mary Poppins broke in.

"We're on our way round the world."

"Well, do let me get you a little snack. It won't take me a jiffy."

He sprang into the blue-green water and came up with a herring. "I wish you could have stayed for a chat." He tucked the fish into Mary Poppins's hand. "I long for a bit of gossip."

"Another time perhaps," she said. "And thank you for the fish."

"South!" she said to the compass.

It seemed to Jane and Michael then that the world was spinning round them. As they felt the air getting soft and warm, they found themselves in a leafy jungle from which came a noisy sound of squawking.

"Welcome!" shrieked a large Hyacinth Macaw who was perched on a branch with outstretched wings.

"You're just the person we need, Mary Poppins. My wife's off gadding, and I'm left to sit on the eggs. Do take a turn, there's a good girl. I need a little rest."

He lifted a spread wing cautiously, disclosing a nest with two white eggs.

"Alas, this is just a passing visit. We're on our way round the world."

"Gracious, what a journey! Well, stay for a little moment so that I can get some sleep. If you can look after all those creatures"—he nodded at the children—"you can keep two small eggs warm. Do, Mary Poppins! And I'll get you some bananas instead of that wriggling fish."

"It was a present," said Mary Poppins.

"Well, well, keep it if you must. But what madness to go gallivanting round the world when you could stay and bring up our nestlings. Why should we spend our time sitting when you could do it as well?"

"Better, you mean!" sniffed Mary Poppins.

Then, to Jane and Michael's disappointment—they would dearly have liked some tropical fruit—she shook her head decisively and said, "East!"

Again the world went spinning round them—*or* were they spinning round the world? And then, whichever it was ceased.

They found themselves in a grassy clearing surrounded by bamboo trees. Green paperlike leaves rustled in the breeze. And above that quiet swishing they could hear a steady rhythmic sound—a snore, *or* was it a purr?

Glancing round, they beheld a large furry shape—black with blotches of white, *or* was it white with blotches of black? They could not really be sure.

Jane and Michael gazed at each other. Was it a dream from which they would wake? *Or* were they seeing, of all things, a Panda! And a Panda in its own home and not behind bars in a zoo.

The dream, if it was a dream, drew a long breath.

"Whoever it is, please go away. I rest in the afternoon."

The voice was as furry as the rest of him.

"Very well, then, we *will* go away. And then perhaps"—Mary Poppins's voice was at its most priggish—"you'll be sorry you missed us."

The Panda opened one black eye. "Oh, it's you, my

dear girl," he said sleepily. "Why not have let me know you were coming? Difficult though it would have been, for *you* I would have stayed awake." The furry shape yawned and stretched itself. "Ah well, I'll have to make a home for you all. There wouldn't be enough room in mine." He nodded at a neat shelter made of leaves and bamboo sticks. "But," he added, eying the herring, "I will not allow that scaly seathing under any roof of mine. Fishes are far too fishy for me."

"We shall not be staying," Mary Poppins assured him. "We're taking a little trip round the world and just looked in for a moment."

"What nonsense!" The Panda gave an enormous yawn. "Traipsing wildly round the world when you could stay here with me. Never mind, my dear Mary, you always do what you want to do, however absurd and foolish. Pluck a few young bamboo shoots. They'll sustain you till you get home. And you two"—he nodded at Jane and Michael—"tickle me gently behind the ears. That always sends me to sleep."

Eagerly they sat down beside him and stroked the silky fur. Never again—they were sure of it—would they have the chance of stroking a Panda.

The furry shape settled itself, and as they stroked, the snore—or the purr—began its rhythm.

"He's asleep," said Mary Poppins softly. "We

mustn't wake him again." She beckoned to the children, and as they came on tip-toe towards her, she gave a flick of her wrist. And the compass, apparently, understood, for the spinning began again.

Hills and lakes, mountains and forests went waltzing round them to unheard music. Then again the world was still, as if it had never moved.

This time they found themselves on a long white shore, with wavelets lapping and curling against it. And immediately before them was a cloud of whirling, swirling sand from which came a series of grunts. Then slowly the cloud settled, disclosing a large black and grey Dolphin with a young one at her side.

"Is that you, Amelia?" called Mary Poppins.

The Dolphin blew some sand from her nose and gave a start of surprise. "Well, of all people, it's Mary Poppins! You're just in time to share our sand-bath. Nothing like a sand-bath for cleansing the fins and the tail."

"I had a bath this morning, thank you!"

"Well, what about those young ones, dear? Couldn't they do with a bit of scouring?"

"They have no fins and tails," said Mary Poppins, much to the children's disappointment. They would have liked a roll in the sand.

"Well, what on earth or sea are you doing here?" Amelia demanded briskly.

"Oh, just going round the world, you know," Mary Poppins said airily, as though going round the world was a thing you did every day.

"Well, it's a treat for Froggie and me—isn't it, Froggie?" Amelia butted him with her nose, and the young Dolphin gave a friendly squeak.

"I call him Froggie because he so often strays away—just like the Frog that would a-woooing go, whether his mother would let him or no. Don't you, Froggie?" His answer was another squeak.

"Well, now for a meal. What would you like?" Amelia grinned at Jane and Michael, displaying a splendid array of teeth. "There's cockles and mussels alive, alive-O. And the seaweed here is excellent."

"Thank you kindly, I'm sure, Amelia. But we have to be home in half a minute." Mary Poppins laid a firm hand on the handle of the perambulator.

Amelia was clearly disappointed.

"Whatever kind of visit is that? Hullo and goodbye in the same breath. Next time you must stay for tea, and we'll all sit together on a rock and sing a song to the moon. Eh, Froggie?"

Froggie squeaked.

"That will be lovely," said Mary Poppins, and Jane

and Michael echoed her words. They had never yet sat on a rock and sung a song to the moon.

"Well, au revoir, one and all. By the way, Mary, my dear, were you going to take that herring with you?"

Amelia greedily eyed the fish, which, fearing the worst was about to happen, made itself as limp as it could in Mary Poppins's hand.

"No. I am planning to throw it back to the sea!" The herring gasped with relief.

"A very proper decision, Mary." Amelia toothily smiled. "We get so few of them in these parts, and they make a delicious meal. Why don't we race for it, Froggie and me? When you say 'Go!', we'll start swimming and see who gets it first."

Mary Poppins held the fish aloft.

"Ready! Steady! Go!" she cried.

And as if it were bird rather than fish, the herring swooped up and splashed into the sea.

The Dolphins were after it in a second, two dark striving shapes rippling through the water.

Jane and Michael could hardly breathe. Which would win the prize? Or would the prize escape?

"Froggie! Froggie! Froggie!" yelled Michael. If the herring had to be caught and eaten, he wanted Froggie to win.

"F-r-o-g-g-i-e!" The wind and sea both cried the name, but Michael's voice was the stronger.

"What *do* you think you're doing, Michael?" Mary Poppins sounded ferocious.

He glanced at her for a moment and turned again to the sea.

But the sea was not there. Nothing but a neat green lawn; Jane, agog, beside him; the Twins in the perambulator; and Mary Poppins pushing it in the middle of the Park.

"Jumping up and down and shouting! Making a nuisance of yourself. One would think you had done enough for one day. Step along at once, please!"

"Round the world and back in a minute—what a wonderful box!" said Jane.

"It's a *compass*. Not a box. And it's mine," said Michael. "I found it. Give it to me!"

"*My* compass, thank you," said Mary Poppins, as she slipped it into her pocket.

He looked as if he would like to kill her. But he shrugged his shoulders and stalked off taking no notice of anyone.

The burning weight still hung heavily within him. After the adventure with the compass it seemed to grow worse, and towards the evening he grew naugh-

tier and naughtier. He pinched the Twins when Mary Poppins was not looking, and when they cried he said in a falsely kind voice:

"Why, darlings, what *is* the matter?"

But Mary Poppins was not deceived by it.

"You've got something coming to *you*!" she said significantly. But the burning thing inside him would not let him care. He just shrugged his shoulders and pulled Jane's hair. And after that he went to the supper table and upset his bread-and-milk.

"And that," said Mary Poppins, "is the end. Such deliberate naughtiness I never saw. In all my born days I never did, and that's a fact. Off you go! Straight into bed with you and not another word!" He had never seen her look so terrible.

But still he didn't care.

He went into the Night-nursery and undressed. No, he didn't care. He was bad, and if they didn't look out he'd be worse. He *didn't* care. He hated everybody. If they weren't careful he would run away and join a circus. There! Off went a button. Good—there would be fewer to do up in the morning. And another! All the better. Nothing in all the world could ever make him feel sorry. He would get into bed without brushing his hair or his teeth—certainly without saying his prayers.

He was just about to get into bed and, indeed, had one foot already in it, when he noticed the compass lying on the top of the chest of drawers.

Very slowly he withdrew his foot and tip-toed across the room. He knew now what he would do. He would take the compass and spin it and go round the world. And they'd never find him again. And it would serve them right. Without making a sound he lifted a chair and put it against the chest of drawers. Then he climbed up on it and took the compass in his hand.

He moved it.

"North, South, East, West!" he said very quickly, in case anybody should come in before he got well away.

A noise behind the chair startled him and he turned round guiltily, expecting to see Mary Poppins. But instead, there were four gigantic figures bearing down upon him—the bear with his fangs showing, the Macaw fiercely flapping his wings, the Panda with his fur on end, the Dolphin thrusting out her snout. From all quarters of the room they were rushing upon him, their shadows huge on the ceiling. No longer kind and friendly, they were now full of revenge. Their terrible angry faces loomed nearer. He could feel their hot breath on his face.

"Oh! Oh!" Michael dropped the compass. "Mary Poppins, help me!" he screamed and shut his eyes in terror.

And then something enveloped him. The great creatures and their greater shadows, with a mingled roar or squawk of triumph, flung themselves upon him. What was it that held him, soft and warm, in its smothering embrace? The Polar Bear's fur coat? The Macaw's feathers? The Panda's fur he had stroked so gently? The mother Dolphin's flipper? And what was he—or it might be she—planning to do to him? If only he had been good—if only!

"Mary Poppins!" he wailed, as he felt himself carried through the air and set down in something still softer.

"Oh, *dear* Mary Poppins!"

"All right, all right. I'm not deaf, I'm thankful to say—no need to shout," he heard her saying calmly.

He opened one eye. He could see no sign of the four gigantic figures of the compass. He opened the other eye to make sure. No—not a glint of any of them. He sat up. He looked round the room. There was nothing there.

Then he discovered that the soft thing that was round him was his own blanket, and the soft thing he was lying on was his own bed. And oh, the heavy

burning thing that had been inside him all day had melted and disappeared. He felt peaceful and happy, and as if he would like to give everybody he knew a birthday present.

"What—what happened?" he said rather anxiously to Mary Poppins.

"I told you that was my compass, didn't I? Be kind enough not to touch my things, *if you please*," was all she said as she stooped and picked up the compass and put it in her pocket. Then she began to fold the clothes that he had thrown down on the floor.

"Shall I do it?" he said.

"No, thank you."

He watched her go into the next room, and presently she returned and put something warm into his hands. It was a cup of milk.

Michael sipped it, tasting every drop several times with his tongue, making it last as long as possible so that Mary Poppins should stay beside him.

She stood there without saying a word, watching the milk slowly disappear. He could smell her crackling white apron and the faint flavour of toast that always hung about her so deliciously. But try as he would, he could not make the milk last for ever, and presently, with a sigh of regret, he handed her the empty cup and slipped down into the bed. He had

never known it to be so comfortable, he thought. And he thought, too, how warm he was and how happy he felt and how lucky he was to be alive.

"Isn't it a funny thing, Mary Poppins," he said drowsily. "I've been so very naughty and I feel so very good."

"Humph!" said Mary Poppins as she tucked him in and went away to wash up the supper things. . . .

