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MR. BONWIG'S SHOT. — Page 21.

YOUNG JOE

AND OTHER BOYS

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

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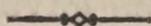


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YOUNG JOE.



I.

WILD DUCKS.

ONE day, a good many years ago, Young Joe Scoville, of Bass Cove, went up to town to sell some wild ducks he had shot.

Old Joe (that was his father) had said to him, early in the season, "When I see you come a-luggin' home a couple o' dozen ducks to oncet, then I'll let you go and try your hand sellin' on 'em;" and Young Joe, having bagged that morning his two dozen and upward, had now for the first time in his life come alone to market.

And very proud was Young Joe, I assure you. He drove smartly into the Square, and cried, "Whoa!" and "Here's yer nice fine ducks, gentlemen! walk up, gentlemen!" and nodded respectfully to customers, and felt and acted very much like Old Joe, his father.

He thought everybody appeared greatly pleased with him. Some looked at his freckled face, long hair, and old coat that had been his father's (and had seen I don't know how many Atlantic storms), and smiled approvingly. Some appeared delighted with his manners — so fresh and natural, you know. Others regarded his little old one-horse wagon, and queer little pony, — with his unkempt mane about his face and eyes, which gave him a striking resemblance to Young Joe with his long hair, — as if they had never seen anything so agreeable.

“What pleasant folks these city folks be!” thought Young Joe.

“Walk up, gentlemen, and take a look! Don't cost nothin' to take a look, whether ye buy or not!” he called out. “How d'e do?”

He said “How d'e do?” to about the handsomest, best-dressed, and fattest man either he or anybody else ever saw. He had a cane in his hand and a cigar in his mouth, and was altogether a nice, plump, shiny fellow, from his hat to his boots.

He did not say in reply, “Pretty well, thank ye; how are you?” as Joe, who had been taught good manners at home, thought he ought to have done; but, with his hat tipped airily on one side of his head, and his cigar sticking up jauntily out of one corner of his mouth, he came along and looked carelessly into the wagon.

“Hello!” said he, when he saw the ducks. He took the cigar out of his mouth and said “Hel-lo!”

again, more emphatically than before, and looked up at Young Joe. "Where did you get these?"

"Shot 'em; where d'ye s'pose?" said Young Joe, proudly.

"*You* didn't shoot 'em? — a boy like *you!*" said the fat man.

"Mabby I didn't," replied Joe, indignantly; "and then, agin, mabby I did; and it's a little more I did than I didn't, this time, I guess!"

"Bless my heart! if I ain't surprised!"

Now the handsome and well-dressed plump gentleman happened to be no other than Mr. Augustus Bonwig, the confectioner, whose celebrated candy-shop was well and favorably known to every good boy and girl in town. He looked almost as if he had been made of candy himself — clear white and red, and a great deal of it.

There was one thing he was remarkably good at, but on which he did not pride himself at all, and that was — his business. There was another thing he was not so good at, but on which he naturally prided himself a good deal (for that is the way with some of us), and that was — gunning. He didn't care whether you praised his sweetmeats or not; but if you happened to say, "Bonwig, people tell me you are a fine shot," that pleased Mr. Augustus Bonwig.

It was this ambition of his which caused him to regard Young Joe with sudden interest, and to exclaim again, very emphatically, after having examined

him and the ducks once more, "Bless my heart now! I *am* surprised!"

"Do—you—want—to—buy—them—ducks?" demanded Young Joe, ungrammatically, but very distinctly, beginning to distrust Mr. Bonwig. "If you don't, you needn't feel obliged to handle 'em any more, that's all."

"No, I don't care to purchase; but I'll give something for a chance to shoot a few such birds," said Mr. Bonwig—and blessed his heart again.

"Oh! that's it! Wal, you come down our way some time, and I'll show ye a chance. Ye can shoot as many black ducks and coots and old-wives as ye can carry away on yer back. And I won't charge ye nothin' for 't, neither. Takes gumption to git 'em, though, sometimes!" said Joe.

"I guess if *you* can get 'em *I* can, fast enough!" said the smiling Augustus. "Where do you live?"

"Bass Cove. Ask for old Joe Scoville—that's my father. Stage-driver'll set ye down right by the door. Hope you'll bring a good gun. I hain't got much of a gun, nor dad hain't, neither;—sometimes I take mine, and sometimes I take his'n, and sometimes I take both;—flint-locks; miss fire half the time; but we manage to make 'em do, seein' we've got the hang o' the ducks."

This speech greatly encouraged Mr. Bonwig, who thought that if such a green youth as Joe, with an old flint-lock, could bag wild ducks at Bass Cove, surely he, Augustus the sportsman, with his fine

double-barrelled fowling-piece and modern accoutrements, must have great success there, and astonish the natives at their own game. He named an early day for his visit, and already imagined himself shooting ducks by the dozen.

“'Arly in the mornin' 's the best time for 'em,” said Joe, who accordingly advised him to come down the evening before, and stop overnight.

To this Mr. Bonwig agreed, and walked away in fine spirits, with his hat on one side, swinging his cane, and jauntily puffing his cigar. Then, having sold his ducks for a good price, and bought a new fur cap for winter wear, and a glass of very small beer for immediate consumption, and a rattle for the baby, and a paper of brown sugar for the family, all with the duck-money, Young Joe turned about and drove home, with a pretty good handful of small change still jingling in his pocket.

II.

MR. BONWIG AT BASS COVE.

ONE evening, not long after, the stage-coach rolled up to Old Joe's door at the Cove, and a stout sporting gentleman got down over the wheel, from the top, and jumped to the ground. It was Mr. Augustus Bonwig, looking plumper than ever, in his short hunting-jacket, and handsomer than ever, to Young Joe's fancy, in his magnificent hunting-boots (red-topped, trousers tucked into them), and with the fine double-barrelled gun he carried.

"Oh, ain't that —!" exclaimed Joe, poising the gun. He did not say *what* — no word in the language seemed adequate to express the admiration and delight with which he regarded the beautiful fowling-piece. "And what boots them are for wet walkin'! And hain't you got the splendidest game-bag though! And what a huntin'-cap! — it don't seem as though a man *could* miss a bird, that wore such a cap as that! Come in," said Joe, his respect for Mr. Bonwig greatly increased, now that he had seen him in such noble sporting rig. "Father's to home. And I'll show you our guns — old-fashioned queen's-arms, both on 'em."

"Bless my heart!" said Augustus, smiling. "Well now, I *am* surprised! You don't mean to say you shoot ducks with *those* things? Well, well, I *am*!"

“My boy there,” said Old Joe, filling his pipe and cocking his eye proudly at the youngster, “he’d shoot ducks with ’most anything, I believe. He’d bring ’em down with a hoe-handle, if he couldn’t git hold o’ nothin’ else. He’s got a knack, sir; it’s all in havin’ a knack.”

And Old Joe, who had been standing with his back to the fire, turned about and stooped to pick up a small live coal with the tongs.

“Then agin,” — he pressed the coal into the bowl of his pipe, and took a puff, — “ducks is” — puff, puff — “puty plenty,” — puff, — “and puty tame on this here coast, about now.” And the old man, having lighted his pipe, and replaced the tongs in the chimney-corner, stepped aside, to make room for his wife.

Mrs. Joe swung out the old-fashioned crane, hung the tea-kettle on one of the hooks, and swung it back again over the fire. Then she greased the iron spider, placed it on the coals, and made other preparations for supper.

“Sed down, sed down,” said Old Joe; and Mr. Bonwig sat down. And the children crowded around him, to admire his watch-chain and his red-topped boots. And the amiable Augustus, who had come prepared for such emergencies, pulled out of one pocket one kind of candy, and another kind out of another pocket, and still a third variety from a third receptacle, and so on; for his hunting-suit seemed to be literally lined with pockets, and all his pockets to

contain more or less of those celebrated sweetmeats so well and so favorably known to the good boys and girls in town. And Mr. Bonwig was pleased to observe that human nature was the same everywhere; country boys and girls were like city boys and girls, in one respect at least—all liked candy.

“Oh, ain’t it good!” said Maggie.

“Prime! I tell ye!” said Joe, who had his share, of course.

“Goodie, good!” said Molly.

“Goo, goo!” crowed the baby.

“Oh, my!” said Tottie.

And they all sucked and crunched, with cheeks sticking out and eyes glistening, just like so many children in town, for all the world. And Augustus was happy, thinking just then, I imagine, of three or four plump little darlings at home, of whom he was very fond, and whom he never left for a single night, if he could help it, unless it was to go on some such glorious hunting frolic as this.

It was a poor man’s kitchen. I don’t think there was a carpet or a table-napkin in the house; the ceiling was low, the windows were small, the walls smoky, and everything was as plain and old-fashioned as could be. But Mr. Bonwig, nice gentleman as he was, appeared delighted. He prided himself on his sportsman-like habits, and so the rougher he found life down on the coast, the better. He admired the little smoky kitchen, he liked the fried perch and cold wild duck for supper, and he was

charmed with the homely talk of gunning and fishing, and storms and wrecks, which took up the evening, and with the bed of wild-fowls' feathers on which he passed the night.

The next morning Young Joe came to his bedside, candle in hand, and awoke him, before dawn.

"Hello!" said Mr. Bonwig, rubbing his eyes open. "Hel-lo! I *am* surprised! I was having such a splendid time! I thought I was hunting ducks, and I had got a whole flock in range of my two barrels, and was waiting for a few more to light; but I was just going to shoot, when you woke me. I wish I had fired before!"

"Wal, you come with me, and mabby your dream 'll come to pass," said Young Joe, leaving him the candle to dress by.

Mrs. Scoville was already cooking their breakfast; "for, like as not," she said, "they wouldn't be back till noon, and they must have a bite of something to start with."

Mr. Bonwig was sorry she had given herself so much trouble; but he afterwards, as we shall see, had good reason to be thankful that he had taken that "bite."

At daylight they set out, Mr. Bonwig with his fine, stub-twist, two-barrelled fowling-piece, and Young Joe with both the old queen's-arms, his own and his father's.

Mr. Bonwig wished to know what the boy expected to do with two guns.

"They may come handy; they 'most alluz does," said Joe.

"But I've *my* gun this time," said Augustus; "and I shall want you to carry the birds."

That was a somewhat startling suggestion; but Joe thought he would take both guns, nevertheless.

"I ain't goin' to come in the way of your shootin'; but I'll jest take what you leave — though I don't suppose that will be much," said he.

It was a cool autumn morning. The air was crisp and exhilarating. The morning light was breaking, through dim clouds, over land and sea. Joe led the way over the short wet grass, and rocks and ledges, of a rough hill back of the Cove. At last he pulled the eager Augustus by the jacket, and said:

"Be sly, now, climbin' around them rocks yender! There's a beach t'other side, and a little stream o' water runnin' acrost it. Black ducks can't git along, as some kinds can, with salt water alone; they alluz have to go to fresh water to drink, and we're apt to find 'em around Beach Brook here, 'fore folks are stirrin'. 'Twas on this beach father shot the twenty-five, to one shot, he told ye about last night."

"Was that a true story, Joe?" Augustus asked, growing excited.

"True as guns," said Joe. "Ye see, they all gather in a huddle along by the brook, and you've only to git in range of 'em, and let fly jest at the right minute; sometimes there'll be a flock of a

hundred, like as any way, and ye can't miss 'em all if ye try."

"I should think not!" said Mr. Bonwig, taking long, noiseless strides in his hunting-boots, and holding his gun in the approved fashion. "Only show me such a chance!"

"I'll wait here in the hollow," said Joe. "You crawl over the rocks, and look right down on the beach before ye, and — By sixty! there's a flock lightin' now! — see 'em?"

"Bless my heart!" said Bonwig, in no little trepidation.

He took the route Joe pointed out, and soon disappeared behind the ledges. Then all was silence for several minutes, while Joe waited to hear the double report of the destructive fowling-piece, and to see the frightened flock of ducks — or such as were left of them after Mr. Bonwig's shot — fly up again.

Bonwig in the mean time crept along behind a pile of rocks Joe had described to him, and, looking through an opening, saw a wonderful sight. Before him spread the broad, smooth beach, washed by the surf. There must have been a high wind off the coast during the night, for the sea was rough, and long, heavy breakers came curling and plunging magnificently along the shore. The morning clouds were reddening over the agitated ocean, which faintly reflected their tints.

But the sight which most interested Mr. Augustus

Bonwig was the game that awaited him. The brook, which cut out afresh its channel across the beach as often as the tide, which filled it with sand twice in the twenty-four hours, receded, — the little brook, from the rocks to the surf (it was now half tide), was alive with ducks, and more were alighting.

Mr. Bonwig silently blessed his heart two or three times — and well he might, for it was beating with very unsportsman-like rapidity at that exciting moment. His hands shook so that it was well that Joe, if he was to retain his high respect for him as a gunner, did not see them. In fact, Mr. Bonwig, who fancied himself a sportsman because he had been sometimes successful in firing at a mark, found this a very different business.

He hardly knew whether he took aim or not. That one barrel went off prematurely in the air is quite certain. At the report, — the like of which ducks on that coast had made acquaintance with before, and knew that it meant mischief, — the entire flock of a hundred or more flew up at once, with a sudden noise of wings which could be heard above the roaring of the breakers. Then the other barrel went off. Then Young Joe came running up in high glee, to offer his congratulations and to help pick up the dead birds. He looked, expecting to see the beach strewn with them.

There wasn't a bird on the beach, dead or alive !

In utter amazement, Joe turned and looked at Mr. Bonwig. That gentleman stood with his portly form

erect, his head thrown back, and his mouth and eyes open, staring at the sky, into which his fine covey of ducks were rapidly vanishing.

“Well, well!” said he. “Now, now! If I *ain't* surprised! Whoever saw anything happen like that? BLESS — MY — HEART!”

“Not a darned duck!” said Joe.

“Oh, I must have wounded some! I must have wounded about twenty!” Augustus declared. He looked critically at his gun; then he turned his gaze once more at the sky; then he looked at Young Joe, who was beginning to grin. “I think my shot must be too fine,” said Mr. Bonwig.

Joe asked to see his lead.

“’Tain’t no finer ’n what *I* use. Feathers on a loon’s breast are so thick, them shot wouldn’t go through ’em; have to fire at a loon’s head when he’s facin’ ye. But I don’t see how ye could let fly into a flock o’ loons even without knocking over a few.”

“It’s a very remarkable circumstance! — very singular! — *very* surprising!” observed Mr. Bonwig, wounded in his tenderest point, — his pride as a sportsman, — and betraying a good deal of chagrin and agitation. He was very much flushed. He took off his cap and wiped his forehead. “Just let me try that thing over again, that’s all!”

“Best way now will be to go off to the island,” said Joe. “That’s our dory. Just help me shove it off, and we’ll have some fun yet!”

III.

OFF TO THE ISLAND.

“BLESS my heart!” said Mr. Bonwig, amazed at the huge rollers that came tumbling in. “How are we ever going to get a boat outside of them without swamping her?”

“I’ll show ye,” said Joe.

The dory was dragged down to the edge of the surf. Then Joe put in the guns. Then he gave the skiff another gentle shove, into a receding wave. Then he told Mr. Bonwig to get aboard.

“I’ve a wife and children at home!” murmured that affectionate husband and father. “If anything should happen!”

“What in sixty ye think is goin’ to happen?” cried Joe, impatiently.

“I am very heavy!” said Augustus.

“So much the better; you’ll make splendid ballast,” grinned Joe.

“You are going too?”

“Of course I am; I hain’t got no wife and children — not much!”

There was something in Joe that inspired confidence, and Mr. Bonwig resolved to stand the risk. He seated himself in the boat. Joe stood on the beach, holding the bow, and waiting. The waves were out.

“ You never can shove me off in the world ! ” said Mr. Bonwig, painfully conscious of his own corpulence.

“ You’ll see, ” said Joe. The next moment the waves were in. A heavy swell lifted the dory, ballast and all. The ballast uttered a scream, and made a motion as if to jump overboard. “ Keep yer seat. All right ! ” screamed Joe, pushing off. As the next breaker lifted the stern, he gave another shove, and jumped aboard. Before the third breaker came, he had the oars in his hand, ready to meet it.

“ Well, well ! ” said Mr. Bonwig. “ I *am* surprised ! ”

And well he might be ; for, you see, this embarking in the breakers is a business that calls for no little skill and experience ; you must take advantage of them, and see that they don’t get the advantage of you. They have no mercy ; and if they strike your skiff sideways, over she goes in an instant, and there she rolls to and fro in their foaming jaws until they crunch her to pieces, unless some strong hand at the right moment seizes and drags her out.

Young Joe, first by skilfully pushing off, then by prompt management of the oars, kept the dory straight across the rollers, and soon had her safe outside of them. Then he commenced rowing strongly and steadily toward a rocky island, two or three miles off, over the ends of which the sea was dashing high and white.

Mr. Bonwig was seated in the stern, which he freighted so heavily that the bow stuck up ludicrously high out of the water. He had now quite recovered his equanimity.

"Well! I enjoy this!" said he, and lighted a cigar. "How easy this boat rows!"

"It does, to look on," said Joe.

"I *am* surprised!" said Mr. Bonwig. "I'd no idea one of these little skiffs pulled so easy!" and he smoked complacently.

"How good that cigar tastes!" said Joe, with a grin. "I had no idee cigars tasted so good!"

"Young man," replied Augustus, laughing, "I see the force of your remark. Perhaps you think I might offer to row. But I want to keep my nerves steady for the ducks. I'll row coming back, and that will be a good deal harder, for we shall have a load of game, you know."

"All right," said Joe. "No, I thank ye," — as Bonwig offered him a cigar. "But if you happen to have any more of that 'ere sweet stuff about ye —"

"Oh, to be sure!" and Augustus had the pleasure of filling the young man's mouth with candy. "What sort of ducks do we get at the island?"

"Coots and black ducks, mostly," said Joe, (and I wish I could make the words sound as sweet on paper as they did coming from his candied lips.) "Black ducks go along the shore to feed when the tide is low. They find all sorts of little live things

on the rocks and in the moss, and in them little basins the tide leaves in holler places. They never dive deep; they only jest tip up, like common ducks. But some kinds will feed where the water is thirty feet deep; they go to the bottom, and pick up all sorts of insects and little critters. They pick young mussels off the rocks, and swallow 'em whole, shell and all, and grind 'em up in their gizzards."

"Do they catch fish?"

"No; loons ketch fish, but ducks and coots don't. A loon has got short wings that help him swim under water, — or fly under water, for that's what it is. He'll go faster 'n some fishes. But he can't walk; and he can't rise on the wing very well. He has to flop along the water, against the wind, a little while, 'fore he can rise. He can't rise goin' *with* the wind, any more 'n a kite can; and sometimes, when he lights in a small pond, he's pestered to git out at all. I ketched one in Bemis's Pond last spring. He was jest as well and spry as any loon ye ever see, but there wasn't room for him to git a good start, and no wind to help him; and he couldn't run on the land, nor fly up from the land; and there wasn't any good chance to dive. A loon'll go down in deep water, and like as not ye won't see anything more of him till by-'m-by he comes up a quarter of a mile off, or mabby ye won't never see him agin, — for he can swim with jest a little speck of his body out of water, so that it takes a purty sharp eye to git sight of him. But this loon in

Bemis's Pond couldn't come none o' them tricks, and I jest stoned him till he couldn't dive, then I in arter him, and ketched him. He was a fat feller, I tell ye!"

"That's a good loon story, I declare," observed Mr. Bonwig.

"I can tell ye a better one than that," said Joe. "My father went a-fishin' off the end of that island once, and as the fish wouldn't bite, and the sea was calm, he jest put his lines out and laid down in the bottom of the dory, and spread a tarpaulin over him, and thought he'd go to sleep. That's a nice way to sleep,—have yer boat at anchor, and it'll rock ye like a cradle, only ye must be careful a storm don't come up all of a suddent and rock ye over. Ye can wind yer line around yer wrist, so's't if a cod does come and give it a yank, you'll wake up. That's the way my father did. And he had a nice long nap, when all at oncet—yank! suthin' had holt. Off went the tarpaulin, and up he jumped, and he thought he'd got a whopper, by the way it run off with his line. But before he'd begun to pull, the line slacked as if nothin' was on it; and the next minute up come a loon close alongside the boat, and looked at him, and my father looked at the loon, and thought he noticed suthin' queer hangin' out of his bill. Then the loon dove, and then my father felt a whopper on his line agin, and he began to pull, and, by sixty! if he didn't pull up that loon and bring him into the boat! He had dove I don't

know how many fathom for the bait, and got hooked jest like a fish."

"That *is* a good story!" said Mr. Bonwig, who had a sportsman's relish for such things. "What makes folks say *crazy as a loon*?"

"I d'n' know," Joe replied, "without it's 'cause they holler so. Didn't ye never hear a loon holler? You'd think 'twas a crazy feller, if ye didn't know. I s'pose *loonatics* are named after 'em."

"Not exactly," said Mr. Bonwig. "*Lunatics* are named after *Luna*: that's the Latin name for the moon, which affects people's brains sometimes."

"I wouldn't give much for such brains!" said Joe, contemptuously. "Moon never hurt mine none!" Hence he argued that his own were of a superior quality. "You must have been to school to learn so much Latin!" he said, regarding Mr. Bonwig with fresh admiration.

Augustus nodded with dignity.

"What's the Latin for *dory*?" Joe asked, thinking he would begin at once to acquire that useful language.

Augustus was obliged to own that he didn't know. Thereupon Joe's admiration changed to contempt.

"What's the use of Latin," said he, "if ye can't tell the Latin for *dory*?" And Mr. Bonwig was sorry he had not said *doribus*, and so have still retained a hold upon Joe's respect.

"Why do folks say *silly coot*?" he asked, to change the subject.

“Wal, a coot *is* a silly bird — jest like some folks,” said Joe. “Sometimes you may shoot one out of a flock, and the rest will fly right up to you, or jest stay right around, till you’ve killed ’em all.” Augustus thought he would like to fall in with such a flock. “There’s some now!” said Joe. “They’re goin’ to the island. The sea runs so, we can’t shoot very well from the boat, and I guess we’d better land.”

Landing was easy under the lee of the island, and the boat was hauled up on the beach. Then Joe set out to guide his friend to the best point for getting a shot.

“There!” said he, stopping suddenly near the summit of a ledge, “ye can see ’em down there, about three rods from shore. Don’t stir, for if they see us we shall lose ’em.”

“But we must get nearer than this!” said Mr. Bonwig, “for even *my* gun won’t do execution at this distance.”

“Don’t you know?” Joe said. “They’re feedin’. When you come acrost a flock of coots feedin’ like that, you’ll notice they all dive together, and stay under water as much as a minute; then they all come up to breathe agin. Now, when they dive, do as I do. There goes one down! there they all go. Now!” cried Joe.

He clambered over the ledge as nimbly as a lad could very well do, with an old “queen’s arm” in each hand, and ran down rapidly towards the shore, off which the water-fowl were feeding. He was

light of foot, and familiar with every rock. Not so Mr. Augustus Bonwig; he was very heavy of foot, and unacquainted with the rocks.

"Bl-e-hess m-y-hy hea-ah-rt!" he exclaimed, jolting his voice terribly, as he followed Joe down the steep, rough way.

"Here! quick!" cried Joe, dropping behind another ledge.

Poor Mr. Bonwig plunged like a porpoise, and tumbled with a groan at the boy's side.

"Flat! flat!" whispered Joe.

"I can't make myself any flatter!" panted Augustus, pressing his corpulence close to the ground. "I've scraped off two buttons, and skinned my shins, already."

"You *ain't* quite so flat as a flapjack, *be ye?*" said Joe. "Never mind. We're all right." He peeped cautiously over the ledge, cap in hand. "There comes one of 'em up agin! There they all come! Now look; be careful!" Bonwig put up his head. "Next time they go down we'll run for them big rocks close by the shore; then we shall be near enough."

"Is that the way you do? Well, I *am* surprised!" said Bonwig. "As your father said, it requires a knack."

"There they go!" cried Joe, and started to run. Augustus started too, but stumbled on some stones and fell. When with difficulty he had regained his feet, Joe was safe in the shelter of the rocks, and

the birds were coming to the surface again. It required no very fine eyesight to see Mr. Bonwig; he was, in fact, quite a conspicuous object, clumsily running down the craggy slope, with both arms extended, — the better to preserve his balance, I suppose, although they gave him the appearance of a man making unwieldy and futile efforts to fly. The coots saw him, and rose at once upon the wing.

“Bang!” “Bang!” spoke Joe’s old flint-locks, one after the other; for, having fired the first as the flock started, he dropped that and levelled and fired the second, almost before the last bird had cleared the surface of the water.

“Bang! bang!” answered Bonwig’s smart two-barrelled piece from the hillside; and the startled Joe had the pleasure of hearing a shower of shot rattle on the rocks all around him. The enthusiastic sportsman, seeing the coots rise and Joe fire, and thinking this his only chance at them, had let off his barrels at a dozen rods, as he would very likely have done at a quarter of a mile, so great was his excitement on the occasion.

He came running down to the shore. “Hello! *hel-lo!*” said he, “I’ve saved these! look there!” And he pointed triumphantly at some birds which, sure enough, had been left behind out of the flock.

“By sixty!” grumbled Joe, “you come purty nigh *savin’ me!* Your shot peppered these rocks — I could hear ’em scatter like peas!”

“Do you mean to say,” cried Bonwig, “that I didn’t kill these ducks?”

“All I mean to say is, they are the ones I fired at,” said Joe, “and I seen ’em turn and drop ’fore ever you fired. Your gun didn’t carry to the water at all. I’ll show ye.”

Joe began to hunt, and had soon picked up a couple of shot of the size used by his friend Bonwig.

“Bless my heart! Now I *am* surprised! The wind must have blown them back!” said Augustus.

“If that’s the case,” muttered Joe, “I shall look out how I git ’tween you and the wind another time! By sixty! ye might have filled me as full of holes as a nutmeg-grater! And I rather guess there’s nicer sounds in the world than to have two big charges o’ shot come rattlin’ about yer ears that fashion!” And he rubbed his ears, as if to make sure that they were all right.

“Well, well, well!” said the wondering Augustus, picking up more shot. “I *am* — surprised ain’t the word; I’m astonished! Well, well, well!”

“You wait here,” said Joe, “while I hurry and pick up them coots. There’s an eddy of wind takin’ ’em right out to sea.”

He disappeared, and soon Mr. Bonwig saw him paddling around the curve of the shore in his dory. Having taken the coots out of the water, he brought them to land, and showed them to the admiring Augustus.

“Now which way,” said the sportsman, filled with fresh zeal, “for I am bound to have luck next time.”

“We’ll haul the dory up here, and go over on the other side of the island, and see what we can find there,” said Joe.

“What a desolate place this is!” said Mr. Bonwig, as they crossed the bleak ledges. “All rocks and stones; not a tree, not a bush even; only here and there a little patch of grass!” He struck a schoolboy’s attitude on one of the topmost ledges, and began to declaim:

“ ‘ I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea,
I’m lord of the — ’

Plenty of fowls, but there don’t seem to be any brutes here,” he commented, as he came down from his elevation.

“Guess ye learnt that to school, too, didn’t ye?” said Joe.

“Young friend, I did,” said Augustus. And he proceeded to apostrophize the salt water:

“ ‘ Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
Ten thousand — ’

Thunder and blazes! who’d have thought that rock was so slippery?” he said, finding himself suddenly and quite unexpectedly in a sitting posture. “Speaking of fleets, what are all those sails, Joe?”

“Fishermen. Sometimes for days you won’t see scarcely one; then there’ll come a mornin’ with a fair wind, like this, and they’ll all put out of port together.”

“Hello! *hel-lo!*” said Augustus. “Who ever expected to see a house on this island? What little building is that?”

“It’s one of the Humane Society’s houses; house of refuge they call it. They have ’em scattered along the coast where ships are most likely to be wrecked, and there’s no other shelter handy.”

“Nobody lives in it, of course?”

“I guess not, if they can help it,” said Joe. “But more’n one good ship has gone to pieces on this island. I remember one that struck here eight years ago. She struck in the night, and the next mornin’ we could see her, bows up, on the reef yender, where the tide had left her; but the sea was so rough there was no gittin’ at her in boats, and the next night she broke up, and the day after nary spar of her was to be seen, ’cept the pieces of the wreck that begun to come ashore to the mainland, along ’ith the dead bodies. About half the crew was drowned; the rest managed to git to the island, but there wan’t no house here then, and they ’most froze to death, for it was winter, and awful cold. Since then this little hut has been tucked in here among the rocks, where the wind can’t very well git at it, to blow it away; and come when ye will, summer or winter, you’ll always find straw in the bunks, and wood in

the box, and matches in a tin case, and a barrel of hard bread, and a cask of fresh water. Only the wood and hard bread are apt to get used up purty close, sometimes. You see, fellers that come off here a-fishin' know about it, and so when they git hungry, they pull ashore with their fish, and come to the house to make a chowder. But I wouldn't," said Joe, assuming a highly moral tone, "without there was a barrel chock full of crackers! For, s'pose a ship should be wrecked, and the crew and passengers should git ashore here, wet and hungry and cold, and should find the house, and the box where the wood should be, and the barrel where the crackers should be, and there shouldn't be neither wood nor crackers, on account of some plaguy fellers and their chowder! No, by sixty!" said Joe. "I wouldn't be so mean!"

"It looks naked and gloomy enough in here!" said Augustus, as they entered.

"It wouldn't seem so bad, though, to wet and hungry sailors, some wild night in Janewary, after they'd been cast away," said Joe. "Jest imagine 'em crawlin' in here out of the rain and cold, and startin' up a good, nice fire in the chimbly, and settin' down afore it, eatin' the crackers!"

"How are the provisions supplied?"

"Oh, one of the Humane Society's boats comes around here once in a while, and leaves things. I don't believe but what it would be fun to live here,"

Joe added, romantically, "like Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday."

"Suppose we try it?" said Mr. Bonwig. "I'll be Crusoe, and you may be t'other fellow."

"And we'll shoot ducks for a livin'!" said Friday. "Come on, Mr. Crusoe!"

They left the hut, and went in pursuit of game, little thinking that accident might soon compel them to commence living the life that was so pleasant to joke about, more in earnest than either dreamed of doing now. But the story of how that came to pass will have to be related in another chapter.

IV.

A COUPLE OF CRUSOES.

THE sea was inspiring to Mr. Augustus Bonwig's poetical feelings; and he began to declaim again, as he and Joe descended the ledges on the seaward side of the island.

“‘The breaking waves dashed high, on a stern —’”
But here a chasm in the rocks occasioned a hiatus in the verse.

“On the stern of a ship?” Joe asked.

“No; ‘on a stern and rock-bound coast,’” said Mr. Bonwig, as he stepped over the chasm.

But here, again, he was interrupted; this time by Joe, who cautioned him against scaring the ducks with his poetry.

“Now, look a here, Mister! You notice, we're comin' to a sort of clift,” (Joe meant cliff.) “We can crawl right to the edge on't, and look right down into a little inlet, where we'll be purty sure to see suthin'.”

“Crawl, is it?” said the portly Mr. Bonwig, wincing. “I'm not built for crawling. But no matter. Go ahead. I'll sacrifice the rest of my buttons in a good cause, if necessary.”

Joe advanced to make an observation. He reached the edge of the cliff; and presently looked back at his companion with a laugh, and beckoned to him.

Augustus came up to him, scratching the rocks with his remaining buttons, and looked over.

“Here’s a splendid shot!” said Joe. “Two old-wives close in shore!”

Bonwig saw with delight the pair of ducks, riding on the swells that poured into the inlet, or tipping up and plunging their bills down among the cool, dark sea-moss, as the bright waves receded, leaving it half exposed and glistening in the early sunlight.

“Now,” said Joe, “I’m goin’ to let you have all the chance this time. I shan’t fire at all till you do. Don’t show yourself, nor make a noise, but take aim right through this notch.”

Bonwig obeyed; resting his ponderous stomach on the ledge, and thrusting his gun over it, he cocked both barrels, and took as deliberate aim as it was possible for a highly nervous sportsman to do, under the circumstances.

“Plenty of time,” said Joe.

“I — know — it; but, bless my heart! how they do — bob up and down!”

The ducks were, in fact, constantly in motion, tossing on the swells, or tipping up and darting their bills hither and thither. Moreover, the light on the water was very deceptive. One has to get used to shooting at objects afloat, as Joe very justly observed afterwards.

“I — I — rather think I’d better fire!” said Augustus, in a trembling voice.

"Seems to me, I would; I don't see what you're waiting for," Joe replied.

Mr. Bonwig fired both barrels in quick succession. The startled ducks rose quickly and quietly from the water, as if to show a due respect for his salute; not a feather of either being injured.

"Bless my heart!" said Mr. Bonwig.

"You've had your chance; now it's my turn," said Joe.

He took aim with his old "queen's arm," fired instantly, and brought down a bird. Then he fired his other gun, and the other duck whirled and fell into the sea.

"Now, I am—I am surprised!" said Augustus. "It's all a knack, as your father said; and you have got the knack! I *am* surprised!"

"I'll go down after 'em," said Joe, "while you go back and see if there ain't some more ducks over t'other side, by this time. And haul the dory a little further up on the beach," he added, "for I'm afraid the tide will git it; it's comin' in fast."

Bonwig went, and returned in a short time, saying that he had left the dory safe, and that he had seen no game.

"Where are your old-wives?" he asked. "Have n't you been down after them yet?"

"No," said Joe; "I'm watchin' them loons," pointing out to sea. "If you'll do jest what I tell ye, I guess we can git 'em. Sure ye left the dory all right?"

“Oh, yes! The tide won't reach it this hour. I don't see your loons though,” said Augustus. “Yes, I do! Half a mile off! How do you expect ever to get them?”

“I'll git down on to that ledge that runs out into the water, and hide. Then I'll holler like a loon, and purty soon you'll see 'em steerin' right in toward me. But if they come near enough to find out I ain't a loon, they'll stop. So, soon as you see 'em comin', you jest wave this 'ere hankercher on yer ramrod, so 's to take their eye. I carry it 'most a purpose for loons.”

Joe pulled a flaming bandanna from his pocket, and showed Mr. Bonwig how to manage it.

“Loons is birds,” he said, “that has lots of curiosity in their dispositions, and they'll 'most gener'lly alluz come in nigh enough to see what a wavin' red hankercher means, so's't a feller can git a shot at 'em. Only,” said Joe, eying his friend's gun wistfully, “it's hard carryin' two long, heavy guns down a steep clift, like this here; and now, if you don't care to go down and do the shootin' — for you'll be too fur off up here —”

“Bless my heart!” said Augustus, looking over the precipice, “I never could get down these rocks alive, in the world! I — I — must think of my wife and children!”

“Then if ye would jest lend me the loan of your gun once,” said Joe.

“Why yes — certainly,” said Augustus.

“Then you won’t be shootin’ *me*, ye know;” grinned Joe.

Leaving his companion on the top of the cliff, he dropped over the edge of it, and, taking advantage of the loons diving, slipped down from crevice to crevice, and from shelf to shelf, until he had made his way in safety to the bottom, and concealed himself on the point of rock he had mentioned. Then he began to halloo like a loon, with his hands behind his mouth to throw his voice out to sea — uttering a wild, lonesome cry, which soon attracted the birds’ attention. They ceased their diving, and presently began to swim towards him.

Bonwig now waved the handkerchief on the cliff, remaining himself unseen; and the loons, tacking and turning occasionally, and rising and falling on the swells, continued to approach the shore, even after Joe had stopped calling.

Nearer and nearer they came, until Augustus grew impatient.

“Why don’t he fire? Why don’t the fellow fire?” he kept saying to himself.

But Joe knew what he was about. Aware of the difficulty of penetrating the loons’ breast-feathers with bird-shot, he wished to get them as near as possible, and close together, or their two heads in range, in order to double his chances. At last, just as one was darting by the other on the top of a wave, he fired one of Bonwig’s barrels. The nearest bird immediately went over on his side, and began to flap

and turn on the water in a way that showed he had got a fatal hurt. His mate was less severely wounded. She tried to dive, but could not remain beneath the surface, and a second shot dispatched her.

Then Joe climbed back up the rock.

“Why don’t you get the old-wives?” Augustus called to him. “They are tossing about in the cove there.”

“We must bring the dory around to pick up the loons, anyhow,” said Joe, handing the gun over the edge of the cliff, “and we can get the old-wives then.”

“Why didn’t you shoot sooner?” Mr. Bonwig asked.

“Don’t you see?” said Joe. “If I hadn’t wounded ’em both at once, soon as I fired at one, t’other ’d have dove quick as wink, and most likely I shouldn’t have got another shot at her. They’re a terrible quick bird! They’ll dodge the flash of a gun, without you’re purty near ’em.”

“Well, well! you *have* got the knack, I declare!” said Mr. Bonwig. “I don’t know but I shall have to give in to you, after all!”

“This is a splendid gun of yourn!” said Joe, covetously. “If I could only have this with me alluz, then I *might* do suthin’! But I must go for the dory now. You stay here and watch the loons, and purty soon you’ll see me come rowin’ round the island.”

“Now, why can't I shoot like that boy?” Bonwig said to himself after Joe had gone. “In the city, he was so green everybody laughed at him. But, bless my heart! if I don't find him my superior down here! I'm afraid, if anybody deserves to be laughed at to-day, he isn't the fellow, any way!”

Mr. Augustus was beginning to be sick of duck-shooting.

Hearing a cry in the direction Joe had gone, Mr. Bonwig arose and listened. Another cry, full of anger and distress. Augustus started to find his young friend, whom he presently saw hurrying back to meet him.

“You critter, you!” shrieked Joe, forgetting all deference due to his companion in the rage and perplexity of the moment; “you old fat fool, you!”

“Bless my heart!” said Augustus, aghast, “what's the matter?”

“Matter, you lazy lummoX! don't you know nothin'?” And Joe turned back again with gestures of fury and despair.

“Why! what on earth have I done?” cried Mr. Bonwig, following him, more alarmed than angry.

“The dory!” said Joe, chokingly.

“Hey? what's happened to the dory?” said Bonwig, turning pale. “I left it safe!”

“You didn't! You said you'd haul it up out of reach of the tide, and you never touched it! Now look a there!”

They had reached a commanding point of the

island, from which Augustus had the satisfaction of seeing the little skiff afloat, and drifting quietly and steadily out to sea.

“ Bless my — ! ” gasped the astounded candy-maker. “ Can’t ye swim and get it ? ”

“ Swim ? ” echoed Joe, with wrathful contempt. “ I’d like to see any man swim for that ! The wind has got into the north-west, and it’s carryin’ on her away faster’n anybody can swim ! Why didn’t ye haul her up, as I told ye ? ”

“ I — really — I couldn’t see any necessity for it ! ” said poor Mr. Bonwig. “ The waves didn’t touch her. ”

“ But I told you the tide was comin’ in ! And couldn’t you see yourself that once in a while there was a big swell, bigger’n the rest ? ’Twas one o’ them that started her off, and then the wind took her ! ”

“ I *am* surprised ! ” said the pale Mr. Bonwig. “ I don’t see how we are going to get off this island ! And I — I promised my wife — she’ll certainly be looking for me to-night. I *must* get back to-night ! ”

“ If you do, you’ll have to swim. ” And Joe sat down sulkily on the ledge and watched the departing dory.

“ What ! you don’t mean — ? ”

“ You’ll have enough of Robinson Crusoe ’fore you get through ! That dory cost my father fifteen dollars ! ”

“ It ain’t possible we shall have to stay here, ”

faltered Augustus, casting his eyes about him, and feeling not a bit like spouting poetry just then, "and live on what we kill?"

"A feller couldn't live very long on what *you* kill!" said Joe. "I don't care for sleepin' in the hut, I'd jest as lief do that as not; and I can eat fish and wild ducks and hard bread as long as the next chap. But, by sixty! that dory! Dad'll skin me alive if I don't bring her back. See her go! see her go!" And Joe whipped his legs with his hands despairingly. "The coots are in her, too!" with a fresh wail. "And we can't get the loons without her; and mabby we can't get the old-wives now."

"Then if no more ducks come around, what shall we do?" said Augustus, who was a man of excellent appetite, never careless about his dinner.

"I guess you'll have a chance to grow a little mite less pussy'n you be now," said Joe, beginning to see the humor of the situation, and to get the better of his despair.

"Can't we make a signal of distress?"

"You can try it, if you want to. But dad is huskin' corn to-day; and even if he should see it, he'd think it was for loons. Besides, there ain't another dory to the Cove, since Old Wansey's got stove up by the last gale; and dad couldn't come off for us if he wanted to."

"Then," said Augustus, "I don't see but that we are in a fix!"

"Jes' so," said Joe. "But now if you want to make

a signal, I'll show you. It must be on the highest spot, where it can be seen from shore, as well as by fishin'-boats outside."

The thought of something to be done put Joe into a good humor.

"Here's where you was monarch of all you surveyed," he said, with a grin, as they walked over the ledges; adding, "I guess the deep and dark blue ocean will roll on fast enough for you now, without waitin' to be told! Here's the place!"

"We never can make ourselves seen from this distance," said Bonwig, with a heavy heart.

"We can try."

"But what can we make a signal of? A handkerchief is nothing!"

"Take my shirt, — I can spare that better than I can my coat, in this wind," said Joe; and he proceeded to divest himself of that useful but not indispensable garment.

He thrust a gun-barrel into one of the sleeves at the wrist, and thence through the shoulders of the shirt into the other sleeve, which he tied into a knot over the muzzle.

"Now, there's your banner!" said he, waving it aloft.

"Well, I declare!" said Augustus, "you've done it! Long may it wave!" as Joe flourished the pale ensign in the breeze. "Though there's a prospect of its waving long enough, without wishing it particularly. But, as a signal of distress, it seems to me

there's something not quite right. Don't they usually have the union down?"

"Shirts hain't got no union," said Joe. And he began to sing, "*'Tis the star-spangled banner,*" in a cheerful and enlivening manner.

Being one of those brave-hearted lads whose spirits always rise in the presence of danger and difficulty, and having recovered from the chagrin of losing the dory, he was now in a merrier mood than he had been at any time that morning.

"It won't take long for this wind to whip a shirt into ravelins!" said he. "After it has flopped mine all to pieces, then we'll take your'n. Then, when that's gone, we'll run up our jackets, and then our trouse's, for we're bound to keep the signal flyin'!"

Mr. Bonwig could not see the fun of the thing, but kept a dismal countenance, thinking of his wife and children.

"*You* needn't be so anxious about suthin' to eat," remarked Joe. "It'll take you a good while longer to starve than it would most people. My uncle was in a ship that was lost once, and was three weeks on a raft in the Pacific Ocean, with seven other men, and he said three of the men died, and all the rest come within one of it; only there was a fat man with 'em,—weighed about two hundred and fifty when they took to the raft,—he stood it; he kept growing lighter an' lighter, and fresher and fresher; he weighed about a hundred and was spry as a cricket when a vessel finally picked 'em up. He had lived

all the while on his own fat—like a bear in winter.”

This pleasant anecdote did not seem to afford Mr. Bonwig very much comfort. The idea of living on *his* fat for any length of time was not cheering. He had no doubt whatever of growing lighter and lighter on that diet; but as for growing fresher and fresher, that did not appear to him to be among the probabilities. No,—Mr. Augustus Bonwig could not indulge a hope of ever becoming spry as a cricket, in that way.

“Your father *must* grow anxious about you if you don’t come home, and he can find a dory somewhere,” said he.

“My father never’s anxious about me when I’m off duck-shootin’,” replied Joe. “Once I got lost in a fog, rowin’ from Pippin P’int. I got turned about somehow. I kept rowin’ and rowin’, but couldn’t find no land; and night come on, dark as Egypt—and there I was! No supper, no north star, no compass, no overcoat,—discouragin’, I tell you! I rowed all night to keep warm, and in hopes of touchin’ land somewheres;—and it wasn’t half so comf’table as we’ll find it in that house to-night, burnin’ the Humane Society’s wood and eatin’ the Humane Society’s crackers, and tellin’ stories,—not half! Wal, mornin’ come, but the fog didn’t lift, and I didn’t know where I was any more’n I did before; but I kept on rowin’ and rowin’, only when I stopped to rest, which was purty often now,—I

was gittin' used up. No supper, and no breakfast! The sea was calm; the fog was so heavy it seemed to press it right down flat. I couldn't see more'n an oar's length or two ahead of me. So the forenoon wore on. By-m-by I give up, — no supper, no breakfast, no dinner, — it was beginning to tell on me. You've no idee how a feller'll shrink, without eatin' or sleepin' for twenty-four hours! It seemed to me I'd got dad's clo'es on. I'd hollered myself hoarse; but in that fog, it was like a man's hollerin' in his grave. You needn't look so sorry; why," said Joe, "this here island, in fine weather, is paradise to an open boat in a fog!"

"How did you finally get ashore?" asked Augustus.

"Wind changed, and fog lifted all of a sudden, jest afore sundown. And where do ye s'pose I was? Almost within gunshot o' the Cove! I jest rowed ashore, hauled up the dory, and walked into the house. There sot dad, a-smokin', comfortable as could be. 'Where's yer ducks, boy?' says he the fust thing. 'Didn't git none,' says I. 'Why, where ye been all this time?' says he; 'and hain't got nary duck!' 'Oh, paddlin' round in the fog,' says I. 'Ain't ye hungry?' says my mother, — she was gittin' supper. 'Wal, I be some hungry,' says I. And supper did taste mighty good that night, I tell ye!"

"Wasn't your family concerned about you?" said Mr. Bonwig.

"What was the use of bein' consarned? There

was no gale; and they knowed I'd come home agin some time," said Joe. "I did come home, and I brought the dory. Dad'll be dreadful worked, if I don't bring it this time! Look! it's 'most out of sight!"

"That seems to be all you care about!"

"Why shouldn't it be? We'll do well enough. It won't be many days afore somebody'll be comin' off here a-fishin', and see us."

"Many days!" groaned Augustus. "I'm getting hungry already!"

"Wal," said Joe, "you keep the flag a-wavin', and I'll go and see what I can do for dinner."

V.

THE FATE OF THE CASTAWAYS.

BORROWING Mr. Bonwig's gun once more, Joe returned to the spot where he had shot the "old-wives." They were still tossing on the surges in the inlet below. He descended the cliff, took off his clothes, plunged into the water, and brought out the birds.

Then climbing to the top of the cliff again, he held up the game, to the delight of Bonwig's hungry eyes.

"If you'll dress and cook them," said Augustus, "I will keep the signal waving."

"I ought to ketch a few fish first," said Joe, "'fore the tide is up. You can't ketch nippers so well at high water, for then they're feedin' on the barnacles and things, on the rocks."

"What's nippers?" said Augustus.

"Cunners," said Joe, amazed at such ignorance. "Don't you know? What you had for supper last night, and for breakfast agin this mornin'."

"Oh! salt-water perch! Of course, I know," said Mr. Bonwig, remembering how good they were. "It *would* be fine if we could get a few to keep the ducks company! But you've no pole nor line."

“ I alluz carry lines in my pocket,” said Joe, “ and I don’t need a pole.”

“ But you’ve no worms !”

“ I can find bait enough. I’ll look out for all that, if you’ll keep the star-spangled sheet a-wavin’.”

Joe laughed as he looked back and saw his portly friend flourishing the white flag, as if for dear life. “ That exercise will do him good,” thought he. “ The trouble with that ’air feller is, he ’s so lazy. He was too lazy for to give the dory a little lift ; and now see where we be ! And don’t I remember *how easy that boat rowed* !—to him a-settin’ comf’r’able in the stern.”

He went down on the rocks by the water’s edge, laid down his gun,— or rather Mr. Bonwig’s,— and taking a ball of line from his pocket, proceeded to unwind it. At the inside end he found a heavy sinker, a corn-cob, and a hook sticking into it. Putting the cob back into his pocket, to be used in winding the line up again afterwards, he looked about for bait. The rocks below high-water mark were covered with barnacles as with a gray scum, and dotted here and there with periwinkles (Joe called them cockles) clinging to the ledge. Of these he gathered a handful, and laid them down by his gun. Then, having baited his hook from one of them, he “ threw in.” He stood on the brink of a steep rock, and the heavy sinker carried the line down in the deep water beside it, notwithstanding the dashing waves.

All was quiet for a minute or two. Then he felt a little jerk. He gave a little jerk in return, and perceived that he had hooked something. He hauled up the line hand-over-hand, and a fine large cunner fell flopping on the ledge. He baited and threw in again, and had many nips, (the cunner is notorious for nipping at your bait, and getting it without getting the hook; hence the term *nipper*,) and now and then drew up a fish. In half an hour he found he had caught a handsome string.

All this time he kept a keen look-out for game. And now he saw a flock of black ducks come flying low along the waves toward the island. They passed so near to him that he might easily have brought down a pair, but as they would have fallen into the water, and as he had no dory to pick them up, he, with admirable self-denial for so young a gunner, stood, piece in hand, and saw them pass.

Arrived at the end of the island, instead of alighting, they wheeled, and, rising, returned in a broad circle over it.

Augustus had seen them coming, in the first place, and dropped his signal, and himself beside it, hoping for a shot. When they passed the island, he was quite wild with excitement, and came very near firing Joe's shirt at them. The distance at which they flew, from where he lay, was probably all that saved the shirt — and the birds. Before they returned, the sportsman had time to exchange the "queen's arm," which served as a flag-staff, for the

other, which had no sleeve tied over the end of it, and to place himself in readiness.

“If they’ll only come again!” thought he. “I believe there’s something in the gun, after all. Those are real duck guns! They’re so heavy, I believe I can hold one steadier than I can my little light thing. By George! there they come!”

They flew so directly over the summit of the island, that Mr. Bonwig, afraid to get up and show himself, rolled over on his back, pointed the “queen’s arm” up into the air, and fired.

The flock veered at sight of him, even before the flash; and that was probably the reason why he did not kill a great many. He thought at first he had killed none. But the rocks below had barely had time to send back two sharp echoes of his shot (a very singular phenomenon, if Augustus had only stopped to consider it), when three ducks, one after the other, dropped down headlong out of the flock, and fell upon the island.

Bonwig ran down to them, with cries of exultation. At the same time Joe came crawling up over the ledge, with Bonwig’s gun in one hand, and the string of fish in the other.

“See that? and that? and that?” cried Augustus, holding up the ducks triumphantly. “Who said ’twouldn’t take long to eat all I kill?”

Joe stood still, fish in one hand and gun in the other, and grinned at him.

“See how fat they are! I picked for the plump-

est, and then took aim. Waited till I got three in range. Never was so cool about anything in my life. If you have any more ducks to shoot, bring 'em on. What are you laughing at? I suppose you'll say I didn't kill these, won't you?" said the jubilant sportsman.

"'Twas your gun that killed them, fast enough," replied Joe, chuckling over the joke.

"Of course it was!" But Mr. Bonwig meant one gun, while Joe meant another. "This is a regular old-fashioned duck-shooter!" — holding up the old queen's arm. "I can handle it a great deal better than I can my piece. It has got so used to it, it seems almost to aim itself. It's nothing to shoot ducks with this gun! Three at a shot! what will my wife say to that? Bless my heart!" And he praised the ducks again.

Joe laughed so that his knees began to give way under him, and his body to double up, and his hands to forget their cunning; he dropped the fish, he dropped the gun, and finally dropped himself—tumbling over and rolling on the rocks in convulsions of mirth.

"Now what's the fun?" said Mr. Bonwig, annoyed.

"You've got the knack! you've got the knack!" said Joe, winking away his tears.

"What do you mean?" Augustus demanded, sternly, for he suspected that he was the subject of merriment.

“Did the birds drop the very minute you fired?”

“Why, no, not the instant; they were so astonished; they had to take time to consider it; that is, they were flying so fast, it was a second or two before they could change their course and come down.”

“And didn’t you hear any other gun?”

“Why, — my shot — echoed!” said Augustus.

“How many times?”

“Twice; I do believe it was a sort of double echo.”

“That was the echo!” said Joe, holding up the double-barrelled piece, and then immediately going into convulsions again.

Augustus seized it. He remembered that it was loaded when it last went into Joe’s hands; and now, nervously shoving down the ramrod, he found the barrels empty. He still stoutly insisted, however, that he had killed the ducks; but it was with a flushed face and a greatly disturbed look.

“If you did, you beat me with your knack!” said Joe.

“How so? Explain yourself. Do stop that confounded giggling, and explain yourself!” said Bonwig.

“I can’t kill ducks without any shot in my gun; and there wasn’t any shot in the gun you fired!”

“That’s a — a — likely story!” gasped poor Mr. Bonwig.

“You see,” said Joe, “I was goin’ to leave the old

guns with you, and I was afraid you'd be shootin' at me, as you did afore; so I didn't put any shot into 'em! Try t'other one, and see!"

Augustus drew the wad from the flag-staff, and found only powder beneath it. He then sat down dejectedly on the ledge, and remained thoughtful for a long while. At last he said:

"Come, Joe, we've fooled about enough; it's time to think of getting ashore."

"It's '*nothing to shoot ducks with that gun!*'—'*three at a shot!*'—'*it aims itself!*' Oh, ho! ho! ho!"

"Come!" said Augustus, sharply. "How about dinner?"

"You '*picked for the plumpest, and then took aim!*'" cried Joe. "'*Waited till you got them in range!*'—'*never was so cool in your life!*' Oh, ho! I shall die!" And he rolled on the rocks again.

Mr. Bonwig had suddenly once more grown extremely anxious about their situation. He stretched the shirt on the queen's arm again, and began to wave it with great solemnity.

Joe then sat up, stopped laughing, took a knife from his pocket, and then and there commenced dressing the fish for dinner.

"You've got a nice string there!" the hungry Augustus at last remarked, regarding the process wistfully.

Joe said it *was* a nice string. He made no further allusion to Mr. Bonwig's remarkable sportsman-

ship (although he would now and then be taken with a stitch in his ribs, a cramp in his stomach, or spasms in the muscles of his face, which he found it hard to overcome); and from that moment the two were good friends again.

“I must find a board somewhere; and I guess I better be startin’ the fire.” And Joe carried his fish and game down to the house of refuge, where he could give occasional vent to his mirth, without hurting his friend’s feelings.

Leaving Mr. Bonwig to wave the signal and keep a look-out, he made preparations for dinner. “I wouldn’t burn up this wood to make chowders, as the fellers do,” thought he; “but aren’t *we* sort of shipwrecked?” And he comforted his conscience with the reflection that the Humane Society would approve of what he was doing.

At last he called Mr. Bonwig to dinner. That hungry gentleman made haste to prop up the standard with stones, and obeyed the joyful summons.

“Joe,” said he, catching the savory odor of the cooking as he entered the hut, “I *am* surprised! Who would have thought you could get up such a dinner?”

“This bench is the table, these clam-shells are the plates; use your pocket-knife, and your fingers are the fork,” said Joe proudly. “Now taste o’ the fish, and see how sweet they are, without salt nor nothin’ on ’em.”

“Glorious!” cried Augustus. “But what’s that on the coals?”

“Pieces of *your* ducks a-brilin’,” said Joe.

“Now look here, Joe!” remonstrated Augustus.

“Did you re’lly think you shot ’em?” Joe asked.

“My imagination was excited; that’s all I have to say—my imagination was excited.” And now Augustus himself had to laugh.

Joe had seated himself astride one end of the bench, facing Mr. Bonwig; and Mr. Bonwig had seated himself astride the other end, facing Joe; and there they feasted;—Joe turning occasionally to take up a fish from the coals with a sharp stick, or to turn the broiling morsels of wild duck.

“Dinner ’s a good invention,” said Augustus.

“And I hain’t nothin’ petickler to say agin a fire—arter a feller’s been around an hour, in a cold north-wester, without his shirt on,” said Joe.

“We shan’t fare so badly, at this rate,” observed Mr. Bonwig, resignedly.

“We shall fare well enough; all I think on now is that plaguy dory,” replied Joe.

“I’ll make that all right with your father, if we ever get ashore again; so don’t worry about the dory.”

“By sixty! Will ye, though? That improves my appetite! Guess I’ll try a drumstick.”

He took a duck’s leg in his fingers, and put on his cap. “Finish yer dinner,” said he, “and I’ll go out and tend the signal.”

“That’s a good boy!” said Augustus, feeling easier in his mind, for he had scarcely begun his dinner yet, although he had eaten two perch to Joe’s one, and game in proportion.

In half an hour Joe came running back, and found his amiable friend fast asleep on the straw; that rosy and plump gentleman having been unable to resist the drowsiness which overcame him almost before the conclusion of his repast. “I guess Joe will look after the signal,” was his comfortable reflection, as he stretched himself on the straw. “For my part, I’m tired of standing on a bleak rock, in a northwest wind, waving a shirt on an old gun-barrel!” And he gave himself up to delicious slumber.

Joe regarded him with disgust; but he did not wake him. “Lazy lummo! I’ll come up with him,” said he; and off he went again.

Another half hour elapsed, when Mr. Bonwig awoke from a vivid dream of firing into a flock of old queen’s arms, that flew over his candy-shop in town, and doing great damage to a number of innocent persons who happened to be passing in the street when the shattered barrels and butt-ends came rattling down upon them.

“Hello!” said he. “*Hel-lo!*” looking about him. “I’d quite forgotten I was cast away! I wonder if Joe has signalled anything yet.”

He went out, and found the signal gone. The gun

was lying on the rocks ; but neither Joe, nor Joe's shirt, was anywhere to be seen.

"The rogue has found some means of getting off; he has left me his old flint-lock, and deserted me!" was Mr. Bonwig's first appalling thought.

He wandered about in great distress of mind for some minutes, calling loudly on Joe. Finally the report of a gun made answer. With gladdened heart he hastened in the direction of the sound, and saw Joe on the beach where they had first landed, picking up a brace of plover he had just shot.

"Where's the signal?" Augustus asked, mildly, conscious of culpable neglect on his own part. "I thought you said you would keep that waving."

"Didn't I?" said Joe, "for ever so long after I left you! Then I went back and found you snoozin'. So I made up my mind, if that was all you cared for gittin' ashore, I wouldn't trouble myself any longer."

"But — Joseph!" Bonwig remonstrated, — "this won't do! We must wave the signal."

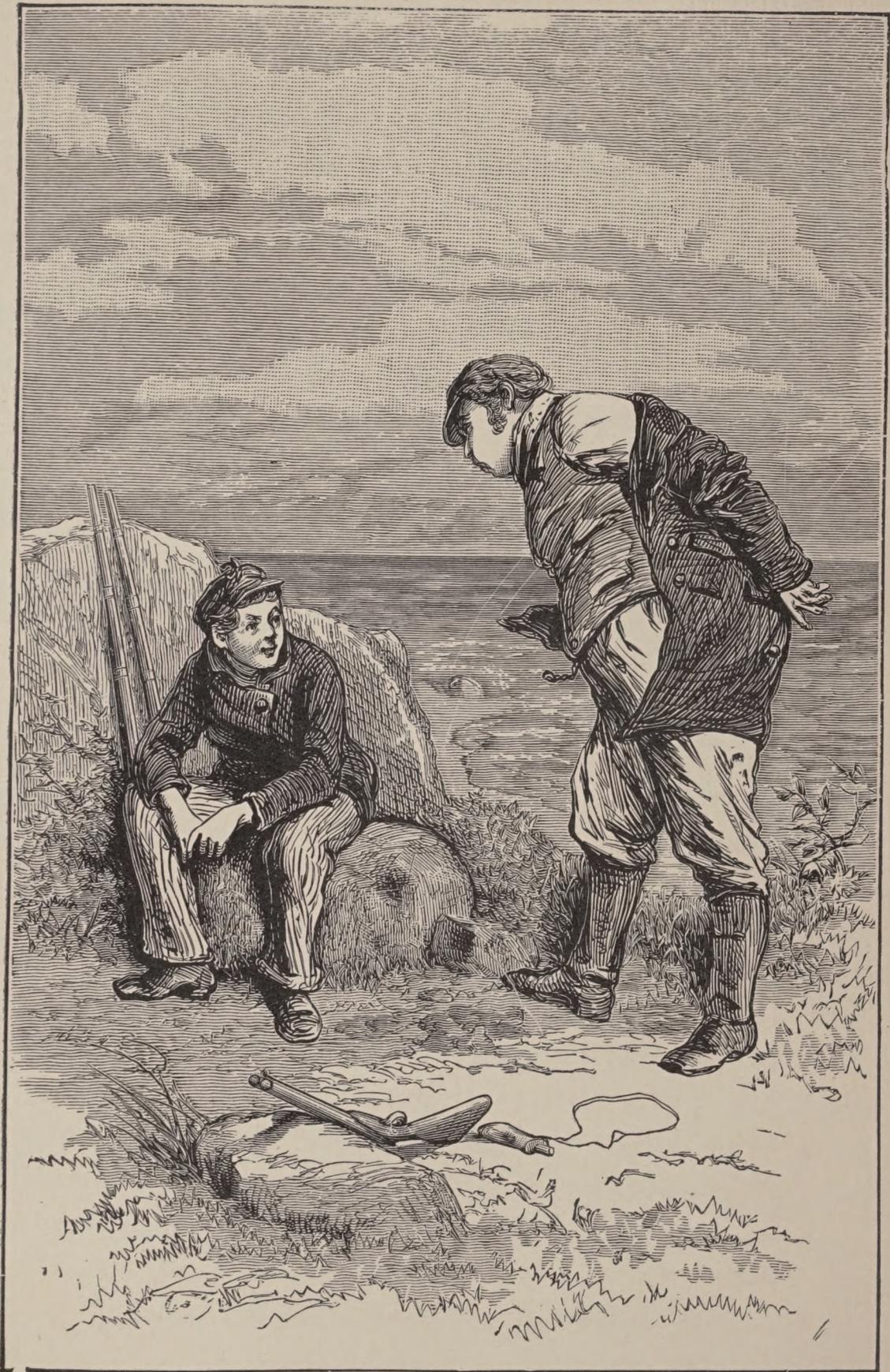
"Wave it then! though I little 'druther ye wouldn't; it scares the game."

"What have you done with the shirt?"

"Put it on, of course! I was cold, and I went to huntin', to get warm."

"Oh, now, let's have it again!" said Augustus, coaxingly.

"Nary shirt!" replied Joe, obstinately. "Use yer own, — it's your turn this time."



MR. BONWIG STRIPS. — Page 61.

Bonwig coaxed, and made offers of money, and various promises of future favors, all to no purpose. Joe buttoned his coat all the more tightly, and declared that he would not part with his shirt again, alive.

Augustus looked all around for succor; he saw sails in the distance, but not one near; and, after some moments of sad hesitation, he began to unbutton his hunting-jacket. The winds cut him.

“I’ll give you a heap of candy, if you only will, Joe!”

“Who knows you’ll ever see your candy-shop agin?” said Joe.

Augustus unbuttoned two more buttons.

“I’ll send down a trunkful by express!”

Still Joe would not yield. Bonwig unbuttoned the last button. Joe began to roar with laughter again. Augustus was actually taking off his shirt, preparatory to sticking it upon the gun-barrel, when he evidently began to suspect mischief.

“Now, what’s the joke?”

“Come over here, and I’ll show you! Bring everything. We’re going ashore now.”

“Going ashore!” said the mystified Augustus.

Joe made no answer, but led him around to the point from which the dory had gone adrift, and showed it, hauled up there again as snugly as if nothing unusual had happened to it.

“Well, now! I *am* surprised! Now — then — bless my heart!” said the amazed Augustus.

"When you was asleep," said Joe, "I went in to tell you there was a sail-boat beatin' up towards us, with a dory in tow, but you was snorin'. So I got mad, and left ye. It was *our* dory. They had picked her up at sea, and looked in the direction the wind was blowin' from, and seen our signal with a glass; and as they was out for fun, they jest beat up here to us. They picked up the loons by the way; and I give 'em the loons and two black ducks and an old-wife, for bringin' her in; and first-rate, tip-top chaps they was, too; and they wanted to pay me for the ducks, but I wouldn't take no pay, of course! And here the dory was tied, all the while you was trying to have me to take off my shirt agin, and then takin' off your own!"

"Well, I *am*! I don't think I was ever *quite* so *agreeably* surprised in my life!" said Mr. Bonwig. "I may get back to town yet to-night. How long will it take to row ashore?"

"Oh, not long," said Joe, "*this boat rows so easy.*"

"Look here! I believe I was going to row back," said Bonwig. "You row till I finish this cigar."

When he had finished the cigar, they were within half a mile of the Cove.

"He thought he was goin' to do wonders," said Joe afterwards, telling the story of their early sporting days. "He took the oars, and give a tremenjous pull, as if he was goin' to send us home with two strokes; but jest as he was strainin' with all his might, they slipped out of the rullocks, and away he

went, over backwards, and heels over head into the bottom of the boat, with his legs stridin' up over the thwart, and his arms spread like a shag's wings, and his head and shoulders in a puddle of water, in the bottom of the dory. It must have hurt him some ; but, for the life of me, I couldn't help laughin'. He got up, brushed the water off, and said he *was* surprised ! I let him try it over again, and we began to make a track like a sea-serpent's, zigzag, zigzag. But I let him work.

“ ‘ It surprises me,’ says I, ‘ to see how easy this boat rows !’ He didn't say nothin', but turned red as ever you see a biled lobster ; and didn't he sweat and blow ! Then we came to the breakers. They warn't more'n half so high as they was in the mornin', or I never should a' let him row on to 'em. But I thought 'twould be fun. We went over the first one slick enough. With the second one, the boat began to skew ; and the third one took us broadside. 'Twas a wrecker, I tell you ! And didn't it heave and twist us ! We came within one of choppin' over ! and you never see a chap so scared ! He pulled first one oar, then t'other ; we turned completely around, and was puttin' out to sea agin afore we knowed it !

“ ‘ Bless my heart, Joe,’ says he, ‘ take the oars ! Take 'em ! I wouldn't row on to the breakers again for a million dollars !’

“ But I ought not to say a word agin Bonwig,” adds Joe, laughing, whenever he tells the story to his children, — for this adventure, as I said in the

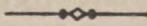
beginning, happened years ago; he is no longer Young Joe, he is Old Joe now. "He was a first-rate, tip-top feller, arter all. And his conduct to me was right down handsome, when I took him over to town in our wagon,—for he was too late for the stage. 'Joe,' said he, jest afore we got to his house, 'I believe, with your father, that shootin' ducks is a knack; rowin' a dory in the breakers requires a knack, too. I'm gettin' too old and clumsy to learn to do either; and I believe I shan't try again. And now, Joe, my boy,' says he, 'as I don't expect to use my gun again, and as you seem to take such a fancy to it, and as you have been so very kind to me, in spite of your jokes, I've concluded,' says he, 'to make you a present.' And what did the gay old chap do but slip that beautiful double-shooter into my hand! Didn't the salt spray come into my eyes? and warn't I the proudest and happiest boy in thirteen counties, at that moment? And haven't I kept that rare old stub-twist shootin'-iron all these years, to remember Bonwig by?"

And Joe takes down the piece from over the chimney corner, and shows it again to his children.

SIMON CANFORD

AND

HIS DOG CARLO.



SIMON CANFORD lived with a hard man, and he had hard work and a plenty of it to do ; but there was one thing about it which he liked.

Mr. Wiggin, his employer, had a small poultry farm over on the Jersey shore, and he used often to send his chickens to market in a boat. Simon, though only seventeen years old, was sometimes intrusted with this part of the business, and it was the part which, as I have said, he liked.

But *liked* is a very mild word for it. To push his skiff into the creek in the early morning, row out upon the great, broad, flashing river, and hoist his little sail to the breeze, if there was one ; then go dashing away on the bright waves in the company of other sail-boats, amidst ships, and barges, and steamers, sometimes so near that he was tossed on their wakes ; to breathe the cool salt air, and leisurely watch everything as he guided his little craft, — this was all a keen delight to the boy Simon.

One day he had been over to the city, and sold his turkeys and chickens, when, as he was returning to his boat with a basket of groceries, whistling and thinking of the pleasant voyage home, he saw a sight which made him turn aside into a dirty street near the river.

Some boys were tormenting a dog. Amid their shouts and laughter could be heard the poor creature's yelps of pain and terror. Simon couldn't stand that. He ran to the spot.

"What are you doing?" he cried, making his way into the crowd of boys.

"Having some fun," said a ragged, grinning, dirty-faced urchin, who was looking on.

"Fun! I should say so!" said Simon. "Whose dog is that?"

"Jeff Holand's," replied the dirty-faced boy.

"Who is Jeff Holand? Where is he?" Simon demanded.

"That's him there, tyin' the tarred paper to the dog's tail," said the dirty-faced boy.

Simon stepped up to Jeff Holand.

"Is this your dog?" he asked.

"Yes, it is!" the fellow answered, shortly. "What 'ave you got to say about it?"

"I say it's a mean thing you're doing!" Simon exclaimed, keeping down his angry feelings as well as he could. "What has the dog done to you to deserve such treatment?"

"Done?" laughed the fellow. "He hain't done

nothin'; that's the trouble. He's the meanest pup you ever see! All he's good for is to have a little fun with, and we're goin' to have it. Where's the matches, Jim?"

"You're not going to set fire to that tarred paper tied to his tail?"

"Yes, that's jest what I'm goin' to do. Be ready," said Jeff Holand to a boy who was holding the dog; "slip the rope from his collar, and let him scud the minute I say the word."

Jeff was a boy about Simon's own age. He wore good clothes, and yet there was something coarse and repulsive in his looks. There were other boys quite as old as he, but none so well dressed, assisting him, and a dozen or more of all sizes looking on.

It was a crowd Simon did not like the looks of. Besides, the basket in his hand containing the groceries he had bought for Mrs. Wiggin, and Mr. Wiggin's money in his pocket, obtained from the sale of the poultry, made him timid. It wouldn't do for him to get into a quarrel with these young roughs, and yet he could not bear to see the dog tormented. He glanced up and down the street, hoping to see a policeman, but there was none in sight.

"Look here," said Simon, coming quickly to a resolution, "if you don't want him, give him to me."

"Give him to you!" echoed Jeff Holand, jeeringly. "What would I give him to you for?"

"To get rid of him, of course, if he's good for nothing."

"But he is good for something, — to have fun with." And Jeff prepared to strike a match on the curbstone.

Fortunately it broke. That saved Simon the trouble of knocking it from his hand, for he was now determined to save the dog at all hazards.

"Well, I'll buy him of you," he said, as Jeff was reaching for another match.

"What'll ye give?" Jeff asked.

"A shilling," Simon answered.

It was in the old days of York shilling pieces, value twelve and a half cents. Simon took one from his pocket, and made a tender of it to Jeff, who only laughed at him.

"I'll give two," said Simon. "That will buy you a good deal more and a good deal better fun than you can torture out of this poor dog."

"Say half a dollar and it's a bargain," said Jeff. "He's a first-rate dog, — he's a spaniel."

He was about to strike another match.

Half-dollars were not plenty with Simon. He had to work hard for his food and clothes (poor clothes they were, too,) and one dollar a month. Two weeks' wages it would take to rescue the spaniel, and what should he do with him then?

Jeff struck the match.

"I'll give it!" cried Simon, thrusting his foot between the tarred paper and Jeff's hand.

“All right!” said Jeff. “Lemme see the color of your half-dollar.”

Simon showed the money, and the trade was concluded.

“What’s his name?” he asked, as he took hold of the rope to lead the poor trembling spaniel away.

“Carlo; it’s engraved on the collar here,” said Jeff. “But you can’t have the collar; that’s worth more than the dog, — nor the rope, neither.”

“Keep your collar and rope, then,” said Simon. “I don’t care.”

He took from his pocket some cord which he had used for tying the legs of his chickens together, and soon had one end fast to the dog’s neck. The collar, meanwhile, was unbuckled and pocketed by Jeff, who then ran off to spend his half-dollar, while Simon walked in the other direction with his dog.

Carlo went willingly, for he was a knowing animal, and it had not taken long for him to learn that he had fallen into the hands of a friend. His cringing head was lifted, his drooping tail rose also with his rising confidence, and by the time Simon reached his boat, the happy and grateful creature was capering by his side.

Simon was delighted.

“He’s a great deal better dog than I thought,” he said, turning to admire him. “He’s well fed, too. I wonder how that scamp ever got to own him. Carlo! Carlo!”

And Simon felt a thrill of joy when Carlo jumped up and licked his hands.

"He's a splendid fellow!" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't sell him for — not for ten dollars! But" — a wave of trouble rolled over his content — "what will old Mr. Wiggin say?"

He got the dog into the boat, hoisted sail, and pushed off. Carlo was tied at first to the thwart, but once well away from the shore, Simon released him and took him into the stern. With one hand on the tiller, and the other on the neck of the animal at his side, he was happier than he had ever been in his life. The poor, lonely, hard-worked boy had now something to love.

"A hundred dollars wouldn't buy him!" he exclaimed aloud, as he patted Carlo's head, and stroked his soft, beautiful ears. "I wouldn't part with him for anything! How handsome he is! He's the handsomest dog I ever saw!"

And in his new-born pride and affection he gave Carlo a caress. Carlo in return whined wistfully and fondly, and licked his new master's face.

The boy's heart was almost too full of happiness. It overflowed into his eyes. That is the reason, I suppose, why he didn't see a fast yacht coming right down upon his port bow. It was, in fact, hidden by his sail, yet our careful young boatman would have seen it at any other time. He was a little too much occupied with Carlo just then.

A shout from on board the yacht gave him warn-

ing. He quickly brought his boat to the wind, the yacht at the same time veered from its course, and passed close by his stern. In the confusion of the moment he allowed his hat to be knocked off by the flapping sail.

“What did you try to run across my bows for?” cried the helmsman of the yacht. “There, you’ve lost your hat, and good enough for you!”

“What did *you* try to run across *my* bows for?” Simon retorted. “Didn’t you see I had the right of way? Carlo!”

The dog, who had been up and watching eagerly for a moment, gave a spring. Simon resolved to catch him, — too late. Had he seen somebody he knew on board the yacht?

“I’ve lost him!” thought the boy, as Carlo splashed into the water and went paddling away, snuffing, with his nose in the air.

But, joyful surprise! Carlo was not going for the yacht. He was swimming towards his new master’s old straw hat, afloat on the water.

“That’s a good dog you’ve got, any way!” cried the captain of the yacht. “What will you take for him?”

“A thousand dollars!” Simon shouted back, in that moment of joy feeling that he would not take a cent less.

If he had learned to love his new friend before, what shall we say of him after this prompt and faithful service?

The boat, brought to the wind, drifted back towards the dog. The dog, with the hat in his mouth, and dragging in the water in spite of him, swam with difficulty towards the boat.

“He would have tried to save that old hat if he had drowned for it!” said Simon, as he reached out and drew Carlo into the boat. “Good fellow! Noble Carlo!”

And wet as the spaniel was, Simon gave him a good hugging then and there.

He had, meanwhile, forgotten all about Mr. Wiggin. But quite too soon he had reason to remember him.

He had hardly got his boat ashore, in the midst of the geese and ducks, squawking and quacking in the water before the poultry-yard, when the old man came down to meet him.

“What ye got there, Simon?” was the first stern question.

“A dog! the finest spaniel you ever saw!”

And Simon, with his eager praises, tried to forestall the old man’s prejudices.

“Finest fiddlesticks!” exclaimed the old man. “What ye going to do with him?”

“I hope you’ll let me keep him,” said Simon.

“Keep him! What do we want such a whelp as that for, eating us out of house and home? A worthless pup!” said the old man.

“He won’t eat much, and he’ll be handy to send

into the water after the geese and ducks when we want to drive them anywhere."

And Simon went on, earnestly setting forth the advantages of possessing such a dog. But nothing could convince the old man.

Carlo received a like welcome from Mrs. Wiggin; and he would have been left to starve if Simon had not saved a part of his own dinner for him, and gone hungry himself, that the poor spaniel might be fed.

For two days Carlo was frowned upon, and Simon was blamed and scolded for bringing him home. Then, all at once, there was a change.

Mr. Wiggin sat reading his newspaper after dinner. Suddenly, he gave a start and looked out quickly at Simon, who was playing with the dog on the doorstep.

"Did that dog have a collar on when you found him?"

"Yes, sir; but the boy took it off," Simon answered.

"Any name on it?"

"Yes, the dog's name, Carlo. I didn't notice anything else."

The old man coughed, puckered his lips, adjusted his glasses, and returned to his newspaper. A minute later, Simon saw him cutting something out of it with the old lady's scissors.

Mr. Wiggin passed the slip to Mrs. Wiggin. She looked at it, exclaimed, "Why, massy sakes!" and passed it back to Mr. Wiggin.

Mr. Wiggin placed it in his pocket-book, drew his

lips in again with a satisfied expression, and once more looked out on Simon and his companion.

"Has that dog had a good dinner?" he inquired.

"I gave him a little something," Simon confessed.

"Well, give him some more," said the old man. "Wife, see what you can pick up for him. If we keep a dog, we must feed him. And if we feed him," he added after a pause, "he ought to be our dog. You won't object to give up your claim to him, will ye, Simon?"

The boy hardly knew what to say, so great was his astonishment.

"I believe you told us you gave half a dollar for him," the old man went on, while Simon was thinking what answer to make. "I don't mind paying ye that. It's a better dog 'n I thought. We can make him handy about the place."

And the close-fisted Wiggin actually offered Simon the money!

"I'll think about it; I guess I won't take it now," replied the boy, wondering what had so changed the old man's sentiments regarding the unwelcome "whelp."

It must have been something in the newspaper.

Whatever it was, Mr. Wiggin had cut it out; and yet Simon felt a keen curiosity to search the columns from which the slip had been taken.

He did not have a chance until evening, for the old man now told him that it was time for him to go to work.

Mr. Wiggin was unusually cheerful that afternoon. He had no longer a word to say of the boy's folly in buying and bringing home a "worthless pup;" and at night Carlo was once more generously fed.

After supper, Simon took up the paper. It was a copy of the *Sun*. Among the columns of advertisements was one headed "LOST." It was from this that the clipping had been made.

Simon noted the date of the paper, the page, the column, and the position in the column of the cut.

"It's an advertisement for Carlo!" he said to himself, "probably offering a reward, or the old man wouldn't act so."

Troubled and anxious, he glanced over the paper here and there, appearing to read; then flung it down, got up, and went out to look at Carlo in the shed.

In a little while he came back and stood in the door.

"Did you tie him?" he asked.

"Tie who? Oh, the dog?" said Mr. Wiggin. "Hem! yes; I thought he'd better be tied."

"But you said there was no need of tying him; you hoped he would run away," Simon reminded him.

His heart swelled, and his voice trembled as he spoke, for he knew there was some sinister design against him and Carlo.

"That was at first. But I've made up my mind to give him a trial. And — hem!" — the old man

cleared his throat again, and crossed his legs in a new position, — “I’m going to town myself with the poultry in the morning. I shall drive, and I thought I’d take the dog along, to see if he can be larnt to guard a wagon.”

Simon had always been afraid of the old man. But now, pale and trembling though he was, he spoke up boldly.

“I’m not willing to let Carlo go, unless I go with him.”

“Not willing?”

And the old man stared at him in grim astonishment.

“No, sir!” said Simon, firmly.

“And why not, young man?”

“Because if I do, I shall never see him again.”

“Why, can’t you trust him with me? Won’t I take good care of him?”

“Not such care as *I* want to have taken of him,” Simon answered, without flinching before the harsh voice and cold gray eyes. “You don’t like him. You’ve hated him till to-day. But you’ve found something in the paper about him, and now you want to take him from me.”

“Suppose I want to get him for the owner; you’ll give him up to the owner, won’t you?” said the old man.

“Then that *is* what you mean to do!” Simon exclaimed, passionately.

The old man seemed to be aware that further concealment was useless. He spoke out plainly.

“Yes; and you may as well know it. The owner has advertised for him, and I’m going to take him back.”

“There’s a reward offered for him, I suppose,” said Simon, swallowing back a great lump that rose in his throat.

“Well, yes, a small one,” said the old man. “You shall have your share on’t. But I think I’m entitled to my share, too, since I’ve harbored and fed the dog.”

“*You’ve* harbored and fed him!” said the boy, indignantly. “You’d have kicked him away from the door, if it hadn’t been for me! You — ”

But he checked himself. It was no use for him to have words with the hard and obstinate old man, and he knew it.

“Go to bed!” said Mr. Wiggin, sternly.

The boy’s anger and grief burst forth in a gush of tears. He obeyed, and went up-stairs to bed, but not to sleep.

For a long time he lay in a fever of excitement, thinking over his talk with the old man, and trying to see a way out of his trouble.

Have you ever loved a dog that somebody threatened to take away from you? Then, if that dog was a new-found object of affection, and the only thing you had in the world to love, you may know something how the boy felt about Carlo.

Simon Canford was an orphan. He had neither brothers nor sisters, nor any near relatives who cared for him. Since he was ten years old he had had to work for his living, and for the past three years he had been with Mr. Wiggin.

He was not bound by any papers, and he had no guardian; but by his faithfulness and industry he kept his place, and now earned his twelve dollars a year, besides his board and clothes. He had also three months' schooling in the winter, or perhaps I should say, three months divided between easy studies in school and hard work at home.

Simon thought over all this as he lay in his bed under the low garret roof. Bitter feelings rose up in his heart against the poultry-raiser.

"He has always been as mean to me as he could be," he said to himself. "When I found that horseshoe he claimed it, because he said I was his hired boy, my time belonged to him, and it took some of my time to pick up a horseshoe. He was to clothe me,—and what clothes I have to wear! I'm ashamed when I go to meeting or to school. He promised me a new suit in the spring, but I didn't get it. If it hadn't been for the pleasant trips across the river to market, I'd have left him long ago."

Simon was thankful now that he had not left him, for if he had, he might never have seen Carlo.

"And now he means to take even him away from me! He shan't! Carlo is my dog; I bought him. I don't want any reward, and old Wiggin shan't have

any. The idea of his claiming a reward for my dog, that I found and brought home!"

He fully made up his mind what to do, and then went to sleep.

The old man rose early the next morning, as was his custom, and went to the stairway to call Simon.

"Come, boy!" he cried; and thump! thump! thump! went his fist on the wall. "Time to be stirring; I want to get an airy start!"

He went to the barn, threw open the doors, and backed out the wagon. Then, having fed the horse, and done a few other chores, he returned to the house to see how breakfast was getting on.

"Where's that lazy-bones?" he said, Simon not having yet made his appearance. "Simon!" he called again, at the foot of the stairs.

No answer. The old man pounded on the wall.

"Do you want me to come up there and pull you out of bed?"

The boy made no sign that he desired any such assistance. He made, in fact, no sign whatever.

"I hain't seen nor heard a word from him this morning," Mrs. Wiggin remarked; "but I think he must be out somewhere; I noticed that the dog was untied."

"Dog untied!"

And the old man stalked to the shed. True enough, Carlo was missing.

Back through the house tramped the old man, his

heavy shoes clattering on the floor, and up the stairs to Simon's room. There was no Simon there.

Long before even Mr. Wiggin was awake that morning, the boy had gone softly down with a small bundle under his arm, helped himself to whatever he could find in the pantry, released Carlo, and gone off in the fresh and breezy morning, to find a home and seek his fortune elsewhere.

"Didn't *you* unbolt the shed-door?" the old man demanded of his wife, as he came clattering down the stairs again.

"No; I supposed you did. I found it unfastened," said Mrs. Wiggin.

"The rogue must have unfastened it then when he went out that way," said the old man. "He's gone. His old clothes are there, but he has worn off his best, and taken his shirts and stockings. Plague on the dog! I don't care so much for the reward I've lost, but that boy's sarvices was worth — wal, it'll cost me six or eight dollars a month to fill his place, any way."

Simon meanwhile was walking fast, with a light heart, along the country roads. He had health and hope, ten dollars of his own well-earned money in his pocket, and Carlo at his side. Why shouldn't he be happy?

It had been his chief thought, up to this time, to get safely away with his dog, to defeat the niggardly old man's intentions, and keep Carlo himself. But as he trudged on, an unwelcome afterthought in-

truded itself on his mind. Had he any right to the dog?

True, he had bought him of Jeff Holand; but, now he reflected, it did not seem to him very probable that Jeff was his owner. In short, that so fine a spaniel, clean and well-fed, and wearing so nice a collar, should belong to a young scamp like Jeff, — was it not incredible?

“And now,” Simon said to himself, “somebody has advertised for him. That can’t be Jeff. It must be his real owner, who thinks as much of him, maybe, as I do.”

The more he thought of it, the more he was troubled. In vain he said to himself, as he did more than once, “I don’t care! I’ve got him, and I’m going to keep him. He’s my dog now.” In a minute or two the terrible spectre of the wrong he was doing somebody would again start up before him.

“I’ll go away off somewhere, and hire out in a place where Carlo was never seen or heard of, and where I can keep him for mine, and earn more, too, than ever old Wiggin was willing to pay me.”

This was his plan. But suddenly he stopped short in the road. “I wish I could see that advertisement,” he said. “Maybe it isn’t for my Carlo, after all. I should feel better if I knew that.”

He had lately passed a little wayside fancy-store, where he had seen some cheap magazines and newspapers in the window. Perhaps he could find there

a copy of the *Sun* from which Mr. Wiggin made the clipping.

He turned back, and entered the door of the little shop. He saw a copy of the *Sun* on the counter, but it was that morning's issue.

"Have you yesterday's *Sun*?" he asked of a woman who stood waiting to serve him.

He was relieved to hear her answer, "No," so fearful he was of finding what his conscience had driven him to seek.

He turned away, but she called after him.

"I shouldn't wonder if I could get you a second-hand copy, if you want one."

"If you please," said Simon, feebly.

"Mary," cried the woman, to a small girl in the rear of the shop, "run in to Mrs. Bowen's and ask her for her yesterday's *Sun*; I'll make it right with her, if she can spare it."

The girl ran off, and returned in a few minutes with the paper. Simon took it with a trembling hand, paid one cent for it, and went out into the open air, where he could breathe freely while searching the columns for poor Carlo's fate.

He remembered just the place from which Mr. Wiggin had cut the slip. He ran his eye down to it, and there he read:

"STRAYED OR STOLEN. — On Tuesday, 6th inst., a good-sized spaniel of mixed breed, fine long hair, rather curly, light-brown back and sides, more yellowish on the legs, left fore-foot white, also white on

end of the tail. Had on when lost a neat collar with name 'Carlo' engraved on it, also 'License No. 1941.' A reward of FIVE DOLLARS will be paid to any person returning the said dog to Mrs. A. A. Watson, No. 96 Vestry Street."

Simon drew a long breath, crumpled up the paper, and looked down despairingly at Carlo.

"The old man was right," he said. "And to think he was going to play me such a trick for the paltry reward of five dollars! I wouldn't give up Carlo for five hundred dollars!"

Tears rushed to his eyes, which he winked away as he walked.

"It's too bad!" he said. "Just as I had got a dog for the first time, and he is growing attached to me! Why can't I feel that he is mine? What do I care for Mrs. A. A. Watson? Why didn't she keep her dog when she had him?"

He was walking fast, but not in the same direction as at first. In spite of himself, in spite of his love for Carlo and his desperate desire to keep him, he was going back,—not to the home he had left forever, but towards the nearest ferry that would take him across the river to New York city.

It was near noon of that day, when, tired and disheartened, followed by the dog, Simon walked along Vestry Street, looking at the numbers, and finally stopped.

I said *followed* by the dog; but that is not the right word. The dog would have bounded on before

him, if he had not been held by a cord which Simon had slipped over his neck before taking him into the city, and he now, with a glad bark and whine, leaped upon the steps of No. 96.

No need for Simon to study the numbers so carefully; Carlo knew his old home.

The joy he showed on seeing it again made Simon bitterly jealous.

"He doesn't care for me any more now," he muttered, as he went slowly up the steps.

Just then the door opened, and, to his utter surprise and bewilderment, a well-known voice exclaimed:

"Here he is now!"

For a moment it seemed to the boy that he was back at the poultry-farm once more. It was the harsh voice of old Wiggin that spoke, and there stood old Wiggin himself, looking grimly down upon him. Was it a dream?

No dream at all, as Simon knew very well after he had had a moment to think about it. The old man had come to bring his report concerning the dog, and perhaps secure his "share of the reward" in case Carlo should be recovered.

Behind Mr. Wiggin appeared a little stooping old lady, who thrust a little head in a little white cap out at the door.

"Carlo! why, precious, darling Carlo!" she exclaimed.

And in an instant the dog was in her arms, licking

her hands and face, and wagging his tail, — or perhaps I should say, wagging himself all over, — while she caressed him in the fondest manner.

Meanwhile Mr. Wiggin looked sternly at Simon.

“So this is what you run away from home for,” he said, “to bring the dog and get the reward unbeknown to me?”

“No, sir,” said Simon. “I haven’t run away from home in the first place; I’ve left your service, as I had a right to do, — that’s all. I would have given you warning if I could, but you forced me to do as I did.”

Simon was no longer afraid of the old man. He went on speaking in a voice which trembled with some nobler emotion than that of fear.

“And I didn’t start to bring the dog, either. I didn’t make up my mind to bring him till two or three hours ago.”

“What was ye going to do with him?”

“Keep him!” Simon stoutly declared. “I wanted him; I didn’t want any reward.”

“Then I trust there won’t be no trouble about that,” said the old man. “I’m willing you should have half, but I rightfully claim the other half.”

“Take it all if you want it!” cried Simon with quivering lips, and eyes filling with tears.

He turned to go; but the little stooping old lady ran out on the steps, beckoning and calling.

“Boy! young man! come back! I want to speak to you!”

Simon was scarcely able to control the passion of grief which swelled in his heart as he obeyed.

"I must pay you something," she said. "I must thank you, at any rate. Come in. Don't you want to bid Carlo good-bye? This man says you were fond of him."

Simon, standing in the entry, stifled a sob and said:

"No, I can't bid him good-bye. He doesn't care for me now he has got home."

"And do you really care so much for him?" said the little old lady, rightly understanding his emotion.

"I thought everything of him!" Simon replied. "You see, I thought he was mine. I bought him of some boys who were tormenting him. There was one by the name of Jeff Holand. He said he owned him, and took my half-dollar."

"Oh, that Jeff Holand!" said the old lady, indignantly. "He's a boy I took to bring up, and did everything I could for, and how he repaid me! To think that at last he should actually sell my Carlo! That was his last act of ingratitude. Thank Heaven, I've sent him away, and he can play no more of his pranks with me!"

She then made Simon tell the whole story of his rescue of Carlo, his care of him, and his final determination to restore him to his mistress.

He spoke in a manly, honest way, and in tones which betrayed his strong affection for the dog.

The woman listened with deep interest, and at last turned to the old man.

“Is he a truthful boy?” she asked.

“Oh, yes, I must say that for him,” the old man replied; “though what he says of my not wanting to keep the dog, — that’s stretched a good deal.”

“But he’s an honest, good-hearted boy?” she continued.

“Well, yes, I can’t deny that,” the old man again admitted; “though his going off this morning the way he did, — I don’t consider that to his credit.”

“Yet you forgive him, and are willing to take him back?”

“Oh, sartin, sartin!” said the old man. “He’s a good faithful boy. I want him to come back.”

The old lady gave Simon a pleasant smile.

“And what do you say?” she asked.

“I’ll never go back there in the world,” replied Simon, — “never!” And he spoke as if he meant it.

“Would you go back if I would let him have the dog?”

“Oh,” said Simon, opening his eyes in astonishment, “I don’t know! I’d do almost anything, — I’d go almost anywhere to have Carlo again!”

“Well,” said the old lady, “since you think so much of Carlo, and since this gentleman gives you so high a recommendation, I’ve a proposal to make. I want a good, honest, faithful boy to fill that Holand boy’s place. How would you like to come and live with me?”

“Live — with — you?” Simon gasped out, more astonished than ever.

“With me and Carlo,” she added, and her pleasant smile became truly tender and motherly. “He shall be your dog as well as mine. I am lonely, and I want a son. I like you, Simon, not merely because you were so kind to Carlo, and so true and honest as to bring him home to me when you loved him so, but I like your looks. You shall go to school, and then to college, or get into some kind of business, if you prefer that. What do you say?”

Well, what could the poor, homeless, hungry-hearted boy say? What would you have said in his place?

The old man was quite thunderstruck at so unexpected a result of the interview. This, then, was what the shrewd little old lady was driving at with her questions all the while!

He was sorry to lose Simon, but the reward of five dollars, the whole of which he was permitted to carry away, partly consoled him.

The boy's astonishment changed quickly to joy, and his joy settled slowly down into a most happy thankfulness for his great good fortune.

He not only had Carlo again, — he had a comfortable home, and, best of all, he had a mother.

Do you, who have had a mother all your life, appreciate and love her as Simon soon learned to appreciate and love good Mrs. Watson, I wonder?

HOW EDGAR LEFT HOME.

L OUD screams in the wood-shed frightened everybody in the house; and Mrs. Drew ran to see what was the matter. She opened the door, and there stood her son Edgar by the work-bench, looking proud and fierce, with his fist doubled up; and there sat his little cousin Walter on the floor, his eyes shut tight and his mouth wide open, screaming as loud as he could scream.

“Children! what is the matter?” cried good Mrs. Drew, hastening to see if Walter had had a finger cut off, or an eye put out, or a leg broken, for she was always afraid some such accident would happen to those boys.

“He — struck — me!” screamed Walter.

“He shan’t have my playthings!” said Edgar, shaking his head, and looking prouder and fiercer than ever; and with his foot he began to push them under the work-bench. There was an express-wagon with four wheels, and a cart with two wheels, and a wheelbarrow with one wheel, a bow and arrow, a box

of blocks to make houses of, an india-rubber dog that would bark, and a cat that would mew, when you squeezed them, a jumping-jack, and I don't know how many more things. Edgar had had most of the toys a good while, and had played with them till they no longer interested him, and they had long lain in his tool-chest at the end of the work-bench, neglected and forgotten, and of no use to anybody. When his little cousin Walter came to live with him, his mother said, "There are those old playthings of Edgar's; they are just what we want for Walter."

Walter was of course delighted with them. But Edgar, as soon as he found out that somebody else wanted his playthings, thought that *he* wanted them, and was unwilling to share them with Walter. If his cousin wished to take the express-wagon, Edgar said *he* was just going to take it, and Walter shouldn't have it; then if Walter gave that up, and chose the cart, Edgar declared he must have the cart, — he was just going to draw chips in it. And so they quarrelled, in spite of all Mrs. Drew could say to make her son ashamed of his selfishness.

But to-day she thought the time had come to put an end to these disputes about the playthings. So she stooped and put one hand kindly on the weeping Walter's head, and took Edgar's unwilling hand in the other.

"There, Walter, don't cry; you shall have the playthings, for I said you might. Edgar, how *can* you treat your little cousin so? Remember you are

a great boy, almost eleven years old, and he is only five."

"I don't care! I ain't going to have him coming into this house, and getting all my things away from me!"

"Have you forgotten what you told me when his poor mother died? Said I, 'Edgar, your little cousin hasn't any mother now, and he won't have any home, unless we let him come here; how would you like to have him for your little brother?' You said you would love him, and be very good to him."

"Yes!" muttered Edgar. "I thought we'd play horse, and he'd let me drive; but he wants to drive half the time! The idea of *his* driving *me*! I ain't going to stand any of that nonsense, now, come!"

"Look here, Edgar; do you know you are talking to your mother?" said Mrs. Drew.

"I can't help that! You always take his part against me. I've stood it long enough. I shan't stand it any longer."

Mrs. Drew looked at her boy in astonishment. After a moment's pause she said, calmly, "What will you do about it?"

"I'll have Walter go away. If *he* stays in this house, *I* won't!"

"Very well. Walter is going to stay in this house, and have kind treatment from everybody in it. I have talked to you enough. Your father and I have done all we could to make a good, generous, happy boy of you; and now if you wish to leave us,

because you are too selfish to have your little cousin here, and too ungrateful to remember how you came by these very playthings, — why, you can go. And if you are resolved to be such a bad, rebellious boy, the sooner you go the better.”

“ Well, I’ll go, then ! ” said Edgar, snatching his hand away, and walking, fierce and straight, up to his little bedroom, to pack his things.

Mrs. Drew did not believe he would have the courage to go, or perhaps she would not have said what she did ; but having said it, she determined to wait and see what he would do. She went into the sitting-room, and sat down to her work (she was making Edgar a skating-cap), but left the door open, so that she could see him as he passed through the entry. She tried to appear calm, but she could not help feeling very anxious all the while he was in his room ; and when at last he came down-stairs with his best clothes on, and a little bundle under his arm, her heart gave a great throb of love and grief, and it was all she could do to keep from sobbing outright.

Edgar, on his part, had not believed that his mother would finally let him leave the house, any more than she had believed that he would go ; and he thought it would be a great triumph to have her at the last moment entreat him to stay. So he made a great noise tramping through the entry, in order to attract her attention. As he looked in, and saw her at work on his skating-cap, his heart almost failed him ; but

he was too proud to stop then, and as she did not speak, he stalked out of the door, thinking she would call him back before he got past the gate.

“Edgar!” she said, rapping on the window; and glad he was to turn back, although he did so very sullenly.

“What!” said he, with a cross, impatient look.

“You are not going away without bidding me good-bye, are you?” said his mother, cheerfully, for she had got the better of her emotions by this time.

“I didn’t know anybody wanted to say good-bye to me,” replied Edgar, gloomily, hugging his bundle.

“Why not?” said his mother. “If it is best for you to go, I am willing; but let us part friends. And I must see what you have in your bundle.”

“Oh, I haven’t anything Walter will want; don’t be afraid!” said the envious Edgar, bitterly.

Mrs. Drew paid no attention to this remark, which was intended to be very stinging, but quietly undid the bundle.

“What! nothing but a shirt and a night-shirt, a pair of stockings and a handkerchief? Why, my child, it will never do to go away from home with so few things.”

“These are enough,” said Edgar, stifling his remorse and grief. “You’ll be glad to give the rest to Walter.”

“But you will have to go to work, if you leave home, and you will want some every-day clothes.”

The boy had not thought of that; and the prospect

of living out somewhere in the service of strangers was not very encouraging.

"I can't carry a big bundle," he said.

"Well, then we will send you what clothes you want, if you will write to us, after you have found a place," said his mother, tying up the bundle again.

"I shall go to sea, and you will never hear from me again!" said Edgar, fiercely. He thought that would bring her to terms, but she appeared quite unmoved.

"Have you money enough for your journey?"

"I have three dollars and a half."

"Where did you get so much?"

"It — it — it's some you gave me!" Edgar faltered. Then, finding that he was beginning to soften, he added, vindictively "I can leave it for Walter, if you want me to!"

"No, my child; you will want more than that; and you know I have never taken anything from you that you needed, to give it to Walter. It isn't because I don't love you, and wouldn't do everything in the world for you, that I insist on your being kind to your little cousin. After you have been away from home a while, living among strangers, who will not be to you what your father and mother and sisters have been, then you will wish you had been more kind to that poor little homeless, motherless boy."

Mrs. Drew wiped away a tear as she put back the boy's purse. How he longed then to throw his arms about her neck, and ask her forgiveness, and promise

never to be unkind to Walter again! But he was too proud for that, and he was angry because she seemed so willing to part with him.

“What shall I say to your father and sisters when they come home and ask for Edgar?”

“Anything you like; I suppose you’ll make out as bad a story as you can about me!”

“Oh, Edgar!” said his mother, reproachfully. Then, showing the skating-cap, “What shall I do with this? I have spent so many happy hours over it, anticipating so much pleasure seeing you wear it this winter; and there will be skating now in a few weeks.”

“I shan’t want it; and I don’t suppose I could have it long if I did; you’d give it to Walter the first time he teased for it,” muttered Edgar, turning to go.

He knew how cruelly unjust this taunt was, and he wanted her to reply to it. But she only said, “Well, Walter shall have the cap. He will be the only boy we shall have to love and care for now. But, Edgar, it is going to rain. There is no need of your starting in bad weather. You can wait till morning, if you like.”

“No, I’d rather go now!” And away he strode, with a tragical air, so full of sorrow and anger and remorse, that he could not say another word, nor look back without bursting into tears.

Little Walter, now just beginning to comprehend what the great trouble was, ran after him, and caught

him by the arm. "Don't go, Edgar!" he pleaded; "don't go! Come back, and I won't ask for your playthings any more!"

But Edgar shook him off rudely, and slammed the gate, and so bade good-bye to his comfortable, happy home, and went out into the great, lonely world.

It was going to rain, sure enough. The sky was dark, and a few drops already began to sprinkle the dust of the road. One fell on Edgar's hand and another on his cheek. The earth had never looked so dreary to him; he had never felt such cold ominous raindrops before. "She'll be certain to call me again before I'm out of sight," thought he; and oh, how he hoped she would! But she did not.

She saw him go up the long hill, carrying his little bundle, farther and farther, dimmer and dimmer, under the darkening clouds, — her darling boy! Would she ever see that little coat, those trudging feet again? Every moment she expected he would relent and turn back. "The rain will certainly send him home!" thought she; and so she watched and prayed till he was out of sight.

The rain set in, slow and chill, not like a shower, but like a long, dismal storm. An hour passed, and no disheartened little boy with his bundle was seen coming down the hill. Then it grew so dark and rained so hard that his mother could not have seen him even if he had come.

Edgar walked on very fast at first, without any idea where he was going, crying bitterly, and mut-

tering to himself, "I won't go back now! I don't care if I do get wet! I'll drown myself, then I guess she'll feel bad! I'll go to sea, — I will! I'll come home a rich man, and put up at the hotel, and not go to see her; and I'll drive a fast horse past the house, and make all my old friends presents, and — boo-hoo-hoo!" wept the wretched, angry boy, unable to support his heart with these spiteful fancies.

Patter, patter went the rain, darker and darker grew the way; and now the serious question forced itself upon his mind, where was he to pass the night? Why not go to the hotel now? Because everybody knew him in the village, and it would look so strange for him to go there for lodgings, so near home. "I'll go where nobody knows me; I'll crawl into a barn somewhere, and sleep on the hay."

Lights began to appear in the farm-houses he passed, their cheerful beams making the rain and darkness seem all the more dismal to his lonely heart. In one warmly lighted doorway a woman appeared and called, "Come, my son, come to supper." "All right, mother," answered a cheery boy's voice from the door of a barn close by; "I've got the chores all done now." And Edgar saw a lad about his own age go into the house with a brimming pail of milk, — go in to light and warmth and supper, and the comfort of a mother's presence, while he, houseless, motherless, hungry, drenched, wandered on in the darkness and rain.

"I'll go into the next barn I come to," thought he.

And there was one near by; but just as he was gliding stealthily to the door, a man came out, and seeing him, exclaimed gruffly, "What do you want here? Clear out, you little beggar!"

Edgar was frightened, and ran away as fast as he could. He walked about half a mile farther, then sat down on a stone wall by the side of the road. Not a person was passing, not a light was to be seen anywhere. Night had now fairly closed in, and it was raining still. And there Edgar thought of the past and of his dismal prospects.

"I wish Walter had never come to our house! Making a row 'twixt me and mother! I was happy as I could be before. I didn't use him very well, I know. I'd got through with the playthings, and he might have had 'em. I don't blame him for wanting to drive me once in a while. And I don't blame mother for taking his part. I *was* mean and selfish. I wish I was back there. Father's got home by this time, and Jane and Ellen. They're eating supper now. I shan't ever see any of mother's good toast again! I wish I was dead!" And Edgar, jumping from the wall, which tumbled down after him, walked on again blindly and miserably.

In the mean while his father and sisters *had* come home, and his mother had anxiously told them what had happened.

"Don't be frightened," said Jane; "he'll be glad to come back again."

"No, he won't," said Ellen, "he's so stuffy."

“I wish,” — Mrs. Drew, now greatly alarmed, appealed to her husband, — “I wish you would go after him, and see if you can find him, or hear from him. It don’t seem to me that I can live through the night unless I can know that he is safe.”

But Mr. Drew said, “The rogue! I’m of Jane’s opinion, — he’ll come home for supper and a dry bed. At all events, he will know enough to go in out of the rain.”

The family sat down to supper; but a sad supper it was. All were anxious about Edgar, and as the rain beat against the windows, they could not help wondering if he was out in it.

After supper Mr. Drew said, “I believe I will go out and see if I can track him.” So he lighted a lantern, and took an umbrella, and went off in pursuit of the fugitive.

In an hour he came back — without him.

“Couldn’t you find him?” cried out the despairing mother.

“What! hasn’t he come home yet? I expected to find him here before me. It’s an awful night!”

It was now getting very late. Mrs. Drew did not dare to say what she felt; she could not stay in the presence of the family; but she went up the stairs to her boy’s little bedroom, and entering where all was dark, threw herself upon her knees by his bed, and began to pray, in a voice convulsed with anguish, for the welfare and safe return of her dear lost child.

“Mother!” sobbed out a well-known voice by her side.

“Edgar, you here!” she cried.

“Yes, mother!” said the penitent, under the bed-clothes.

In her joy she threw her arms about him, and it was a minute before she could control her feelings sufficiently to ask, “How came you here? how did you get in?”

“I was ashamed to have you see me, and I climbed up the apple-tree on to the piazza, and got in at the window, about half an hour ago. And, O mother, I have been so unhappy — and I know I’ve been a bad boy — I know I don’t deserve it, but if you *will* forgive me — ”

Forgive him! Why, the happy mother had never loved him so in all her life. She went and told his father and sisters, and brought him up a plate of toast she had kept warm for him, and stood by while he ate it, sitting up in bed.

“I tell you, mother,” said he, “I’ve found out what *home* is, and you won’t catch me leaving it again in a hurry. I thought of it, sitting on that stone wall in the rain, and I didn’t go much farther after that, you’d better believe; but I turned round in a little while, and came as straight back as ever I could. I crossed by Towner’s Lane, and that’s the way, I suppose, I missed father. Oh, what toast! It’s the best toast, and I’ve got the best father and mother, and the best home and sisters, there are in

this world ! And see here, mother," — Edgar looked up earnestly in her face, — "if I can't afford to be a decent sort of boy in such a home as this, just send me off again, that's all !"

Need I add that she nas never yet had occasion to send him off again ?

THE

ONE-EYED HOSTLER'S STORY.

WHAT amused us most at the Lake House last summer was the performance of a bear in the back yard.

He was fastened to a pole by a chain, which gave him a range of a dozen or fifteen feet. It was not very safe for visitors to come within that circle, unless they were prepared for rough handling.

He had a way of suddenly catching you to his bosom, and picking your pockets of peanuts and candy — if you carried any about you — in a manner which took your breath away. He stood up to his work on his hind legs in a quite human fashion, and used paw and tongue with amazing skill and vivacity. He was friendly, and didn't mean any harm, but he was a rude playfellow.

I shall never forget the ludicrous adventure of a dandified New-Yorker, who came out into the yard to feed Bruin with seed-cakes, and did not feed him fast enough.



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He had approached a trifle too near, when all at once the bear whipped an arm about him, took him to his embrace, and "went through" his pockets in a hurry. The terrified face of the struggling and screaming fop, and the good-natured, business-like expression of the fumbling and munching beast, offered the funniest sort of contrast.

The one-eyed hostler, who was the bear's especial guardian, lounged leisurely to the spot.

"Keep still, and he won't hurt ye," he said, turning his quid. "That's one of his tricks. Throw out what you've got, and he'll leave ye."

The dandy made haste to help Bruin to the last of the seed-cakes, and escaped without injury, but in a ridiculous plight, — his hat smashed, his necktie and linen rumped, and his watch dangling; but his fright was the most laughable part of all.

The one-eyed hostler made a motion to the bear, who immediately climbed the pole, and looked at us from the cross-piece at the top.

"A bear," said the one-eyed hostler, turning his quid again, "is the best-hearted, knowin'est critter that goes on all-fours. I'm speakin' of our native black bear, you understand. The brown bear ain't half so respectable, and the grizzly is one of the ugliest brutes in creation. Come down here, Pomp."

Pomp slipped down the pole and advanced towards the one-eyed hostler, walking on his hind legs and rattling his chain.

“Playful as a kitten!” said the one-eyed hostler, fondly. “I’ll show ye.”

He took a wooden bar from a clothes-horse near by, and made a lunge with it at Pomp’s breast.

No pugilist or fencing-master could have parried a blow more neatly. Then the one-eyed hostler began to thrust and strike with the bar as if in downright earnest.

“Rather savage play,” I remarked. And a friend by my side, who never misses a chance to make a pun, added:

“Yes, a decided act of bar-bear-ity.”

“Oh, he likes it!” said the one-eyed hostler. “Ye can’t hit him.”

And indeed it was so. No matter how or where the blow was aimed, a movement of Pomp’s paw, quick as a flash of lightning, knocked it aside, and he stood good-humoredly waiting for more.

“Once in a while,” said the one-eyed hostler, resting from the exercise and leaning on the bar, while Pomp retired to his pole, “there’s a bear of this species that’s vicious and blood-thirsty. Generally, you let them alone, and they’ll let you alone. They won’t run from you maybe, but they won’t go out of their way to pick a quarrel. They don’t swagger round with a chip on their shoulder lookin’ for some fool to knock it off.”

“Will they eat you?” some one inquired; for there was a ring of spectators around the performers by this time.

“As likely as not, if they are sharp-set, and you lay yourself out to be eaten; but it ain't their habit to go for human flesh. Roots, nuts, berries, bugs, and any small game they can pick up, satisfies their humble appetite, as a general thing.

“But they're amazin' fond of honey, and there's no end of stingin' they won't stand for the fun of robbin' a bee-nest. They're omnivourous as a hog.”

The spectators smiled, while some one remarked:

“You mean omnivorous.”

The hostler winked his eye knowingly, and replied:

“I mean omnivourous,” with a still stronger accent on the wrong syllable. “I found the word in a book, and it means eatin' or devourin' all sorts. That's what a bear does. He likes everything, and a good deal of it. He can't live on suckin' his paws all winter, neither. That's a foolish notion.”

“Do you mean to say a bear doesn't hibernate?” I asked.

“He hibernates, — yes, I believe that's what they call it,” replied the one-eyed hostler. “He lies curled up kind o' torpid sometimes in winter; but what he really lives on then is his fat.

“Fat is fuel, so ter speak. He lays it up in the fall, and burns it out in the winter. He goes into his cold-weather quarters plump, and comes out lean; but it's only in very cold weather that he keeps so quiet. In mild, open winters he's out foragin' around, and when there comes a warm spell in the toughest

winter, you may see him. He likes to walk out and see what's goin' on, anyhow."

The one-eyed hostler leaned against the pole, stroked Pomp's fur affectionately, and continued somewhat in this style :

"Bears are partic'larly fond of fat, juicy pigs, and once give 'em a taste of human flesh,—why, I shouldn't want my children to be playin' in the woods within a good many miles of their den!

"Which reminds me of Old Two Claws, as they used to call him, a bear that plagued the folks over in Ridgetown, where I was brought up,—wal, as much as forty year ago.

"He got his name from the peculiar shape of his foot, and he got that from trifling with a gun-trap. You know what that is,—a loaded gun set in such a way that a bear or any game that's curious about it, must come up to it the way it p'int; a bait is hung before the muzzle, and a string runs from that to the trigger.

"He was a cunning fellow, and he put out an investigatin' paw at the piece of pork before trying his jaws on it; so instead of gettin' a bullet in the head, he merely had a bit of his paw shot away. There were but two claws left on that foot, as his bloody tracks showed.

"He got off; but this experience seemed to have soured his disposition. He owed a spite to the settlement.

"One night a great row was heard in my uncle's

pig-pen. He and the boys rushed out with pitchforks, a gun and a lantern. They knew what the trouble was, or soon found out.

“ A huge black bear had broken down the side of the pen ; he had seized a fat porker, and was actually lugging him off in his arms ! The pig was kicking and squealing, but the bear had him fast. He did not seem at all inclined to give up his prey, even when attacked. He looked sullen and ugly ; but a few jabs from a pitchfork, and a shot in the shoulder, convinced him that he was making a mistake.

“ He dropped the pig, and got away before my uncle could load up for another shot. The next morning they examined his tracks. It was Old Two Claws.

“ But what sp'ilt him for being a quiet neighbor was something that happened about a year after that.

“ There was a roving family of Indians encamped near the settlement, hunting, fishing, and making moccasins and baskets, which they traded with the whites.

“ One afternoon, the Red-Sky-of-the-Morning, wife of the Water-Snake-with-the-Long-Tail, came over to the settlement with some of their truck for sale. She had a pappoose on her back strapped on a board ; another squaw travelled with her, carrying an empty jug.

“ Almost within sight of Gorman's grocery, Red-Sky took off her pappoose and hung it on a tree. The fellows around the store had made fun of it when

she was there once before, so she preferred to leave it in the woods rather than expose it to the coarse jokes of the boys. The little thing was used to such treatment. Whether carried or hung up, pappoosey never cried.

“The squaws traded off their truck, and bought, with other luxuries of civilization, a gallon of whiskey. They drank out of the jug, and then looked at more goods. Then they drank again, and from being shy and silent, as at first, they giggled and chatted like a couple of silly white girls. They spent a good deal more time and money at Gorman’s than they would if it hadn’t been for the whiskey, but finally they started to go back through the woods.

“They went chattering and giggling to the tree where the pappoose had been left. Then suddenly their noise stopped. There was no pappoose there!

“This discovery sobered them. They thought at first the fellows around the store had played them a trick by taking it away; but by-and-by the Red-Sky-of-the-Morning set up a shriek.

“She had found the board not far off, but no pappoose strapped to it, only something that told the story of what had happened.

“There were bear-tracks around the spot. One of the prints showed only two claws.

“The Red-Sky-of-the-Morning went back to the camp with the news; the other squaw followed with the jug.

“When the Water-Snake-with-the-Long-Tail heard

that his pappoose had been eaten by a bear, he felt, I suppose, very much as any white father would have felt under the circumstances. He vowed vengeance against Old Two Claws, but consoled himself with a drink of the fire-water before starting on the hunt.

“The braves with him followed his example. It wasn't in Indian nature to start until they had emptied the jug, so it happened that Old Two Claws got off again. Tippy braves can't follow a trail worth a cent.

“Not very long after that a woman in a neighboring settlement heard her children scream one day in the woods near the house. She rushed out, and saw a bear actually lugging off her youngest.

“She was a sickly, feeble sort of a woman, but such a sight was enough to give her the strength and courage of a man. She ran and caught up an axe. Luckily she had a big dog. They two went at the bear.

“The old fellow had no notion of losing his dinner just for a woman and a mongrel cur. But she struck him a tremendous blow on the back; at the same time the pup got him by the leg. He dropped the young one to defend himself. She caught it up and ran, leaving the two beasts to have it out together.

“The bear made short work with the cur; but instead of following the woman and child, he skulked off into the woods.

“The settlers got together for a grand hunt; but Old Two Claws—for the tracks showed that he was

the scoundrel — escaped into the mountains, and lived to make more trouble another day.

“The child? Oh, the child was scarcely hurt! it had got squeezed and scratched a little in the final tussle; that was all.

“As to the bear, he was next heard of in our settlement.”

The hostler hesitated, winked his one eye with an odd expression, put a fresh quid into his cheek, and finally resumed: —

“A brother-in-law of my uncle, a man of the name of Rush, was one day chopping in the woods about half a mile from his house, when his wife went out to carry him his luncheon.

“She left two children at home, a boy about five years old, and a baby just big enough to toddle around.

“The boy had often been told that if he strayed into the woods with his brother, a bear might carry them off, and she charged him again that forenoon not to go away from the house; but he was an enterprising little fellow, and when the sun shone so pleasant, and the woods looked so inviting, he wasn't one to be afraid of bears.

“The woman stopped to see her husband fall a big beech he was cutting, and then went back to the house; but just before she got there, she saw the oldest boy coming out of the woods on the other side. He was alone. He was white as a sheet, and so frightened at first that he couldn't speak.

“‘Johnny,’ says she, catching hold of him, ‘what is the matter?’

“‘A bear!’ he gasped out at last.

“‘Where is your little brother?’ was her next question.

“‘I don’t know,’ said he, too much frightened to know anything just then.

“‘Where did you leave him?’ says she.

“Then he seemed to have gotten his wits together a little. ‘A bear took him!’ said he.

“You can guess what sort of an agony the mother was in.

“‘O Johnny, tell me true! Think! Where was it?’

“‘In the woods,’ he said. ‘Bear come along — I run.’

“She caught him up and hurried with him into the woods. She begged him to show her where he was with his little brother when the bear came along. He pointed out two or three places. In one of them the earth was soft. There were fresh tracks crossing it, — bear tracks. There was no doubt about it.

“It was a terrible situation for a poor woman. Whether to follow the bear and try to recover her child, or go at once for her husband, or alarm the neighbors, what to do with Johnny meanwhile, — all that would have been hard enough for her to decide, even if she had had her wits about her.

“She hardly knew what she did, but just followed her instinct, and ran with Johnny in her arms, or dragging him after her, to where her husband was chopping.

“Well,” continued the one-eyed hostler, “I needn’t try to describe what followed. They went back to the house, and Rush took his rifle and started on the track of the bear, vowing that he would not come back without either the child or the bear’s hide.

“The news went like wildfire through the settlement. In an hour half a dozen men with their dogs were on the track with Rush. It was so much trouble for him to follow the trail that they soon overtook him with the help of the dogs.

“But in spite of them the bear got into the mountains. Two of the dogs came up with him, and one, the only one that could follow a scent, had his back broken by a stroke of his paw. After that it was almost impossible to track him, and one after another the hunters gave up and returned home.

“At last Rush was left alone; but nothing could induce him to turn back. He shot some small game in the mountains, which he cooked for his supper, slept on the ground, and started on the trail again in the morning.

“Along in the forenoon he came in sight of the bear as he was crossing a stream. He had a good shot at him as he was climbing the bank on the other side.

“The bear kept on, but it was easier tracking him after that by his blood.

“That evening a hunter, haggard, his clothes all in tatters, found his way to a backwoodsman’s hut

over in White's Valley. It was Rush. He told his story in a few words as he rested on a stool. He had found no traces of his child, but he had killed the bear. It was Old Two Claws. He had left him on the hills, and come to the settlement for help.

"The hunt had taken him a roundabout course, and he was then not more than seven miles from home. The next day, gun in hand, with the bear-skin strapped to his back, — the carcass had been given to his friend the backwoodsman, — he started to return by an easier way through the woods.

"It was a sad revenge he had had, but there was a grim sort of satisfaction in lugging home the hide of the terrible Old Two Claws.

"As he came in sight of his log house, out ran his wife to meet him, with — what do you suppose? — little Johnny dragging at her skirts, and the lost child in her arms!

"Then, for the first time, the man dropped; but he didn't get down any further than his knees. He clung to his wife and baby, and thanked God for the miracle.

"But it wasn't much of a miracle, after all.

"Little Johnny had been playing around the door, and lost sight of the baby, and maybe forgotten all about him, when he strayed into the woods and saw the bear. Then he remembered all that he had heard of the danger of being carried off and eaten, and of course he had a terrible fright. When asked about his little brother, he didn't know anything

about him, and I suppose really imagined that the bear had got him.

“But the baby had crawled into a snug place under the side of the rain-trough, and there he was fast asleep all the while. When he woke up two or three hours after, and the mother heard him cry, her husband was far away on the hunt.

“True — this story I’ve told you?” added the one-eyed hostler, as some one questioned him. “Every word of it.”

“But your name is Rush, isn’t it?” I said.

The one eye twinkled humorously.

“My name is Rush. My uncle’s brother-in-law was my own father.”

“And you?” exclaimed a bystander.

“I,” said the one-eyed hostler, “am the very man who wasn’t eaten by the bear when he was a baby.”

MY LOST POCKET-BOOK.

MY name is Edney — Philip Clement Edney. That was my father's name before me. Twenty odd years ago he did a small but comfortable dry-goods business in Utica. But in the panic of '57 he met with severe losses; and he had hardly weathered the financial storm when he was taken down with a disease from which he never recovered.

In his last illness he was deeply concerned for the future of his family. I was the eldest son, and he frequently expressed the hope to my mother and to me that in some way we should be able to find Harringford.

Thomas Harringford was a generous-hearted but rather unprincipled young man who had been in my father's employ several years before.

He had got into bad company, and was guilty of some irregularity, as the modern genteel phrase is, having helped himself to my father's cash to the amount of several hundred dollars, before his dis-

honesty — I mean his irregularity — was discovered. He was penitent, and confessed everything, but it was impossible for him to make restitution.

He had been a favorite of both my father and mother, and they could not bear to have him sent to prison. So, on his promising to reform, lead an honest life in future, and repay my father when he was able the sums he had stolen, — I mean *misappropriated*, — he was let off.

He went to parts where he was unknown, and only vague rumors concerning him had reached us since. One of these rumors was that he had been seen in Buffalo and Detroit, and that he was doing a prosperous business.

On settling up my father's estate, my mother found that she and her little family were left in straitened circumstances. Then we remembered what he had said about Harringford. I wrote to him letters directed to Buffalo and Detroit, but failed to receive answers. At last we were so much in need that I said:

“Mother, if you can spare the money for me to make the journey, I believe I can find him, and get at least a part-payment of what he owes us.”

It was a long time before she would listen to this proposal. She could ill afford the expense. Though we held Harringford's note to my father, it was outlawed, and she had not much faith in my being able to get any money of him, even if he could be found in one of the two cities named.

At last, however, thinking the journey might do me some good at any rate, she consented to it, and in July I set out.

I went first to Buffalo, where I began with the post-office and directory, but without being able to find the man I was searching for. I proceeded to Detroit. No luck there either. I returned to Buffalo, stopping at Cleveland by the way, and finally gave up the search, concluding that Harringford must have gone elsewhere, and that the world was too large a haystack for me to hunt in for such a needle.

But my mother had told me to be sure to visit Niagara before my return; so one afternoon I went down by a late train to the Falls, which I saw by moonlight for the first time.

I was of course too poor to go to a first-class hotel, but put up at one both small and obscure. The next morning was fine. I was in good spirits, in spite of the failure of my undertaking, for I had youth and health. I passed the day at the Falls, but, for economy's sake, I felt that I ought to leave on the night train for Utica. So I prepared to take leave of the great cataract.

"But I am going to drink out of it first, any way," I said to a young man whose acquaintance I had made that afternoon.

The American shore of the river was not fenced in from the public in those days, as I found it when I was there a year ago. We stood at the very brink,

near the edge of the fall. The wild, tumbling rapids shot past us, seemed to pause an instant on the verge, broke into curves of marvellous green water, then crumbled into masses of foam, and fell thundering into the abyss.

With that view before me, boy-like, I got down on my hands and knees for my drink. My lips touched the swift water. I had my drink, and was about to rise, when something dropped out of the inner breast-pocket of my coat, and shot away from my reach and sank from sight before I could put out my hand. In my astonishment, I was near making a leap after it, but the sight of the steaming gulf below brought me to my senses.

“Gone!” I exclaimed, flinging up my hands in despair. “Did you see it?”

“See what?” said my companion.

“My pocket-book!” I replied, full of consternation. “It dropped from my coat-pocket into the water. I came within one of going after it!”

He had seen nothing. I explained how it happened. I had always carried my pocket-book in that way, and never dropped it before. But in stooping far forward to bring my lips to the water, I had emptied my pocket, and lost in an instant all my money, together with that poor outlawed note of Harringford’s among other more or less valuable papers.

My chance acquaintance expressed his sympathy in well-sounding words, but all at once he appeared

to have grown cold towards me. Perhaps he expected I should want to borrow money of him, for money I should certainly need in getting away from the Falls. I still had my hotel bill to pay, and I could not very well travel by rail for nothing.

We had already exchanged cards, and I had ascertained that his name was Eastmore, — that he was a reporter, or something of the sort, for a Buffalo paper. I thought a young man of his experience ought to be able to give me good advice, if nothing else, and I begged him to tell me what to do.

“Have you any friend in town that you can call on for assistance?” he asked.

“Not one,” I said; and added, without thinking how he would take it, “You are the only acquaintance I have here except the hotel folks.”

He laughed and looked embarrassed.

“That’s bad!” he said. “I would be glad to lend you a little money, if I had any to spare, but I haven’t. Perhaps the hotel folks will help you, if you can convince them of the truth of your story.”

A horrible suspicion flashed across my mind. I might pass for an impostor!

“The truth of it!” I exclaimed. “Why, I had my pocket-book right here, with twenty dollars in it! And what motive could I have —” In my bewilderment I could not finish my question.

“Of course you had your pocket-book,” he answered with a smile; “and mind, *I* don’t say you have any motive for making a false pretension. But

the world is full of impostors, who are always inventing excuses for borrowing money or for omitting to pay their bills. Hotel-keepers have to deal with such characters pretty often, and we can't blame them for being a trifle suspicious of men who have lost their pocket-books."

He must have been impressed by the horrified look I gave him, for he immediately went on:

"Of course, *I* am as much convinced that you lost your pocket-book in the way you say, as if I had seen it go over the falls. But even if I had seen it, I never saw the money in it, — though don't understand me to say that I have any doubt of that either. I am only stating the case as it might look to other people, if you didn't carry such an honest face about with you."

"Thank you for so much!" I said, bitterly; for now I perceived by something in his look and tone, which he could not hide, that in his own mind my story stood sadly in need of confirmation.

I couldn't blame him, however. Impostors are in the majority smooth-tongued people in want of assistance; and the worst of their sin is that they throw discredit upon honest people who have been really unfortunate. I was destined to find that out to my sorrow.

I felt that the first thing to be done was to make my case known to my landlord, and I went back to the house. I told him, in as cool and business-like

a way as I could, what had happened, and asked him to trust me for the amount of my bill.

Eastmore went with me, and I hoped he would say something to corroborate my story; but he was very cautious. He stood at my elbow, a little behind, and I suspect there was something in his face which did not help my cause.

The landlord, a short, stocky, red-visaged, wall-eyed Irishman, glanced over his shoulder with the one good eye he had, and seemed to receive intelligence to my disadvantage.

I turned quickly. I don't think Eastmore had made a signal, but he had not concealed his incredulity. I found then that I might better have gone alone to the landlord.

"I don't know anything about your losing your pocket-book," said the Irishman, after hearing me out. "If you have no money, you must get some. My business is to keep a hotel, and I can't furnish guests with board and lodging for the fine stories they may tell."

The words stung me, but I managed to reply calmly:

"I don't ask you to do any such thing. I shall pay you every cent I owe you. But I have lost my money, and can't very well afford to stay here until I receive more."

Then it occurred to me that that was just what he would like to have me do. He could hold my valise

for security, and my bill would be increasing, so I added :

“I shall be obliged to leave your house, any way. If you will let me take my valise, I think I may get passed over the railroad ; and I promise to send you the two dollars I owe you as soon as I reach Utica.”

He smiled.

“What time is it?” he asked. I took out my watch and told him. “That’s a good-looking turnip,” he said. “Leave that, and you may take your baggage.”

The watch had been my father’s. I wouldn’t have trusted it in his hands on any account.

“No, thank you !” I said, and put it back into my pocket.

He saw that I distrusted him, and became abusive.

“You’re a swindler !” he cried. “I’ve heard of you before. How many pocket-books have you lost this week ? I’ve a cat here that could eat them all, and lick her chaps for more. Ah !” — he shook his fist at me angrily, — “I’m the wrong man for you to try your little confidence game on. If you come into my house again without the money,” he shouted after me as I was turning my back on him indignantly, “I’ll have you arrested ! I’ll have you in the lock-up !”

I think I never was so angry in my life ; but what is the use of arguing with a wild beast ? I held my tongue, and walked out of his miserable hotel without my baggage. I had been poorly accommodated

there, and his charge, after all, was exorbitant, — almost as much as I should have had to pay in those days at a first-class house.

I should have found no fault with that, and would gladly have sent him the money if he would have let me off; but to feel that I had been imposed upon as well as insulted increased my indignation.

Eastmore followed me out, and spoke some words intended to appear sympathizing; but I had no patience with the cold, suspicious, non-committal character of the fellow, and gave him but a curt reply. So he went his way, and I mine.

I had already resolved what to do. I walked boldly into a first-class hotel, entered my name on the register, and then asked the clerk to be good enough to put my watch in the hotel safe. It was an unusual act. I knew the clerk would wonder why I requested it; but I made no explanation. I then took a room and wrote a letter to my mother, which I thought would reach her the next morning, and serve my purpose as well as a telegram. I got my letter into the mail and took "mine ease in mine inn." I determined to enjoy my stay at the Falls, while waiting for money to get away.

The next day, while walking out of the hotel, I met Eastmore walking in. He gave me a curious smile and went to the desk, where he seemed to be looking over the register for names.

I didn't have anything more to say to him, but sauntered away, with my head up. I looked eagerly,

the next morning, for the expected letter from home. It did not come. But I got an interesting bit of news instead.

I took up at the breakfast-table a newspaper which a gentleman had laid down, and read with feelings which you can perhaps imagine, this item, under the heading of—

“SPRAY FROM THE FALLS.

“Don't drink out of the Cataract! That is what Philip Clement Edney attempted to do on Tuesday, in the presence of our reporter, and thus parted with a large and well-stuffed pocket-book, which took that occasion to leap out of his breast-pocket and dart over the American Fall like a fish. Philip Clement Edney was hugely disgusted; so likewise was the landlord of the Eagle House, when he found that the said P. C. E. had nothing but fair promises wherewith to settle his bill. Unfortunately our reporter could not swear to the wallet and its contents; and in this age of dead-beats and confidence-men, P. C. E. naturally fell under some suspicion.

“If an impostor, — which our reporter did not believe, — he is a very young and a very good-looking specimen. If an honest person, — as he appears, — we can only say that it was an expensive drink, and refer the prudent reader to the MORAL of our story, which, to insure its being read, we have placed at the beginning, and here repeat at the end, — *Don't drink out of the Cataract!*”

Hot and cold streaks shot over me as I read this smart paragraph. I burned to get hold of Eastmore's sagacious nose, and be rude to it. My name — the name which the reporter had given in full — was on the hotel register, and already, no doubt, I was an object of suspicion by the clerk. I arose hastily and left the dining-hall.

I went to cool my heat under the cliff below the

Falls, and did not return to the hotel until noon. Again I asked the clerk for letters. There were none for me; but there was something else—a card.

“H. F. MARSTON” was the name I read on it; and I was informed that Mr. Marston had inquired for me.

“I don’t know him,” I said. “Who is he?”

By way of reply the clerk struck a bell, called a messenger, and sent him off to see if Mr. Marston was in his room, and to tell him that “Mr. Edney” had returned. Then he said to me:

“You are the young man who left a watch with me, I believe. Do you wish for it?”

“I shall wish for it,” I said, “when I have money to pay my bill, which I am expecting by every mail.”

“Then it wasn’t simply for safe-keeping that you handed it to me?” he said.

“Not altogether,” I replied. “I had no baggage; and to avoid unpleasant explanations, and perhaps still more unpleasant suspicions, I thought I would place that security in your hands.”

He smiled as he took the watch from the safe and handed it back to me.

“I don’t require the security. I believe you are honest, Mr. Edney. The paragraph in this morning’s paper has excited interest, and one or two persons have asked about you. Mr. Marston wished particularly to see you. Walk up stairs.”

The messenger had in fact just returned for me, and I went with him, wondering all the way what would happen next.

I found a tall, well-dressed, fine-looking gentleman waiting for me in his private parlor.

"Is this Philip Clement Edney?" he said, with a smile, which brought up a host of recollections.

I stared at him, all a-tremble with excitement. I might have passed him twenty times in the hotel without knowing him; but now I was sure of my man at a glance.

"That is my name," I said; "and you —?"

He stopped me with another engaging smile.

"I am Henry F. Marston, please remember. If I had another name once, I should be glad to have it forgotten. But I am willing that you should know who I am. When I saw your name in the paper this morning, I knew it must be you. Then I found you were stopping at the same hotel with me. Your father was very, very kind to me, Philip; and when I learned —"

The tears actually came into his eyes, as he faltered; and at that moment I forgave him all.

"You were a little shaver when I knew you," he went on, with another flashing smile. "I should not have recognized you; but you have your father's name, and your mother's eyes. I don't know why I have neglected to communicate with them. When I found that you were here, my heart yearned towards you. How are your parents, Philip?"

He had not heard of my father's death. When I told him, and described the straitened circumstances of our family, he appeared greatly astonished and conscience-stricken.

"Why haven't you sent for me?" he asked.

"My father, in his last moments, begged us to let you know our circumstances, and I have gone through three cities in search of you," I replied. "But no Thomas Harringford —"

He stopped me again. "Of course not," he said. "There is no such man now, and never has been, since I left Utica and began a new life under a new name. I have been much to blame that I have never repaid your father. Do you know the amount of the debt?"

"The face of the note was seven hundred and forty dollars," I answered. "But that, I am sorry to say, went over the Falls in my pocket-book. But I have a letter to you from my mother, which I have left in my valise at the Eagle House."

"Go and get it," he said.

"I can't," I replied, "for I have no money to pay my bill there."

He at once opened his pocket-book. "Take that and get your valise."

He put a twenty-dollar bank-note into my hand.

In half an hour I had redeemed my baggage, told the landlord of the Eagle House in plain language what I thought of his conduct, and returned to Harringford's room — or rather Marston's — with my mother's letter.

In reading it he had to hide his face. Tears were still in his eyes, though he was smiling again. Then he turned to me.

“That was a lucky paragraph in this morning’s paper,” he said; “and a lucky accident which detained you here. In your absence I have computed the present value of that note at compound interest; and now it gives me the greatest satisfaction to repay your family in a time of need. I have deducted the twenty dollars I just handed you; and here is the balance.”

He put a paper into my hands. I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was a check for twenty-three hundred and ninety dollars.

I did not wait for my mother’s letter, but took the next train for home.

I found my letter there waiting for her. She was away, and it had not been forwarded. She soon returned, and I had the joy of putting Harringford’s check into her hands. We felt some anxiety lest it shouldn’t prove good for the large sum of money it called for; but it did; and it proved also to be the turning-point in our fortunes.

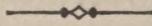
In my delight at the happy termination of my adventure, I forgave everybody who had wronged me. I forgave the wall-eyed landlord. I even forgave Eastmore.

I have visited Niagara Falls more than once since; but I never again felt any desire to drink out of the cataract.

ANDY'S ADVENTURES;

OR,

THE WORLD BEWITCHED.



ANDY'S folks had gone to town, and left him at home to take care of the house, watch the garden, and amuse himself.

Andy had a new bow and arrow, and he thought it would be great sport to have nothing to do all the afternoon but to shoot at the robins and woodpeckers.

So, as soon as the wagon was out of sight, and the gate shut, he ran into the orchard, and began the fun. He kept near enough to the house to see if anybody came to the door, and near enough to the garden to see if the pigs got into it; and whenever he saw a bird, he sent an arrow after it. But the robins soon found out what he wanted, and flew away when they saw him coming. Their beautiful red breasts would have been capital marks, if they had only waited for him to get a good shot. The wrens were not afraid, but they were so small he could not hit them. And the swallows kept flying about so,

twittering and darting here and there, that he knew he would have to practise a long time before he could take them on the wing. The yellow-birds and blue-birds were so shy that he could hardly see one in sight of the house. So there was no game left but the woodpeckers.

But woodpeckers are cunning fellows. They run up the trees, and stick in their bills, and hop about, and fly from one tree to another so fast, that it takes a pretty smart boy to hit one. They were tame enough, and would sometimes let Andy come quite near; they would stop pecking a moment, and hold up their red heads to take a good look at him; then they would begin to drum again in the merriest way, making little holes in the old peach-trees, which began to look like wooden soldiers that had gone through the wars and been shot in hundreds of places. But the instant Andy drew the bowstring and took aim, they knew well enough what it meant; and it was provoking to see them dodge around on the bark and get out of sight just in time to let the arrow whiz by them. Then they would go to pecking and drumming again so near, that he wished a dozen times that he had some kind of an arrow that would shoot around a tree and hit on the other side.

At length Andy grew tired of this fun; and he had lost his arrow so many times in the grass, and had to hunt for it, that he got vexed, and thought it would be much better sport to go and shoot a chicken.

Now he did not mean to kill a chicken, and he did not really think he would be able to hit one. But often we do things more easily when we are not trying very hard, than when we are too anxious. So it happened with Andy. He tried his luck on the speckled top-knot, which everybody considered the handsomest chick that had been hatched that summer. He drew his bow, let go the string, and the speckled top-knot keeled over. He ran up to it, very proud, at first, of his good shot, but frightened enough when he found that the chicken only just kicked a little, and then lay quite still.

Andy turned it over, and tried to stand it upon its legs, and thought what he should tell his parents.

"I'll say a hawk flew down and killed it! But I shot at the hawk, and he let it drop, just as he was flying away with it."

This was the story he made up, as he took poor top-knot and laid it down by the well-curb.

He was still wishing to shoot something that was alive, and, seeing the cat creep along on the fence watching for a mouse, he concluded to try his luck with her. So he drew up, aimed and fired. Puss was so intent on watching the mouse that she paid no attention at all to the arrow, which struck the rail a little behind her, and glanced off towards the house. Andy heard a sound like shivered glass, and, running up, saw to his dismay that he had broken a window.

Now he had been told never to shoot his arrow to-

wards the house; and how to conceal the accident and avoid punishment he couldn't at first imagine. The glass lay scattered on the pantry shelf, and the hole in the pane was large enough to put his hand through.

"I'll say Joe Beals came and wanted my bow, and because I wouldn't let him have it, he threw a stone at me, and broke the window."

And having made up this story, he searched for such a stone as Joe would be apt to throw, and having found one, placed it on the pantry floor, to appear as if it had fallen there after passing through the glass.

These accidents made him dislike his bow, and he hung it up in the woodshed. Then he made a lasso of a string, and caught the cat by throwing the noose over her head. But Puss did not like the sport so well as he did, and gave him such a scratch that he was glad to let her run off with the lasso. Then he thought he would plague the old sow by getting one of her little pink-white pigs; but the instant he had caught it up in his arms, it began to squeal; and the mother, hearing it, ran after him with such a frightful noise, throwing up her great savage tusks at him, that he dropped it, and ran for his life. She stopped to smell of Piggy, and see if it was hurt; and so he got away, though he was terribly frightened.

Then Andy thought of his toy ship; and having stopped the holes in the sink, and pumped it full of

water, he called it his ocean, and launched the "Sea-bird." With a pair of bellows he made wind, and with a dipper he made waves; and by placing a kettle bottom upwards in the middle of the sink he made an island; and the good ship pitched and tossed, and rolled in a very exciting manner. At length he resolved to have a shipwreck. This he managed, not by putting the ship on a rock, but by putting a rock on the ship. He used for the purpose the stone Joe Beals did not throw through the pantry window, and the "Sea-bird" went down, with all her crew on board. He then opened the holes in the sink, and the tide, going out, left the vessel on her beam-ends, stranded.

It would have been well for Andy if he had been contented with such innocent pastimes, without doing mischief to the cat, or chickens, or pigs, or trying to shoot the pretty birds that fly about the orchards, singing so sweetly, and eating the worms that destroy the trees.

But nothing satisfied him; and to have some better fun than any yet, he determined to stand in the door and scream "Fire!" He could not imagine greater sport than to see the neighbors come running to put out the fire, and then laugh at them for being duped. He did not consider that they would have to leave their work, and run a long distance, till they were quite out of breath; or that his laughter would be a very mean and foolish return for the good-will they would show in hastening to save his father's house;

or that, in case the house should really take fire some day, and he should call for help, people might think it another silly trick, and stay away.

He stood in the door, filled his lungs with a long breath, opened his mouth as wide as he could, and screamed, "Fire! fire! fire!"

Three times. He thought it so funny, that he had to stop and laugh. Then he took another breath, and screamed again, louder than before,—"Fire! fire! fire! fire! fire!"

Five times; and he heard the echoes away off among the hills; and, looking across the lot, he saw old Mother Quirk hobbling on her crutch.

Old Mother Quirk was just about the queerest woman in the world. She had a nose as crooked as a horn, and almost as long. It crooked down to meet her chin, and her chin crooked up to meet her nose. And some people said she could hold the end of a thread between them, when she wished to twist a cord with both hands,—although I doubt it. Her face was so full of wrinkles, that the smallest spot you could think of had at least twenty in it. Her eyes were as black as charcoal, and as bright as diamonds. She was very old; and her back was bent like a bow; and her hair was perfectly white, and as long and fine as the finest kind of flax; and she was so lame that she could never walk without her crutch.

She was a good woman though, people said, and knew almost everything. She could tell when it



would rain to-morrow, and when it would be fair. She would shut her eyes, and tell you all about your friends at a distance; describe them as plainly as if she saw them, and inform you if anything pleasant or unpleasant had happened to them. She knew more about curing the sick than the doctors did; and once when Andy had hurt his foot by jumping upon a sharp stub, and it was so sore for a week that he could not step, and it had been poulticed and plastered till it was as white and soft as cheese-curd, Mother Quirk had cured it in three days, by putting on to it a bit of dried beef's gall, which drew out a sliver that the doctors had never thought of. She was always ready to help people who were in trouble; and now, when Andy screamed fire, she was the first to come hobbling on her crutch.

"What is burning, Andy?" she cried, as she came through the gate. "Where is the fire?"

"In the bottom of the well!" replied Andy, laughing till his side ached. "Oh, ho, ho! why don't you bring some water in a thimble, and put the well out? Oh, ho, ho! Mother Quirk!"

There was fire in the old woman's eyes just then, if not in the well. It flashed out of them like two little streams of lightning out of two little jet-black clouds. She lifted her crutch, and I am not sure but she would have struck Andy with it, if she had not been too lame to catch him.

"Put the well out, ho, ho, ho!" laughed Andy, hopping away.

“I would put you in, if I could get hold of you!” said Mother Quirk, shaking her crutch at him. “You wouldn’t be dancing around so on that foot of yours, if I hadn’t cured it for you, and this is the thanks I get for it!”

That made Andy feel rather ashamed; for he began to see how ungrateful it was in him to play the old woman such a trick.

“It isn’t the first time you’ve made me run for nothing, with my poor old crutch,” she went on, as he stopped laughing. “The other day you told me your mother was sick abed, and wanted to see me; and I left everything and hobbled over here; and didn’t I find her ironing clothes in the kitchen, as well a woman as she ever was in her life, you little rogue!”

Andy laughed again at the recollection. “You was smoking your pipe,” said he, “with your old black cat in your lap, and ’twas fun to see you jump up and catch your crutch!”

“Fun to you! but do you think of my poor old bones? I’m almost a hundred years old,” said Mother Quirk; “and shall I tell you what I’ve learned all this time? I’ve learned that the meanest thing in the world is to treat ill those who treat you kindly; and that the worst thing is lying.”

Andy was sobered again, and the old woman continued:

“What if everybody and everything should lie? What if we could never know when to believe what

our friends and neighbors tell us? What if my crutch should lie, and, when I lean on it, break and let me fall?"

"I think it would be fun!" said Andy.

"And what if the ground you stand on should not be the ground it appears to be, but a great pit, and should let you fall into it when you think you are walking on the grass? Suppose that everything was a lie, that nothing was what it pretends to be, that the whole world should trick and cheat us?" cried the old woman, raising her voice.

"I should like to see the sport!" said Andy, giggling again.

"Should you?" almost shrieked the old woman with a terrible look.

"Yes!" And Andy grinned at a safe distance.

"Then try it!" exclaimed Mother Quirk.

And holding her crutch under her shoulder, she brought her hands together with a loud slap. Although Andy was at least three yards off, it seemed to him exactly as if she had boxed his ear. He was almost knocked down, and his head hummed like a bee-hive; but he could not, to save his life, tell which ear had been boxed, nor which he ought to rub. For a minute he kept whirling around, as dizzy as a top. Then a voice cried, "Catch that rabbit!"

In an instant Andy stopped turning, and saw sitting on the grass right before him the most beautiful white rabbit, with the softest fur and the longest ears that ever were.

“O Bunny!” cried Andy, delighted; and he stepped forward to smooth the lovely creature with his hand.

He had scarcely touched it, when it gave a little hop, and sat down again, just out of his reach.

“Bunny, Bunny! poor Bun!” cried Andy, coaxingly, creeping after it, as eager to catch it as ever a cat was to put her paw on a mouse. “I won’t hurt you! Poor, poor Bunny!”

But the rabbit watched him with its mild, timid eyes, and gave two leaps, as light as a feather and as noiseless, and sat down again by the garden fence. Andy crept up, still coaxing, and promising not to hurt it; and when he had got quite near, he spread out both hands, gave a spring like a cat, and caught a whole handful of grass right where the pretty creature had sat that very instant; but it was gone, and, looking over the fence, he saw it hopping away across the garden, from cabbage to cabbage, from hill to hill of the potatoes, in the airiest and most graceful manner, but not half as fast as a boy could run. So Andy resolved to chase it; and getting over the fence, he hurried across the garden, and came up to it just as it was perched for a moment like a bird on the top of a slender weed, which did not bend in the least beneath its weight. Andy grasped eagerly with both hands, and caught the weed between them; but away went the rabbit over the next fence, and across a large sunny pasture, making wonderful leaps, so long and light and high

that sometimes it seemed to sail in the air on wings.

Andy ran after it, wild with excitement. Now it slipped through his fingers just as he pounced upon it, and tumbled headlong into a bunch of thistles. Now it floated in the air quite above his head, while he reached up and jumped, and ran on tiptoe after it, until he hit his foot against a stone, which he was looking too high to see, and nearly broke his shin in falling. Then it skipped along close upon the ground, stopping when he stopped, and seeming to invite him to come and catch it, but darting away again the moment he thought he had it fairly in his hands.

At last it squatted down against a stump, in a large, hilly field full of stumps and stones and ploughed ground, where Andy had never been before.

Almost crying, he was so vexed and tired and far from home, he came up to the stump. Bunny did not stir, but only winked a little, and pricked up its pretty ears.

“Now I'll have you!” And Andy sprang upon it, catching it with both hands. “I've got you! I've got you! I've got you!” he cried, in high glee. “Now, my pretty, naughty — ho!” said Andy, with the greatest amazement.

For, lo! on opening his hands, he found that the thing he had given such a chase, and caught at last, was nothing but a little ball of thistle-down, which had been blown before him by the wind!

There he held it, and rubbed his eyes as he looked at it, and wondered; then he began to remember what Mother Quirk had said to him; and he would have given a good deal just then to have been back again at the well, as he was before the angry old woman boxed his ear. He was afraid she had bewitched him.

He looked at the thistle-down again and again, and turned it over, and picked it to pieces a little, then brushed it off from his hand, when, O wonderful! it immediately changed to a dove, and flew into the sky! But he found that he had pulled out some of its feathers, and still held one beautiful long white quill in his fingers.

Now he was sorry he had not kept it. And he would have got up and run after it again; but just then, happening to look where he had thrown the feathers down by the stump, he saw one of the strangest sights in the world.

A little bit of a fellow, not so large as the end of his thumb, opened a little bit of a door in the side of the stump, walked out, and looked around as if he had heard a noise about his house, and wished to see what had happened.

“Tom Thumb!” exclaimed Andy, in the greatest surprise and delight.

He had lately read the history of that famous little dwarf; and he had often thought he would give all his playthings just to make his acquaintance.

"Tom Thumb! Tom Thumb! how do you do?" he said.

But as Tom walked about, and paid no attention to him, he thought perhaps he had not addressed him respectfully enough. So he said, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Thumb! I hope you are pretty well, Mr. Thumb."

At that the little gentleman took off his hat, and made the politest little bow imaginable.

"My name is Andy. I have read about you. Come, let's be friends."

Mr. Thumb made some reply, but in such a very small voice that Andy could not understand a word.

"Speak again, Mr. Thumb, if you please."

And Andy put his head down to hear. But Tom appeared to be afraid; and, opening the little door again, he stepped back into the stump.

"Hello! come out again!" cried Andy. "Won't you? Then I'll find you!"

And with the dove's quill he forced the door of Tom Thumb's house, and penetrated the entry. At that he heard a confused murmuring and muttering and shouting; and, pulling away the feather, he saw rush out after it a dozen little fellows, all as angry as they could be.

"Excuse me, gentlemen!" said Andy, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. "I didn't mean any harm. Did I hurt anybody?"

They did not answer, but kept running to and fro, and talking among themselves, and darting in and

out of the door, as if to see what damage had been done.

Andy watched them with the greatest interest. They were all dressed in the gayest style, and very much alike. They had on black velvet caps, striped with gold, and with long plumes that waved over their heads. They wore the handsomest little tunics, of stuff as much finer than silk as silk is finer than the bark of a tree. They had on beautiful bright yellow scarfs, and their tunics were bordered with fringes of the richest orange-color, and their trousers were all of dark velvet and cloth of gold. They dangled the neatest little swords at their sides, in golden scabbards; and three or four of them clapped their hands furiously on the hilts; and one, seeing the feather which Andy pushed at them, drew out the finest little black steel blade, not near so large as a needle, threw himself into a noble fencing attitude, and made an impetuous lunge, thrusting and brandishing his weapon in the bravest manner.

Andy laughed gleefully, but stopped laughing, to wonder, when he saw another of the little warriors shake out the folds of a marvellous little cloak that covered his back, and, spreading it on the air, sail aloft with all his flashing colors, sword and plumes. He came straight to Andy's ear, and said something in a voice of thunder, and even made a cut or two at the boy's hair; then darted away out of sight.

By this time the little doorway in the stump was crowded with these strange little people. Some

hurried to and fro, muttering and shaking their cloaks, some sailed aloft, and others passed in and out of the door,—all very much excited. Andy also noted several new-comers, who seemed quite surprised, on arriving, to find the little community in such confusion. The most of them brought some kind of plunder,—tiny bags of gold, armfuls of a minute kind of yellow-ripe grain, silks and satins of the fine quality mentioned,—which they hastened to hide away in their dwelling.

But what astonished Andy most of anything was the appearance of a wonderful little lady, who walked out among the warriors like a queen. She was extremely small-waisted, although otherwise very portly. She wore hoops of the most extraordinary extension, which made her appear three or four times as large as the largest of her subjects. She walked with a haughty air, fanning herself with a little gossamer fan, while her servants went backwards before her, spreading down the cunningest little carpets for her to tread upon. She was magnificently attired; her dress, of the costliest materials, the most gorgeous pattern, and the widest dimensions, was covered all over with the most splendid little fringes and flounces which it is possible to conceive. Her countenance, although very beautiful, was angry, and full of scorn, and she appeared scolding violently, as she strode to and fro on the royal carpets.

Andy was almost beside himself with delight and

amazement, as he watched these proceedings. At length he said, "These are not Tom Thumb's people, but a nation of fairies! O what a lucky boy I am!"

For it is not every boy, you know, that has the good fortune to discover these rare little people. They are in fact so seldom seen, that it is now generally believed that no such beings exist except in story-books. Andy had read about them with a great deal of interest; and although he had never been quite convinced that what was said of them was really true, he could now no longer have a doubt on the subject. He had not only discovered the home of the fairies, but he had seen the fairy queen.

And as Andy was a selfish boy, who wished to possess every strange or pretty thing he saw, he felt an ardent desire to seize and carry away the beautiful and scornful little being, who walked up and down on the carpets, scolding, and fanning herself with the gossamer fan.

"I will put her under a tumbler," he said, "and keep her there until I can have a glass cage made for her. And I will make all the little fairy people come and be my servants, as they will have to if I carry off their queen. And I will show her to everybody who comes. And everybody will wonder so! O, what a lucky boy I am!"

So saying, he formed his plan for capturing her Majesty. Being anxious to take her alive, and carry her off without doing her any personal harm, he

resolved to put her into his hat and tie his handkerchief over it. Having got everything in readiness, he stooped down very carefully, and extended his hand. Nobody seemed to be frightened; and the next moment the fairy queen was fast between his thumb and finger.

“Ha, ha!” cried Andy; “the first time trying! Hurrah!” And he lifted her up to put her into his hat.

But instantly the tiny creature began to struggle with all her might, and rustle her silks, and — queen as she was — scratch and bite in the sharpest manner. And at the same time the bravest little warriors flew to the rescue, shrewdly darting at Andy's face, as if they knew where to strike; and suddenly, while he was laughing at their rage, he got a thrust in his forehead, and another in his neck, and a third under his sleeve, where a courageous little soldier had rushed in and resolutely driven in his rapier up to the hilt! Andy, who had no idea such little weapons could hurt so, was terrified, and began to scream with pain. And now, strange to see! the fairies were no longer fairies, but a nest of bumblebees; it was the queen-bee he held in his fingers; and two of them had left their stings sticking in his wounds!

Andy dropped the queen-bee, left his hat and handkerchief by the stump, and began to run, screaming and brushing away the bees, that still followed him, buzzing in his hair, and stinging him where

they could. He did not stop until he had run half across the fallow, and the last of the angry swarm that pursued him had ceased buzzing about his ears.

“Oh! oh! oh!” he sobbed, with grief and disappointment, and the pain of the stings. “I didn’t know they were bumble-bees! And I’ve lost my hat! And I don’t know where I am! Oh! oh! oh!” And he sat down on a stone and cried.

“Whoa! hush, haw!” said a loud voice.

And looking up through his tears, he saw an old farmer coming, with a long whip in his hand, driving a yoke of oxen. Andy stopped weeping to ask where he was, and the way home.

“About a peck and a half a day,” replied the farmer.

Andy did not know what to make of this answer. So he said again, “Can you tell me where my father and mother live?”

“One in one stall, and the other in the other. Hush, haw!” cried the farmer.

“I’ve got lost, and I wish you’d help me,” said Andy.

“Star and Stripe,” replied the farmer.

“How far is it to my father’s?” the poor boy then asked.

“Well, about ninety dollars, with the yoke,” said the farmer. “Whoa, back!”

At this Andy felt so vexed, and weary, and bewildered, that he could not help sobbing aloud.

“What!” said the farmer, angrily; “making fun of me?” And he drew up his whip to strike.

"Oh, I wasn't making fun!" said Andy, frightened.

"You stopped me, and asked how much corn I feed my oxen; and I told you. Then where I feed them; and I told you that. Then their names; and I said, Star and Stripe. Then what I would sell them for; and I gave a civil answer. And now you're laughing at me!" said the farmer, raising his whip again.

Then Andy perceived that, whenever he said anything, he seemed to say something else, and that his weeping appeared to be laughter, and that, if he stayed there a moment longer, he would surely get a whipping. So he started to run, with the owner of the oxen shouting at his heels.

"There! take that for being saucy to an old man!" cried the farmer, fetching him a couple of sharp cuts across the back. Then he returned to his oxen and drove them away; while Andy got off from the fallow as soon as he could, weeping as if his heart would break.

Seeing not far off a beautiful field of clover, the boy thought he would go and lie down in it, and rest.

He had never seen such clover in his life. It was all in bloom with blue and red and white flowers, which seemed to glow and sparkle like stars among the green leaves. How it waved and rippled and flashed in the sunshine, when the wind blew! Andy almost forgot his grief; and surely he had quite forgotten that nothing was now any longer what it

appeared, when he waded knee-deep through the delicious clover, and laid himself down in it. No sooner had he done so than he saw that what he had mistaken for a field was a large pond, and he had plunged into it all over like a duck.

Strangling and gasping for breath, and drenched from head to foot, Andy scrambled out of the water as fast as he could. His hair was wet; and little streams ran into his eyes and down his cheeks. His ears rang with the water that had got into them. He was so frightened that he hardly knew what had happened. And in this condition he sat down on the shore to let his clothes drip, and to empty the water out of his shoes.

Having thought it all over, Andy resolved to make a new start, and not be deceived by anything again. Finding his coat very wet, he concluded to wring it out, and hang it somewhere to dry. He saw a log and a large wood-pile near by; and he was going boldly to spread his coat on them in a good sunny place, when he happened to think that these also might be cheats, and that it would be wise to test them before going too near.

He took up a pebble, and threw it. He hit the end of the log, which immediately changed into a head with a hat on it; and the log jumped up, and strode fiercely towards him, on two as good legs as ever he saw.

“What are you stoning me for?” cried the log, with a terrible look.

“ Oh, Mr. Log! I didn't mean to! I didn't know it would hurt you!” said Andy, clasping his hands.

“ I'll teach you to throw stones and call names!” growled the log, — no, not the log, but the teamster, whom Andy had mistaken for a log as he lay on the roadside by his wagon. And he gave two or three extra stripes to the boy's trousers with his long whip-lash. “ I didn't mean to! I didn't know it would hurt you!” he said, mockingly, as he went back to his team; while Andy rubbed his legs and shrieked.

Now, when wagon and driver were gone, and the lad saw that there was neither log nor wood-pile anywhere by the road, he became more and more alarmed about himself. Everything was a lie, then; and, the best he could do, he could not help being deceived and injured. Bitterly he regretted using old Mother Quirk so ill; and he said to himself that he would never tell another lie in his life, if he could now only get safely home, and find things what they appeared to be.

Being very tired, he looked about for a stick to walk with. He thought, too, something of the kind would be useful to feel with, and test the truth of things. Soon he saw a very pretty stick lying in the sun. It was not quite straight; but it had as handsome little wavy curves as if it had been carved. It was beautifully tapered; and as he came quite near it, he saw that it was painted with the most wonderful colors, — glossy black, bright green spots, and silver rings. It appeared to be a cane, which prob-

ably some very rich man had lost. Its carved handle was of gold, set round with precious stones, in the midst of which were two very bright, glittering diamonds.

“Such a cane is worth picking up!” said Andy, highly pleased. “I hope the owner won’t come to claim it.” And he stooped down to take hold of the stick. But he had scarcely touched it, when it began to move and squirm, and coil up under his hand. He sprang back just in time to save his parents the grief of a funeral; for what he had mistaken for a cane was a living serpent of the most venomous kind; and it raised its angry crest, darted out its forked tongue, and struck at him with its hooked fangs, making his blood curdle and his flesh creep, as he ran screaming away.

Andy reached a wall — or what seemed a wall — and scrambled upon it, putting one leg over it, and looking back; when the stones began to swell and swell under him, and the whole wall rose up with such a tremendous lurch, that he was nearly thrown head foremost to the ground. And he now perceived that, instead of climbing a wall, he had mounted a horse that lay dozing in the field. Before he could get off, the horse began to walk away. In vain Andy cried “Whoa!” and gently pulled his mane. The horse seemed to understand “Whoa!” to mean “Go along!” and he began to trot. Pulling his mane had the effect of pricking him with a goad; and he began to prance. Then Andy gently patted

him; but he might as well have struck him with a whip. The animal began to gallop! And when Andy, to avoid being flung off, clung to him with his feet, it was as if there had been sharp spurs in his heels, and the animal began to run!

Across the fields; faster and faster and faster; wildly snorting; measuring the ground with fearfully long leaps, and making it thunder under his hoofs; clearing fences and ditches, and heaps of brush and logs, as if he had wings; away — away — away! — through thickets, through brier-lots, through gardens, and orchards, and farm-yards; with Andy hugging his neck in extreme terror, thrusting into his ribs the heels that seemed to have spurs on them; the wild steed scudded and plunged.

Andy clung as long as he could. The terrible bounces almost hurled him off; the wind almost blew him off; the thickets, and briars, and boughs of trees almost scratched him off. Everywhere along his track people came out to stare, and to stop the horse. Men hallooed, and shook their hats; boys screamed, and shook their bats; women "shooed," and shook their aprons; all contributing to frighten him the more.

And now Andy felt his breath partly jolted out of him, and partly sucked out by the wind. And for a moment he scarcely knew anything, except that he was losing his hold, slipping, sliding, — a hairy surface passing rudely from under him, — and the ground suddenly flying up, with a stunning flap and slap, into his face.

In a little while a young lad, considerably resembling Andy, might have been seen sitting on the grass of a field, rubbing his shoulder, with a jarred and joyless expression of countenance, which seemed hesitating between fright and tears,—between numbness and deadness of despair, and a returning sense of pain and grief. He saw a gay-looking horse frisking and kicking up along by the fence; felt in vain for his hat, but found a shock of wild hair instead; saw his torn trousers, wet not with water only, but also with blood from his scratched legs; arose slowly and sufferingly to his feet; looked imploringly about him, and began to snivel.

Not knowing what to do, he sat down again, and wept miserably, until he heard a sound of wheels, and a voice say, "Get up, Jerry!"

"That's our wagon—and father and mother!" exclaimed Andy, in great joy, springing up as quickly as his sore limbs would permit him. "Father! father!" and he ran towards the road.

The vehicle rattled on. His father either did not hear or did not heed him. He could not make his mother look up, scream as loud as he would. Jerry trotted soberly on, as before. Only Brin, the dog, pricked up his ears, gave a surly bark, leaped the fence, and approached him shyly, bristling and growling.

"Brin! Brin! here, Brin!" said Andy, alarmed at the dog's extraordinary behavior.

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Brin, with a snarl and a snap.

"O father! father!" shrieked Andy.

"Whoa!" said Mr. Mountford, stopping Jerry, and turning to look. "Come here, Brin!" And he whistled.

Brin, having paused to take a sagacious snuff of Andy, without appearing to recognize him, ran back to the road, the boy following him.

"What's the trouble?" said Mrs. Mountford. "What a strange-looking dog that is!" — fixing her eyes on Andy. "It looks to me like a mad dog, and I'm afraid Brin will get bit. Come here, Brin!"

Brin ran obediently under the wagon; and Andy, flinging up his arms, rushed towards his parents.

"Oh, it's me! it's me! Father! mother! it's me!"

"Get out, you whelp!" exclaimed Mr. Mountford, striking at him with his whip.

"Oh! oh!" shrieked Andy, hit in the face by his own father's lash!

"Ki-hi, then!" And Mr. Mountford drove on.

Andy still followed, running as fast as he could, wildly weeping and calling.

"What a hateful dog that is!" said Mrs. Mountford. "Give me the whip!" And as soon as Andy got near enough, she beat him mercilessly over the bare head.

Then Andy, exhausted, out of breath, his heart broken, fell down despairingly, with his face in the dust, while the vehicle passed over the hill out of sight. There he lay, sobbing in his misery, and moistening with a little trickling stream of tears the

sand by the bridge of his nose, when an old woman came hobbling that way on a crutch.

“What’s this?” said she. Her back was curved like a bow; but she bent it still more, stooping over to look at Andy.

The boy raised his head, brushed the adhering dirt from his nose, lifted his eyes, and recognized good old Mother Quirk. But he could not speak.

“I declare!” said she, “one would think it was Andy Mountford, if anybody ever saw Andy Mountford in such a plight as this!”

That encouraged the wretched boy to open his mouth, spit out the dirt that obstructed his speech, and in grievous accents pour forth the story of his woes.

“But how do I know this is true?” said Mother Quirk, putting up a pinch of snuff under her hooked nose.

“It is true, every word; as true as I am Andy!” wept the boy.

“But how do I know you are Andy? Folks and things lie so, in this world!” said Mother Quirk. “But never mind; I suppose it is fine sport; and if it is really you, Andy, I suppose I may as well leave you to enjoy it!”

She adjusted her crutch, and was hobbling away, when Andy, on his knees, called after her, making the most solemn promises of truthfulness in the future, if she would help him home.

“How do I know what to believe?” said the old

woman, piercing him with her black, sparkling eyes. "You may be a reptile. I've known more than one that pretended to be human, and honest, and grateful, turn out a reptile at last. Everything is so deceitful, we never know what to depend upon."

She was passing on again; but Andy ran after her, and caught her gown, still pleading and weeping.

"Bless my heart! Is it really Andy?" said she, leaning on her crutch. "I've a good mind to trust you, and try you once!"

"Do, do! good Mother Quirk!"

"Well, come along; my house is close by; and there comes my black cat to meet me!"

Andy was overjoyed, and clung to her as if he was afraid she too would turn out a delusion—a lie—and work him some new mischief.

They passed a field, in which the old woman picked up a hat, which she placed on his head, and a handkerchief, which she told him to put into his pocket. "If you are Andy, they belong to you," she said, with a shrewd look out of her coal-black eyes.

They reached her cottage, where she washed him, combed his hair, took a few stitches in his clothes, and stroked his hurts with hands dipped in some exquisitely soothing ointment. Then they set out to return to his father's house.

She accompanied him as far as the well, where she gave him a sudden box on the ear, which set him whirling. The next he knew, he was getting up from the grass, like one awaking from a dream. He

thought he had a glimpse of a crutch and a dark green gown vanishing behind the wood-shed, but could not be certain. He looked in vain upon his person for any evidence of rents and bruises, bee-stings, or drenching. He was as good as new, to all appearance; and one who did not know the subtle power of old Mother Quirk would have said that he had merely fallen asleep on the door-yard turf, and had a dream.

“Andy!” cried a voice.

That was a reality, if anything was. His folks had returned, and it was his father calling him. “Andy! come and open the gate!”

He hastened to swing the old gate around on its hinges, while Brin ran up eagerly to caress him and leap upon his legs, and Jerry walked slowly through, drawing the family one-horse wagon.

“Have you been a good boy, Andy?” asked his mother, dismounting at the horse-block.

“Yes, ma’am. I mean,” he added, fearing that was an untruth,—“I don’t know,—I guess not very!”

“What! you haven’t been doing any mischief, have you?” cried his father.

Andy remembered the stories he had made up about the hawk killing the chicken, and the Beals boy throwing a stone through the pantry window. But he also remembered his terrible adventure in a world of lies,—mishaps and horrors which were somehow dreadfully real to him, whether he had

actually experienced them, or dreamed them, or been insane and imagined them. So he falteringly said, "I — I — killed the top-knot with my bow-and-arrow!"

There indeed lay the top-knot, stark dead, by the curb. His parents looked at it regretfully; and his father said, "I am sorry! sorry! that nice chicken! But you didn't mean to, did you?"

"I didn't think I should hit it!" said Andy, hanging his head with contrition.

"Well, if it was an accident, let it pass," said his mother. "It isn't so bad as if you had told a lie about it. I'd rather have every chicken killed, than have my son tell a lie!" And she caressed him fondly.

"You haven't done anything else, I hope?" said Mr. Mountford.

"I — I — shot at the cat, and sent my arrow through the window!" Andy confessed.

"Haven't I told you not to shoot your arrow towards the house?" cried his father, sternly. But, at a glance from Mrs. Mountford, he added, reluctantly, "But as you have been so truthful as to own up to it, I'll forgive you this time. Nothing pleases me so much as to have my son tell the truth; for the worst thing is lying."

That was what Mother Quirk had said, and it reminded Andy of the false alarm which had brought her to the house. That was the hardest thing for

him to confess! And it was the hardest thing for his parents to forgive.

“Poor old Mrs. Quirk, with her lame leg!” his mother reproachfully said. “How could you, Andy?”

“I didn’t think, — I didn’t know how bad it was!” he replied.

“What did she say to you? What did the poor woman do?”

“She scolded me, and boxed my ears, and made me crazy, I guess, — for such awful things have happened to me! I never can tell what I have been through — or dreamed I went through — till she brought me back! But I’ve made up my mind I never will tell another lie, or act a lie again, if you will forgive me this once!”

“I forgive you! we forgive you! my dear, dear boy!” exclaimed Mrs. Mountford, folding him in her arms, while Mr. Mountford smiled upon him, well pleased, and stroked his hair.

THE WOLF-HUNT.

JED PARKINSON, let that dog alone !”
“He’s my dog, Cy Hayward, and I shall do what I please with him.”

Cy stepped up to the fence.

“You have no right to be cruel to him, if he is your dog,” he said. “I tell you to let him alone !”

“You better go about your business !” said Jed.

Crack went his whip, and the dog gave another yelp.

Cy jumped over the fence.

This occurred in one of the early settlements of Illinois, long before there was any Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; but Cyrus Hayward had too kind and noble a nature to allow him to stand by and see a dog so cruelly beaten without remonstrating. He sprang over the fence and walked up to Jed, and said:

“Don’t strike that dog again !”

“You get out !” retorted Jed. “He’s my dog.

I'm in my own door-yard, too, and I'll thrash you if you interfere!"

Cy was about seventeen. He had been brought up on the prairies, and had been accustomed to trapping and hunting ever since he was ten years of age. He was no coward, and yet he did not like to quarrel.

Tied to the dog's neck was a cord about ten feet long. This Jed held with one hand, while he wielded a whip with the other. He was trying to teach the poor frightened dog to come to him.

"Come here! come here now!" he would yell, jerking the rope and plying the lash, while the terrified, cringing, shivering brute hung back, until he was dragged, panting, to his master's feet.

"That's no way to teach a dog anything!" cried Cyrus, with hot indignation. "You should coax him, not scare him to death."

"Will you stand out of the way?" Jed demanded, angrily.

"What for?"

"So I can swing my whip."

"No, I won't."

"Then I shall hit you!"

Cy stood his ground resolutely. "You'd better not," he said.

"I'm not afraid of any of the Hayward tribe!" exclaimed Jed; and he struck at Cy's legs.

In an instant Cyrus snatched the whip from his hand and flung it half across the yard.

Jed let go the rope and sprang furiously at Cy. The contest was "short, sharp, and decisive." When it was ended, Jed lay flat on his back on a pile of chips, and Cy knelt over him. The dog and rope had disappeared around the house.

"Now, look here, Jed Parkinson," said the victor. "I didn't come in here to have any fuss with you; but you have no right to whale a dog in that way, even if he is yours. If I see you doing it, I have a right to stop it. Now you may get up; but don't touch me again, and don't let me see you lashing that pup again!"

Jed got upon his feet, but made no reply, and Cy walked unmolested out of the yard.

This was the beginning of a feud which led to the more tragical incident I am going to relate.

Cyrus felt indignant at the cruelty he had witnessed, but cherished no grudge in consequence of the encounter he had had. Not so Jed. He was not the lad to say much of his disgraceful defeat in a bad cause, but he nourished a relentless hatred against his neighbor.

Whenever they met afterwards, he glowered upon Cyrus angrily, and passed him without a word. Cyrus at first spoke to him pleasantly, as if nothing had happened; but seeing Jed's disposition towards him, he smiled disdainfully, and took no more notice of him.

Jed knew better than to attempt any open attack on a fellow of so much strength and spirit; but day and night he studied to be revenged.

Soon Cyrus found his rabbit-traps mysteriously destroyed. He set them in other places, and they were destroyed again. Then his own dog lay dead one morning in the road before the house, evidently poisoned. He did not know who committed these cowardly acts, but he could not help thinking of Jed.

The death of his dog caused Cyrus great grief and indignation, and the look on Jed's face the next time they met, convinced him that his suspicion was not misplaced.

"I didn't think you such a sneak!" he exclaimed, angrily. "If you've a grudge against me, why don't you step up and settle your account man-fashion? I wouldn't go prowling round breaking a fellow's traps, and killing dogs that are honest and better than you are!"

"You want me to take it out of your skin, do ye?" growled Jed.

"I think it would be a good deal more manly in you, if you've anything to take out," replied Cyrus. "But what's the use of all this nonsense? You were abusing your pup when I stopped you, and you know it. You should have thanked me; but instead, because I took the part of your dog, you must go and murder mine. That shows what sort of fellow you are."

"Have I said I killed your dog?" Jed called after Cy, as he was walking away.

"Said you killed my dog? A fellow who'll do so

mean a thing isn't man enough to own it." And he went his way without more words.

"Wants me to take it out of his skin, does he?" snarled Jed Parkinson to himself, more furious than ever under Cy's scornful rebukes. "Well, only let me see the chance!"

The chance was not long in coming.

Prairie wolves were plenty in those days, and they did great damage to the farmers' flocks. There was unlimited pasturage for sheep, but they required constant watching, and must be carefully penned every night. The walls of the folds were built of logs and poles, and usually had an inward slope, which made it easy for the wolves to leap over into the enclosure, but impossible for them to get out.

A wolf after he has thus reached his prey, it is said, will, before attacking it, make sure of his own means of escape; and so sometimes one wolf, and often several wolves together, would be found in the morning shut up with the frightened sheep, more frightened than they, when the farmer or farmer's boy appeared with the deadly gun.

Numbers were killed in this and other ways; but to more quickly rid the country of the pest, the settlers used to unite in a grand wolf-hunt once a year.

After the first light snowfall in November, one of those great hunts was to come off.

Early in the morning, according to a plan agreed upon, every able-bodied man and boy in the settlement, or cluster of settlements, turned out, mounted

or afoot, with their dogs and guns. They formed a ring many miles in extent, beating the groves and thickets, and driving the wolves towards a common centre, where a great slaughter was pretty sure to take place.

The focus of the hunt this year was to be Morton's Grove, a piece of oak woods about three miles from the homes of Jed and Cy.

The morning's sport was fine, and many a wolf was shot, or taken down by the dogs, during the drive.

The wolf of the prairies is inferior in size, strength, and fierceness, to the great gaunt gray wolves of other parts of the country, or of the Old World. He has not

“Their long gallop, which can tire
The hound's deep hate and hunter's fire.”

It was easy enough for a hunter, mounted on a not over-fresh horse, to ride up beside a jaded wolf that had been driven in from some distant point, and bring him down with a shot.

Jed Parkinson was on foot, and towards the close of the day he posted himself in an oak-tree in Morton's Grove to watch for wolves.

He had had pretty good luck, and now, while he was watching, something far more exciting than the sight of a wolf attracted his attention.

A white horse with his rider was coming over a little hillock in the woods, not more than twenty

rods away. Jed knew the horse, and guessed who was the rider.

It was Cyrus Hayward. He was slowly approaching the tree in which Jed was perched. A clump of undergrowth intervened, in which horse and rider were hidden for a few moments. That gave Jed a chance to reflect.

“Proud because he’s got a horse to ride, and I haven’t!” was his first envious thought.

“I’d like to give his horse a shot,” was his next thought. “I could do it, and pretend I was shooting at a wolf.”

But if he should kill or maim the horse, his father might have to pay for the animal. Jed did not fancy that. Besides, in shooting at the horse, he might hit the rider.

He liked the idea of that well enough, and suddenly all his pent-up hate seemed to burst into a raging fire within him.

“Wants me to take it out of his skin, does he? I will. I’ll shoot just as he is coming out of the underbrush. My father won’t have *him* to pay for, and I can claim that it was an accident; I was shooting at a wolf.”

Something like this — not in so many words, but in a wild torrent of feeling — rushed through Jared Parkinson’s heart and brain.

“I shall never have another so good a chance; I’ll pay him now!” And he took aim at the bushes,

which were already rustling, before the white horse reappeared.

It was a moment of terrible excitement. The great artery throbbed in the boy's neck as if it would burst; the woods and the sky turned almost a dull red color before his eyes, and his hands shook so that he could hardly hold his gun.

He could not get his aim; but there came horse and rider, and he must fire before they were well out of the brush, or people would not believe in the accident.

His fowling-piece was loaded with large slugs. The range was short. Cyrus was now not more than six rods off; his form could be plainly seen amidst the opening boughs, bare as they were, except for clusters of dry red leaves fluttering here and there.

Jed's shaking hands held the gun, — his trembling finger jerked the trigger.

But at that moment his foot slipped from a limb on which he was standing. In his excitement he had forgotten to keep his hold on the tree secure.

As the report of the gun rang through the woods, and the heavy slugs clipped the twigs over Cy's head, a dark object tumbled out of the tree, crashed from branch to branch, and with a dull thud struck the ground.

Cyrus was a good deal more startled at sight of the plunging object than by the whistling slugs and the cutting of the twigs above him. He was not

hurt, and he had no idea that he had been shot at. It was not in his frank and generous nature to believe anything so bad even of Jed. He spurred to the spot, and found a boy lying quite still beside his gun under the tree.

“Jed Parkinson!” he exclaimed. “Are you killed?”

No reply.

Cy stooped and lifted him up a little. Then Jed gave a groan.

“How did it happen? Where are you hurt?” cried Cyrus, forgetting instantly that he ever had any quarrel with the injured lad who had taken the fearful plunge from the tree. “Is it your back?”

Jed, rolling up his eyes, seemed to recognize his enemy, gave another groan and a convulsive shudder, and swooned.

Cy shouted for help, and after a while a horseman came galloping to the spot.

“What is it? A wolf?” he cried, as he reined up towards the oak.

“No, a boy; Jed Parkinson,” Cyrus replied. “He fell out of the tree. His gun went off at the same time. He has got a bad hurt.”

“I should think so,” said the man. “Give him a taste of this.”

He took a flask from his pocket, and poured some of its contents into Jed’s lips. Jed choked, stirred, and once more opened his eyes.

“There, he’s all right,” said the man. “Get him

on to your horse in a few minutes; you can take him home without any trouble."

"Don't leave me, Mr. Graves!" Jed pleaded, clinging to the man's arm. "I shall die here if I am left alone!"

"But you won't be left alone; Cy will stay by you," said the man. "You ain't much hurt."

"O yes, I am! Don't leave me!" Jed implored.

He felt a horror at being left with Cyrus; but it was in vain that he entreated and held on to Graves's arm with his feeble grasp.

Graves mounted his horse again and rode away.

"Don't be afraid!" Cyrus cried, cheeringly; "I'll stick by you. I'll get you home somehow. Now, can you sit up?"

Jed tried it, but nearly fainted again as he sank back in Cy's arms.

"I'm awfully hurt," he said, as soon as he could speak. "I'm afraid my back is broke."

"How did you fall?" Cy inquired.

"I — I slipped. I was shooting at a wolf." And Jed looked up in his agony to see if there was any suspicion of the truth in Cy's face.

"You came near shooting me," Cy replied. "You've got a terrible wrench, but I don't believe your back is broken."

"I can't ride that horse!" groaned Jed.

"I'm afraid you can't," said Cy. "If I could only get you well on my back, I believe I could carry you."

It was growing dark; something must be done speedily. Again Cy hallooed loudly for help. Presently a young fellow he knew appeared on foot. He had a rifle in his hands, and a hatchet, with several wolves' tails, at his belt.

"John Allen!" exclaimed Cy; "you are just the fellow I want, — you and your hatchet."

The situation was quickly explained. The hatchet was needed for cutting poles and boughs to make a litter, and John Allen's help was required in carrying Jed home.

"You can take my hatchet," said the hunter, "but I'm just tuckered out. It's all I can do to lug myself home."

"Oh, but you'll help, I know you will!" Cy insisted. "We can't leave him here, and he can't ride a horse. You're not the one to forsake anybody in such a situation as this, — I know you're not, John Allen."

"Wal, I'll see," said John, sitting down by Jed, while Cy went to chop the poles.

Jed heard every word, and Cy's kindness sent a pang to his heart. Allen seemed reluctant to render assistance, while Cy alone was full of zeal in his behalf. And this was the enemy he would have shot half an hour before!

The litter prepared, Cy persuaded John to help him place Jed carefully upon it. The handles were two stout poles about eight feet long; on these the

boughs were placed, forming a bed for the disabled boy. The guns were strapped to the saddle.

“Now carry the front end,” said Cy; “I’ll take the rear, and lead my horse.”

John was a good-natured fellow; he could not refuse the urgent request. They took up the litter, with Jed stretched upon it, and began the toilsome journey home.

“I don’t see why you should do this for me,” Jed said to Cyrus, once when the bearers had set down the litter and stopped to rest.

“Why shouldn’t I?” said Cy.

“After — our — trouble,” faltered Jed.

“You don’t think I’ve laid up any ill-will on that account, do you?” cried Cyrus, generously.

“I don’t know; some fellows would,” Jed confessed.

“Even if I had,” said Cyrus, “I should have forgotten it all the minute I saw you lying there under the tree. If I took a dog’s part when I saw him abused, why shouldn’t I stand by a boy when I see him suffering?”

“It isn’t every fellow that would,” replied Jed.

There was a strange look in the eyes he turned up at Cyrus from the litter in the November twilight. He had never understood that nature before; he was beginning to see it now, and to have a deep, remorseful troubled feeling towards his late enemy.

The litter was taken up again, and carried with

labor and difficulty through wood and swale in the increasing gloom.

At length they struck a prairie road, and a quarter of a mile further on they came to a house.

There Cyrus obtained a wagon, in which he made a good bed of hay, on which Jed was carefully laid. Then, having seen him on his way home, he mounted his horse again, and rode in the other direction for a doctor.

He reached Jed's home almost as soon as Jed himself did, borne on the slowly-moving wagon. The doctor arrived soon after. Then, when there was nothing more that he could do, Cyrus bade the sufferer good-bye and left him.

Jed's back was not broken, but he had met with injuries which confined him a long time to his bed. It was six weeks before he was able to sit up and to walk about a little. In the meanwhile, Cyrus visited him nearly every day, carried him books to read, and amused him with stories and games.

During one of these visits, Jed, who had been gazing long and wistfully at Cyrus while he was reading, gave a deep sigh. Cyrus, looking quickly at him from his book, saw that his eyes were blurred with tears.

"What's the matter?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Don't read any more just now," Jed replied, in a stifled voice; "there's something I want to tell you. I *must* tell you!"

And he began to sob.

“What is it, Jed?” Cy asked, soothingly. “Don’t be afraid; speak out.”

“I ain’t afraid, — I’m ashamed,” said Jed, choking back his sobs. “I’ve tried to keep from telling you, but I shall die if I don’t speak. It was me — you knew it was me that broke your traps.”

“O yes, I knew it; but I don’t care for that now,” said Cy.

“And I — I poisoned your dog,” Jed confessed, with a look of anguish.

“But I’ve forgiven that,” Cyrus replied. “I know you are sorry. You wouldn’t do such a thing again, I’m sure, so say no more about it.”

“All that is nothing to what I was going to do!” Jed groaned, and turned his face away for a minute. “You can’t forgive that.”

“Of course I can’t unless I know what it is,” said Cy, wondering what would come next.

“That’s it; I want you to forgive me, and so I — I must tell you!” Jed said again, turning his agonized, guilty face once more towards his friend.

“I wasn’t shooting at a wolf when I tumbled from the tree; I was going to shoot at — you!”

Cyrus looked at him in utter astonishment, but without speaking a word. Jed ground his teeth in an agony of remorse.

After a while Cy answered:

“I’m sorry you told me; but may be it is better that you should have it off your mind. Don’t tell anybody else, though, and we will forget it.”

“I don't want to forget it!” Jed exclaimed. “I'm so glad I tumbled! Now I'm going to live to show you that I never can be again such a boy as I was then!”

He did live, and he kept his word. From that time Cyrus Hayward had no better friend than Jared Parkinson, and the town no truer or manlier boy.

THE
FORTUNES OF CALEB KEMP.

A STORY OF A JUNK-SHOP.

OLD Jasper Kemp had the name of being a miser, and people who knew him doubted whether he loved anything but his junk-shop and his small gains, until his brother Caleb, who was a cobbler, and died a poor man, left a little Caleb on his hands.

Little Caleb was then twelve years old. Uncle Jasper groaned dreadfully over him at first, and vowed that the expense of keeping a boy like that "would be his ruin."

"Why," said he, standing and cracking his finger-joints, with his features all in a snarl,—as his way was when anything disturbed his peace of mind or his pocket,—"a boy like that will eat as much as a man! Much as a man, by the Great Dictionary!"

That was his favorite oath. Being a very ignorant person, he had a sort of superstitious regard for

learning, and used to swear by the book which he supposed contained it all.

“And what’s sich a boy worth in the shop? I’ve tried ’em! I’ve tried ’em! I don’t never want to try another!” And Uncle Jasper cracked his joints till it would have made you nervous to hear him.

He tried little Caleb, nevertheless, and little Caleb proved so good a boy to eat crusts, and so trusty a boy to do errands and attend in the shop, that Uncle Jasper not only changed his mind about the ruinous cost of keeping him, but became sincerely attached to him in a little while.

Another thing pleased the old miser mightily. Caleb liked to read. Uncle Jasper, who traded a little in almost everything,—old bottles, old rags, and broken metals of all kinds,—also did a small business in second-hand books. He had two or three barrels of these, which Caleb dived into and overhauled, until sometimes not much more than his legs could be seen sticking out of a barrel.

The boy found plenty of books full of old-fashioned s’s which looked like f’s, printed in so dull a style that he could not read them. But now and then, to his great joy, he fished up a “Life of Peter the Great,” or a “Robinson Crusoe,” which he devoured with an eagerness which delighted the old man.

“That boy will be a scholar! He’ll be a doctor or a minister, by the Great Dictionary!” exclaimed Uncle Jasper. And he liked to watch from his junkshop of an evening young Caleb in the back room,

reading by the light of a tallow candle, his pale, boyish features lighted up with intelligence and interest over a torn copy of "Ivanhoe" or "History of Columbus."

The bottoms of the barrels were reached, and Caleb, having read all the attractive books, had got down to very poor fodder indeed, — he had even begun on the "Elements of Political Economy," — when, coming in one evening from doing some errand, he found a fresh pile of old books on the table in the back room.

"I thought of you, and I paid a price for them 'ere books — I paid a price!" cried Uncle Jasper, cracking his fingers at the recollection. "There's larnin' for ye. There's food for the mind, thanks to your old uncle, if they do call him a miser. Suit ye, do they? I thought so."

Caleb was now fourteen years old, and quite capable of appreciating some of the best books in the language.

"Why, uncle," he cried, "here's 'Prescott's Conquest of Mexico'! and 'Montaigne's Essays'! and 'Hallam's History of England'! But isn't it curious," he said, "that such nice books should all have the covers torn off?"

"Don't know nothin' 'bout that," replied Uncle Jasper. "When I buys a thing, I jest pays what I thinks it's worth, and axes no questions. I paid fifteen cents a volume for every one of them books, Caleb!"

"Fifteen cents!" said Caleb. "Why, they would

be worth at least two dollars a volume, if they only had covers on !”

“Then they never ’d ’a come to my shop,” replied Uncle Jasper, “and you never ’d ’a had the readin’ on ’em. Readin’ is readin’, ain’t it, kivers or no kivers? Well, then, you can jest thank your stars, and say nothin’.”

But when Caleb came to examine the books, he felt inclined to say a great deal. Not only had they all been stripped of their covers, but every one had marks of previous ownership.

Stamped on each title-page was a neatly engraved coat-of-arms — a rose in a shield — with a French motto over it, which he did not understand, and a name beneath, which interpreted the symbol. The name was Francis James Rosinshield. This stamp was also found on a fly-leaf of one of the volumes. From the others the corresponding fly-leaf had been torn out. In two or three of the books clumsy attempts had been made to erase it from the title.

The examination led Caleb to believe that the books had all formerly belonged to a person named Francis James Rosinshield, and to wonder how they had ever found their way to an old junk-shop in that condition.

Meanwhile he dived into Prescott’s romantic History of the Mexican Conquest, which he found more interesting than any mere story-book. At every leisure moment he was at the book again, following the strange fortunes of Cortez and Montezuma. He

was thus engaged in the back room two or three evenings later, when somebody entering the shop attracted his attention.

It was a tall, stooping, haggard-looking man, in a seedy black cloak. From under the cloak he took a bag, and from the bag he removed volume after volume of books, all without covers, and laid them on old Jasper's little black counter, until there was a pile of about two dozen.

The two men talked together in low voices. The stranger seemed pleading for a larger price than Uncle Jasper was willing to give, while Uncle Jasper stood, with his miserly old features in a dreadful snarl, cracking his fingers and growling.

At last a price seemed to be agreed upon; the old man counted out a small sum of money, which the stranger clutched eagerly, and then, thrusting the empty bag under his cloak, hurried out, leaving the pile of books.

Then the old man went lugging his prize into the back room, crying out, gleefully:

“More larnin' fer ye, Caleb! Piles of knowledge! piles of knowledge! It's expensive, but I thought of you, Caleb. Now pitch in; cram your knowledge-box. I'll make a scholard of you if I live, by the Great Dictionary!”

“But, Uncle Jasper,” said Caleb, confused between his delight at receiving such treasures, and his misgivings at finding the marks of Rosinshield's ownership in these volumes also, “I'm afraid something ain't

right. Who is that man? How did he come by these books?"

"That's more'n I can tell. And it's none of our business," said the old man. "He sells the books, I buys the books, you reads the books; what's the use of goin' further and axin' questions about what don't consarn us?"

"But it does concern us if he gets the books dishonestly," cried Caleb. "And I'm afraid he does; they are all such nice books, all but the covers; and — see, uncle, all have this name in them! Now if he is Mr. Rosinshield, or if he has a right to sell Mr. Rosinshield's books, why has he tried to scratch out the name in so many places?"

Uncle Jasper snarled his features and cracked his joints with a piteous expression.

"Never you mind, young man," he said. "Stow in the larnin', but leave alone sich questions as them 'air. It don't do fer a man in my business to know too much about some things. If I keep ign'rant, then I keeps out of trouble. Now don't, don't, Caleb, no more. He has promised to bring some po'try next time, which he says is jest the thing to fill the chinks in your mind. Then he's got some nice friction to top off with. I don't know what friction is, but I told him I thought you'd like some, if it was cheap. Would, wouldn't ye?"

"He means *fiction*," said Caleb; adding, "O yes, uncle, I want to read everything! I know how kind

you mean to be, but don't, I beg, buy any more of his stolen books — for I'm sure they're stolen."

"'Sh, Caleb!" whispered the old man, turning pale. "Don't speak that word. You'll get me into diffikilty. I didn't think you was goin' to turn out sich an ongrateful boy, Caleb." And the old man whiningly retreated to the front shop.

Still Caleb was greatly troubled about the books, and when, a few mornings afterwards, he chanced to meet in the street a tall, stooping, haggard-faced man, in a seedy black cloak, he turned, looked at him twice very anxiously, and then followed him.

The man took him a long walk, and finally mounted the steps of a fine large house in a fashionable part of the town. Caleb was several rods away, but he kept the house in sight, and walked slowly past it, shortly after the man had been admitted by a servant. The boy felt a shock of something very much like fear when he saw the name of Rosinshield on a handsomely engraved silver plate over the doorbell.

The man, he was sure, could not be the owner of the house, nor would the owner of a house like that be apt to sell off his library of fine books stripped of their covers. Caleb knew that he must do something to warn him of the theft, and that was what made him afraid.

He took all day and all the following night to think of it; then, early the next forenoon, mounted the steps and rang the bell of Mr. Rosinshield's house.

“Is Mr. Rosinshield at home?” he asked, timidly, of the servant who opened the door to him.

“Mr. Rosinshield is sick. He cannot see anybody,” was the reply.

“It is something very important. I wish to see him about something which concerns him very much,” Caleb insisted.

“It’s no use. Leave your errand and your address with me, and we will send for you when he can see you,” said the servant.

Then Caleb took a folded slip of paper from his pocket.

“Please show him that,” said he; “I will wait here.”

The servant disappeared, and, returning in a little while, threw open the door.

“Walk in; he will see you,” he said, and led Caleb through an elegant hall, up a broad staircase, and into a richly-curtained chamber, where a pale young man was lying in bed.

The young man looked sharply at Caleb, then at a piece of paper which he held in his thin white fingers. It was a fly-leaf, on which was stamped the Rosinshield coat-of-arms.

“Where did you get this?” said he, as Caleb stood, cap in hand, by the bedside.

“I should like to tell you, for it is something you ought to know,” replied Caleb. “But I want you to promise me one favor.”

“Oh, yes,” said the young man, observing that the

boy was poorly clad. "You want a reward. Everybody wants a reward. Very well, you shall have it, if your information is worth anything. This looks like a leaf from one of my books, and I'm curious to know how you came by it."

He listened to Caleb's story with a look of surprise, which gradually changed to one of pain and anger.

"Books from my shelves, probably, every one!" he exclaimed. "But the person you describe is a poor man I employ to come and read to me, who is indebted to me for a thousand favors, and who can't be guilty of such base ingratitude, I am sure. Touch that bell for me. Press down on the knob."

Caleb pressed the knob, and the sound of the bell brought a servant.

"Has Mr. Walburgh come?" Mr. Rosinshield asked.

"Not yet, sir."

"When he arrives, ask him to remain below, and come and tell me. My dressing-robe!"

"You will not venture to get up, sir!" exclaimed the servant.

"My Turkish trousers and slippers!" said Mr. Rosinshield.

Hastily putting on the loose articles he called for, he dismissed the servant, and took Caleb into the adjoining room. It was a superbly furnished library, with alcoves of carved bookcases on the sides, busts of great men in the corners, and reading-chairs and

writing-tables at the ends, lighted by great windows.

The sick man took from one of the desks a manuscript catalogue, turned the leaves rapidly, found the title, "*Mexico, Conquest of. W. H. Prescott,*" with the numbers indicating its place in the library, and went eagerly to one of the cases. Everything appeared in order. Not a book was missing.

"Quick!" he cried impatiently to Caleb; "those steps! Set them here! Mount!" Caleb climbed the steps. "Second shelf from the top. Seventh book from the left hand."

"*History of the Conquest of Mexico. Volume First,*" said Caleb, reading the title on the back of the Turkey morocco binding.

"Yes, that's it. Hand it down!" cried the sick man.

But when Caleb went to take down the volume, it pinched up in his fingers, some wads of paper which had been stuffed into it fell out, and only the empty cover dangled in his hands. Rosinshield uttered a cry of wrath and dismay.

"The other two volumes!" he said to Caleb.

They were found in the same condition, as were also several other books which Caleb had named as being in his uncle's possession.

Satisfied at last, the owner made him put the covers all back in their places, while he sank down exhausted in a chair.

"You spoke of reading these books," he then said to the boy. "Are you fond of reading?"

“Oh, very!” replied Caleb. “There’s nothing I like so well.”

“How many of my books do you say you have?”

“About fifty.”

“How many have you read?”

“I am reading the first one now.”

“Then what have you come to me for? If I reclaim my books, as I certainly shall, you will lose the reading of them. Have you thought of that?”

Caleb smiled. “Oh, yes. I love the books; but since they don’t belong to me, what else could I do?”

“I remember,” said Mr. Rosinshield, — “you expect a reward. What is it?”

“My uncle” — stammered Caleb.

“He’s a villain!” exclaimed the sick man; “a receiver of stolen goods, and I’ll have him punished.”

“Oh, sir, forgive him!” Caleb pleaded. “That’s the favor I was going to ask. He didn’t *know* the books were stolen, that is, he had no positive knowledge of it — although he suspected it. And, please consider, he did it all for me, — to make me happy and contented. Oh, you wouldn’t have him get into trouble on that account!”

This earnest and tearful appeal touched Mr. Rosinshield.

“Well, suppose I let him off. What other reward do you want?”

“No other reward, sir.”

“What, no money?”

“No, sir. I hadn’t thought of such a thing.”

Just then the servant came to say that Mr. Walburgh was below.

“Send him up,” said Mr. Rosinshield. “Boy, slip into that alcove, where you can see without being seen. If he is not the man you have described, come out and speak to me. If he is, keep quiet till I call you.”

Caleb was hardly concealed when the reader entered. Although he was without his cloak, and Caleb caught only a glimpse of his side face before his back was turned, he recognized the tall, stooping form and worn features of the man who had sold the coverless books.

Mr. Walburgh expressed some concern at seeing the sick man in his library.

“I am feeling stronger this morning,” Mr. Rosinshield replied. “We will proceed at once with our reading. I think I will try a little of ‘Hallam’s History.’ Please hand me the second volume, and I will point out the passage.”

As this was one of the missing books, Caleb listened with anxious interest to hear what Mr. Walburgh would say.

“I fear,” said the reader, after some hesitation, “that ‘Hallam’s’ is too heavy for an invalid like you. Let me recommend something more entertaining.”

“Very well. Say ‘Prescott’s Mexico.’ That splendid description of the Battle of the Temple of the Sun.”

There was an embarrassing pause, and Mr. Wal-

burgh's voice betrayed some agitation as he replied :

"That, I am afraid, would prove too exciting. You are in a more feeble condition than you think."

"You are quite right. Something quietly pleasing, then. Say 'Montaigne's Essays.' Please turn to that curious chapter on 'The Inconsistency of our Actions,' at the beginning of the second book."

That the invalid, in choosing from a library of several thousand volumes, should have hit upon three in succession of the fifty books that had been mutilated, was a circumstance that might have alarmed a bolder thief than Walburgh.

"Excuse me," he stammered. "Your 'Montaigne' is in such fine type, I am afraid my eyes are not equal to it; I have had such a dreadful night, watching with my sick child."

"No matter, then. But hand me down the volume. I wish just to glance at it. The steps are there at the shelf. What's the matter, Mr. Walburgh?"

"Let me go home to my wife and sick child! I am sick myself to-day!" said the wretched man.

"Oh, Mr. Walburgh, I should think you *would* be ill!" said Mr. Rosinshield, in tones full of grief and indignation. "I have discovered everything. You have been robbing my library. And for what? No sane man could have destroyed such valuable books for the paltry fifteen cents a volume you have got for them. Haven't I been loading you with benefits? Where is the money I have given you for your

family? The clothes to make you look more respectable? You have no sick child, Mr. Walburgh!"

"No," the miserable man confessed, bowing his whole body in the most abject manner over his bent knees, and his shaking hands pressed together before him,—"I have no child now;—she is dead,—dead from my neglect. My wife has left me, for worse cause. I am a wretch, Mr. Rosinshield! The money you have given me I have gambled away, or spent for drink. The clothes you have given me I have pawned for the same purpose. Then, when I couldn't ask you for more, or get money in any other way, I tore out the bodies of your books for that purpose. But, as you say, I am not a sane man. I have fallen into vice; that has been my ruin. Forgive me and pity me, Mr. Rosinshield!"

The poor creature uttered these last words with a sob.

"I can forgive you and pity you," replied the invalid, with stern sorrow, "but I cannot trust you. Go now. Come again when I have thought over your case,—say to-morrow at this hour. But first tell me where you have sold the books."

"The second-hand booksellers wouldn't have them, so I sold them at Kemp's junk-shop."

"Nowhere else?"

"Nowhere else."

"Very well, Mr. Walburgh; you can go."

After the reader was gone, Mr. Rosinshield called Caleb from his alcove.

“Are you a good reader?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” replied Caleb, “but I understand what I read.”

“Let me hear you read this paragraph in Thackeray’s ‘Newcomes.’ ”

Caleb was taken too much by surprise to read very well. But the sick man said, “That will do, considering the circumstances. A little instruction, which I can give you, will make you a good reader. Now, how would you like the situation?”

“What situation?” said Caleb, staring with bewilderment.

“To come and read to me two or three hours a day, at a salary of eight dollars a week.”

“Eight — dollars — a week!” exclaimed Caleb, who had never thought of earning so much money.

“From what you say, and from what I can see,” continued Mr. Rosinshield, “I know that you are an honest boy. Your uncle’s shop is no place for you. Come and live with me. Quit him altogether.”

“Oh, I couldn’t do that, after he has been so kind to me!” said Caleb.

“Well, well! Perhaps I can arrange it with him. You will come and read to me, any way; he will consent to that for the pay and the other advantages you will get. Now go and tell him to bring me those books.”

Trembling with joy and fear, Caleb ran back to the junk-shop. Old Jasper cracked his knuckles frightfully at first, when the boy told his story, but

afterwards loaded the books on a barrow, and trundled them up to Mr. Rosinshield's house.

He returned in an hour, well satisfied, having got back the money he had paid Walburgh for the books, and made an arrangement by which Mr. Rosinshield was to take Caleb as a reader, and have charge of his education.

Caleb was almost beside himself with happiness. He entered upon his new duties the next day. In a week he was living in Mr. Rosinshield's house, and a far more comfortable career was opened to him than he could ever have enjoyed with his narrow-minded uncle in the old junk-shop.

The gambler never showed his face again in the house of the man he had wronged; and Mr. Rosinshield, still anxious to do him good, inquired for him in vain.

As for Caleb, he is now as fine a "scholard" as even his unscrupulous old uncle could desire.

THE MISSING LETTERS.

RICHARD BORDEN'S STORY.

WHEN I was sixteen years old, I thought I was in a fair way to become rich and famous.

My parents were poor, and I had been obliged to leave school in order to get my own living; but by great good luck I had obtained a place in the law office of old Judge Peakerton, then the foremost member of our county bar.

He was not only a successful lawyer, but a very liberal sort of person. He had already started two or three young men on the road to fortune, and to be a law-student in his good graces was to be sure of a career; so at least people said, and I certainly believed.

But though a kind man, he was exacting. "Business before everything else," was his motto. I was inclined to be wild in those days, and once I delayed delivering a message he had intrusted to me, when I had no other excuse for my neglect than that some

young fellows had invited me to ride. He looked at me sternly.

“Young man,” said he, “don’t let a thing of this sort happen again as long as you are in my office. Fortunately no great harm has been done in this case, but as a matter of principle and good habits, I wish now, once for all, to impress it upon you, that if you mean to succeed, or if you mean to remain with me, stick to business, *stick to business*, STICK TO BUSINESS! That’s all, Richard.”

He was leaving the office, but when he got to the door he turned back. “One word more,” he said. “I like you, Richard, and what I say is for your good. You have talents and address, and are capable of study and hard work; but you are inclined to be indolent, and to let your love of ease and social pleasure interfere with your duties. That won’t do. There is a time for recreation; but business is business. That’s the first lesson for a young man of your habits to learn and live up to.”

“I will try to learn it, sir,” I answered, frankly and earnestly; for I knew my fault, and was really grateful to him for his kindness and good counsel.

And I did apply myself after that as I had never done before. He was kinder than ever, and, boy that I was, he treated me with a great deal of confidence.

He had at this time an important case coming to trial,—that of Gage *versus* Flamworth. Gage had furnished a friend of his, named Ireland, with large sums of money, to help him develop an improved

mill-wheel. From overwork in his invention, and too much anxiety of mind, Ireland took a brain-fever and died, and the thing passed into the hands of Flamworth, a miller, who had built a mill for the new wheel, and who claimed to have bought poor Ireland's patents.

Gage claimed that these must have been sold -- if sold at all -- subject to a contract with him, by which he was to have half the profits of the invention. But though he had memoranda of sums advanced to Ireland, he had no written agreement to show, and the contract had to be proved by circumstantial evidence.

As the invention turned out to be valuable, Gage sued Flamworth, and the case had been some time in the courts. Peakerton was Gage's counsel. Flamworth's lawyer was Ridgefield, a man of inferior ability, but notorious for the shrewd tricks by which he sometimes won a suit in the face of evidence and justice.

The trial came on, and some pretty hard swearing on the part of Flamworth's witnesses made the thing look rather dark for our side, when some important papers fell into Peakerton's hands.

One day after the court had adjourned, he came to me in the office, looking rather excited for a cool-headed old practitioner like him.

He took a package from his pocket.

"We have at last something we've been hunting for," he said, with an air of triumph. "Letters of

Ireland to his wife, in which he makes frequent allusion to his contract with Gage. But you see what a condition they are in, — badly written in the first place, and some of them worn almost to tatters since the poor woman must have carried them around with her until she died; they turned up yesterday in an attic. I am afraid the other side has got a clue to our discovery, but it is too late to help them. Besides the evidence as to the contract, the letters are full of pathetic passages in which Ireland speaks of his eternal obligations to Gage.”

“Which will have a tremendous effect on a jury!” I exclaimed, full of enthusiasm over the discovery.

“I trust they will have their due influence,” he said, with a smile. “Now, Richard, you see what is needed, — a clean copy of all of them. The poor, tattered, pathetic scrawls will do to hand round among the jurymen, but we must have an attested copy to handle and read. You are as quick at such work as anybody I know, and I think you can have it done by midnight.”

“If not,” I replied eagerly, “I can work till morning.”

“Very well. I put the letters into your hands. As people will be coming in here for an hour or two yet, perhaps you had better take them home and copy them in the privacy of your own room. Remember that the utmost care and secrecy are required. Keep them safe, make the best copy you can, and bring them to me at my house the first

thing in the morning, — at seven o'clock. Can you?"

"At seven o'clock it shall be," I said, promptly, delighted with my commission.

He then gave me some further instructions with regard to the copying, and, with the letters in my pocket, I hurried home to my boarding-house.

It was then five o'clock. I set to work in great glee. The handwriting was not hard to decipher, and I made rapid progress. At supper-time I had some toast and a cup of chocolate brought up to me; I nibbled and sipped, and scarcely lost a minute from my task. I had lighted my lamp; the night was before me.

The letters were very interesting; they showed the enthusiastic inventor struggling against poverty and difficulty of all kinds, sometimes driven almost to despair, but full of faith in his ideas, of affection for his wife, and of gratitude to his friend.

That friend was Gage. The contract was implied in every allusion to the money advanced by him, and all their transactions were honorable to both. I saw what an influence over the sympathies of a jury these letters would give a powerful pleader like Peakerton, and I felt that Gage's cause was won. My love of justice made me glad of it, and my boyish vanity made me proud of my share in the work.

At nine o'clock I found that I had copied more than two-thirds of all the letters. I felt tired, and got up and walked about my room. After a little

rest, one more sitting, I said to myself, would take me safely through my task before the clock struck twelve.

Somebody knocked at my door. I packed the letters together before opening it, and then let in Bill Kneeland and Sylvester Robbins. Kneeland was a fellow-boarder, and Robbins was a brother law-student. They were both older than I, and I was flattered by the friendship they professed for me.

“What are you up to at this time of night?” said Robbins, seeing my copy and the pile of old letters on my table.

“Look here, Syl,” said I, laughing, “don’t you ask any questions. It’s a singular case. I’ll tell you all about it some time.”

As he glanced with curiosity towards the table, where my copy lay in the full glare of the lamp-light, I placed the paper in a drawer, and put the package of letters back into their wrapper.

The fellows sat down and lighted their cigars, as if prepared for a long call. At length Kneeland proposed to walk. I felt the need of air and exercise, and thought this would be a good way to get rid of them. So I consented, left my copy in the drawer, slipped the package of letters again into my pocket, and went out, locking my door behind me.

After we had been a little while in the street, Robbins proposed to pay “that bet.”

“What bet?” I asked.

"Oh," said he, "I bet a bottle of champagne with Bill that Juliet Vane wouldn't go to the ball with him. Lost, of course. Come with us, Dick, and see the bet paid."

Kneeland seconded the invitation.

"Can't, boys, possibly," I said. "I've got to go back home and work till twelve o'clock."

"You'll do your work all the easier," said Robbins. "Come, we won't keep you more than half an hour."

The mention of champagne had inflamed my thirst. I had been at work four hours at a stretch. Had I not earned a little refreshment? and would I not, as he said, get through my work all the better for it?

"Well, go ahead, boys," I replied; "I'll take just one glass with you, any way."

We entered a saloon. With the popping of the cork and the sparkling of the glasses, my spirits rose. Another acquaintance had joined us, and a game of euchre was proposed. At first I objected. But the cards were produced and shuffled.

"Well, one game," I said, thinking that if I finished my copying by one o'clock, or later, it would be just as well.

After one game, we must have another. Then the rubber. Then another bottle of champagne, and more card-playing to see who should pay for that.

I felt all the time that I ought not to be there, but reflected that I had still eight or nine hours to do work in that would take less than two. I might

finish my copying and have yet some time for sleep, if I got home by midnight.

I suppose I must have got home about that time, but I was in no condition for work. Everything whirled with me. There was then but one thing to do,—sleep first, and work afterwards. I tumbled upon my bed in my clothes, and forgot everything.

The next thing I was aware of was a strong smell of lamp-smoke in the room. I started up. I had left the lamp burning, but it had gone out, leaving a foul wick and darkness. As I had supposed there was oil enough in it to last all night, you may well believe that I was frightened at the waste of time. In fact, daylight was glimmering through the slats of my window-blinds.

I threw them open. It was not yet light enough to see distinctly anything in my room. I struck a match and held it to the face of my watch. It was twenty minutes past four o'clock.

My wits seemed benumbed, and I had to rub my brows a moment before I could fully realize the situation. The papers were to be delivered to Judge Peakerton at seven. It would take me fifteen minutes to reach his house. Less than two hours and a half to finish the copying in, if I began it at once. But my wits brightened and my courage rose as I reflected.

“All right!” I said. “I can do it. I’ve had my sleep, and wakened just in time. Now for a lamp!”

I found one without much delay, and placed it,

lighted, on my table. Then — the letters. I remembered taking them with me, and feeling the package in my pocket from time to time as I was playing cards. I felt again. It was gone.

It must have fallen out on the bed while I was asleep. I ran to look. I held the light. I searched bedclothes and floor. I nearly upset the lamp in my trepidation. No package! I felt again in my pockets, and turned them inside out in my terror and despair.

Then I hurried back to the table. Had I not taken the letters from my pocket on reaching home? I could not distinctly remember, but it seemed to me that I had. I ransacked books and newspapers, all the time with such fear and sickness of heart as no words can express.

I felt that I was ruined, and deserved to be.

More than that: in losing the letters, I had probably lost a cause for Peakerton and his client, who deserved something very different. For a moment I was half resolved to kill myself to avoid a difficulty I had not the courage to face.

Where could I have lost the letters? There was no means of knowing. Perhaps at the saloon; perhaps in stumbling along the street. Or — a terrible suspicion flashed across my mind — perhaps they had been stolen!

Yes, I saw it all, or thought I did. It was one of Ridgefield's tricks. Robbins was at the bottom of it. He had been employed to rob me of the letters,

and had got Kneeland to help him. I was confirmed in this suspicion by another discovery. My copy of a portion of the letters, which I had placed in the drawer, was also missing.

Kneeland, as I have said, was a fellow-boarder. It was not many seconds before I was pounding at his door with a lamp in my hand, and fury in my heart.

“Who’s there?” demanded a voice within.

“I! Richard Borden!” I answered. “Let me in this instant!”

Bill complied; and when he saw me with the light, standing before him, pale and haggard, stammering with fear and rage, and heard enough to understand what I had lost and what I suspected, he showed such honest sympathy and unaffected astonishment that I was forced to believe that he, at least, was innocent of the theft.

“And,” said he, “I don’t believe Robbins had anything to do with it. He helped me take you to your room, and we left it together. I was with him all the time, and I didn’t see him touch any papers.”

“Somebody has touched them!” I exclaimed. “Somebody, too, who was with me in my room,—or else there were two robbers, one who picked my pocket, and another who rifled my drawer when I was out.”

“Look again. I’ll go and help you look,” said Bill.

He did. We searched every nook and corner—

my table, the bed, the floor, every part of the room. The papers were certainly gone.

I put on my hat.

"Where now?" Bill asked.

"I am going back over the ground we travelled last night to the saloon where we drank and played. Then I am going to find Robbins. If I am satisfied that he robbed me, he shall restore the papers, or —"

I added a threat which seemed to make Bill feel uneasy.

"I'll go with you," he said, "though I'd give a thousand dollars to tumble back into bed and sleep off my headache!"

Burning with impatience, I waited for him to dress; and we hurried off together.

It was in the gray of the morning. The streets were deserted, and there was a chill and desolation about them which struck to my heart.

The echoes of our footsteps on the empty sidewalks seemed to mock me. I had no hope of recovering the papers; and I told Bill so, expecting that he would say something to encourage me.

"There isn't a chance of it," he replied, pausing on a street-corner. "What's the use of this wild-goose chase? Let's go back and go to bed!"

"I'm going to find Robbins, any way!" I said, desperately. "And I'm bound to look for the papers, even if there is no chance of finding them."

There was nothing else to do, and in my torment of mind I could not have kept still. The search,

hopeless as it was, furnished me with occupation; I felt as if I should have gone wild without it. So we kept on.

It was now light enough to see distinctly any white object on the sidewalk or in the gutters, and we passed over the ground rapidly.

We reached the saloon without having made any discoveries. There was a dim light burning within, but it was some time before we succeeded in rousing up the barkeeper.

At last he appeared in his shirt-sleeves and disordered hair, and we told him our errand. He admitted us, and we searched. No package was to be found, and he could give us no information.

The fellow's unconcern was exasperating. He took no interest in the affair; he yawned, waiting for us to clear out. While I was on fire with anxiety, all he cared for was to get back to his bed.

Robbins lodged in a private house. Nobody seemed to be stirring in it when we reached the door and rang.

"This is absurd, calling on Syl before six in the morning," said Kneeland, as we waited on the steps.

He grinned dismally. Again and again we rang. I thought the bell would never be answered. The morning was raw and chill, and now a fine drizzling rain began to fall. Bill shivered and declared himself sick of the business.

"If you were half as sick as I am, then you might talk," I said, and gave the bell another furious pull.

At last the man of the house, very much unbuttoned and uncombed, came to the door, and regarded us with no little indignation when I asked for Robbins.

"Yes, he is in, I suppose," he said; "but he don't receive callers at this time of day."

"He will receive us," I replied, "for we come on very important business."

Still he seemed inclined to shut the door in our faces; but he was a little man, and in spite of him I pressed in, followed by Kneeland. Very unwillingly he showed us up a flight of stairs, and knocked at a door.

There was no response. In my impatience I knocked after him, a good deal more effectively. There was an ill-natured growl within, a delay of a minute or two, which seemed to me half an hour, and Robbins, in trousers and dressing-gown, opened the door to us.

"Why, fellows," said he, staring at us by the bleak daylight that struggled through the curtains of his room, "is it the end of the world?"

"It's the end of the world to me," I replied, "unless you can help me."

"What's the row with you, Dick? Sit down, fellows. Bill, what is it? I never saw such a face on a human being!" Robbins added, glancing from me to Kneeland, and back again at me, with a show of astonishment which was very well acted indeed, if it wasn't real.

“He has been robbed of the papers he was at work on last night,” Kneeland explained; “and the truth is, he more than half suspects us of being the robbers.”

“Us! — you and me!” said Syl, with a puzzled look. “Why should we want his papers?”

“He thinks we stole them for Ridgefield. They are papers in the Gage and Flamworth case,” Kneeland explained.

Syl laughed outright.

“We have been stealing papers for Ridgefield! Come, Dick,” he said, “this is a little too thin!”

I had all the time been studying him as carefully as I could in my intensely excited state of mind, and now it struck me that if he had been a true and honest friend, he would have shown more sympathy for my misfortune, and less amusement at the absurdity of my suspicion.

I had sunk down on his sofa. He sat on the bed facing me; Kneeland stood resting one leg on a chair by the window, watching us. The whole picture of that wretched scene comes back to me now, and I remember how peaked and foxy Syl’s face looked as he peered at me from the big collar of his dressing-gown, under his tumbled hair, — how mean and despicable his little sleek black mustache appeared to me then for the first time!

I had never had occasion to read his character before. I thought I read it now, — a sly, prying, crafty fellow, just fitted to be a tool in the hands of

the man who had an interest in getting possession of the papers I had lost.

My mind was made up. Kneeland was innocent of the whole affair; Robbins was the guilty one, and he had made use of Kneeland in carrying out his plans.

I took time to consider what I should say, and then replied:

"I don't mean to be unjust to anybody, but here are the facts of the case. I was engaged in copying papers when you and Bill came for me last evening. Long as I have known you, often as I have seen you, Syl Robbins, you never came for me before."

"No, that's a fact," he admitted; "and I shouldn't have gone to your room last evening, but I happened to be with Bill, and somehow your name was mentioned —"

"Who mentioned it first?" I demanded.

Bill had already told me; and now, after some little hesitation, Syl said:

"I don't remember; I rather think I remarked: 'Dick Borden has a room here in this house, hasn't he?' He said: 'Yes, on this very floor. Would you like to see him?' Of course I said I would; for haven't you and I always been good friends?"

I didn't much like the smile with which he appealed to me as he said this. I did not smile in return.

"Well," I went on, "you came, found me at work, saw what kind of papers I had in hand, and got me

to go out with you. I took some of the papers in my pocket, and left one — a copy — in my drawer. You know what sort of a time we had, and the condition I went home in at midnight. You and Bill took me to my room.”

“Of course,” said Syl. “You wouldn’t have us desert a chum in your situation, would you? That’s not our style, is it, Bill?”

“I fell asleep,” I continued, “and when I woke at twenty minutes past four this morning, the package was gone from my pocket, and the copy from my drawer.”

“Well, well!” said Syl, with a gleam of his sharp little eyes, “you are making out a pretty strong case! I think, as a lawyer, I could work it up, and prove myself, as a man, guilty of the robbery. You might have lost the package from your pocket; but then, there was the copy taken from your room! That might have been stolen in your absence; but then, there’s the lost package!”

“It’s no laughing matter,” I said to him, with a look which must have been black enough if it expressed what was in my heart.

“That’s so!” he exclaimed; “and, to be serious, it’s preposterous, Dick! I knew nothing about your papers. I know nothing about them now. I won’t deny but that I had a chance to steal them, but Bill must have seen me if I did; and Bill — look at him there. Is that the face of a rogue? I never did any business for Ridgefield, and I wouldn’t do busi-

ness of that sort for anybody. I don't wonder, though, that you thought of us the first thing; and now, if you fancy I have the papers, you are welcome to search my premises. I'll help you all I can."

"I don't care to search your premises," I replied, knowing that if he had stolen the papers, he would not have been so foolish as to place them where they could be found, and then invite me to find them. "They are probably in Ridgefield's hands by this time, whoever took them," I added, despairingly; "and if it will be any satisfaction to the thief to know it, Gage's case is lost with them, and I am ruined."

Here my grief and despair completely overcame me, and instead of wreaking the vengeance on Robbins which I had threatened, I betrayed all my weakness in a violent fit of sobbing. I did not try to check it. I thought perhaps Robbins would pity me, and help me recover the papers, if he knew anything about them.

"Really, Dick," he said, "this is a hard place you are in. I am sorry for you."

"I would sooner have had the rascal take my life!" I exclaimed. "I can never face Peakerton again."

"Well, no, I don't see how you can, if the papers are as important as you say, and you lost them by going on that little spree last night," said Robbins. "But don't be cut up by it. A smart young fellow

like you needn't be long out of a place. Let Peakerton slide, and go in for your chances somewhere else. Don't you say so, Bill?"

Kneeland shook his head.

"It will be hard for him to get in with another man like Peakerton," he replied.

"Well, I suppose so. Then I'll tell you what you'd better do. Go to him boldly with a made-up story. Tell him your room was broken into, — not while you were off on a spree, of course, but after you had fallen asleep over your work. You were awakened by a noise, lamp suddenly extinguished, violent scuffle with an unknown antagonist, who tore himself from your hands, knocked you down, and fled with the papers. You can give yourself a little knock, and show a torn and bloodied shirt-front, in corroboration. Ain't that his cue, Bill?"

Syl's small bright eyes sparkled with lively cunning as he proposed this. I turned to Bill, who was more grave, but who answered like the bad friend and false counsellor he was.

"Really, I don't see but what he will have to lie to get out of the scrape."

I listened with astonishment to these base suggestions. Such, then, were the friends I had cherished, for the sake of whose society I had neglected my trust, and risked disgrace and ruin!

I started up, and retorted with indignation:

"Because I have been a fool, would you have me be a coward and a rascal?"

My suspicions of Robbins were fully confirmed, and I now more than half believed Bill to have been in league with him. Why not, since they were so ready to counsel me to base conduct? It is safe to conclude that those who would have us act falsely are capable of acting falsely themselves.

I left them in anger and disgust; but their words had quite another effect on me from what might have been expected. They roused my manhood. I was revolted by the dishonorable proposal, and stung into forming a different resolution.

It would not do to leave Judge Peakerton in ignorance of what had occurred. The least I could do after losing the papers was to give him warning of the fact. I would go to him, confess everything, denounce myself, and accuse my false friends.

It was now past six o'clock. I hurried home to make final search and inquiry, and get at some solution of the mystery, if possible, before meeting the judge.

I could learn nothing, except that a gentleman had called for me at about ten o'clock the evening before, when I was out. He had gone away, however, without leaving his name.

"Did he go to my room?" I asked.

"I went with him to your room, and tried the door," said the housekeeper, "but it was locked."

"And you saw him go out of the house?"

"Yes; and nobody could have got in after that without a latch-key. The servants were all abed."

This caller who did not leave his name might have been another spy of Ridgefield's. But this was a mere conjecture, and it threw no light on the robbery. The boarders were not yet astir, and it would not do to go from room to room at that hour, questioning them. Two or three appeared just as I was leaving the house, but they had seen no strange person in the halls the night before, except the young man who came to see Kneeland, and went out with Kneeland and me.

"But I did hear some decided stumbling up-stairs at about midnight," said one; a point on which I did not care to elicit further information.

I had now barely time to reach Peakerton's house at seven o'clock, — the hour he had appointed for receiving the copied letters. I don't know how it feels to have several pounds of melted lead in one's bosom, but that's what my heart seemed like; it was so heavy, and yet so fiery hot, when I set out on my dreadful errand.

It was raining still, — a cold, fine, dismal, penetrating rain, but that did not cool my fever.

I felt like a wretch going to the gallows; but worse than that: he knows the fate before him; his mind is made up to it; he is at peace compared with a culprit like me, going to confess to a man like Peakerton the ruin I had brought upon his client's honest cause.

Only those who have been in a like situation will know just what I mean when I say that death would

have been welcome if it could have relieved me of that terrible necessity and saved me from disgrace.

When I reached the house, I walked by, fearing to enter; I wished to put off until the last moment the ordeal I was to go through. As I hesitated, sick, faint, undecided, I saw a man coming from the opposite direction.

It was Fenholm, Peakerton's youngest partner. The sight of him added to my misery. He was going to the house; he would witness my humiliation. But I reflected that he was a kind-hearted fellow; he had always treated me well; and the next moment, in my desperation, I resolved to tell him all.

I went on to meet him. He saw by my looks that some calamity had occurred, and his friendly questions helped me to make the confession. There, in the rainy street, in the early morning, standing under his umbrella, I told in a few words the story.

He regarded me with grave concern.

"Do you know," said he, "how long we have been trying to get on the track of those letters of Ireland to his wife, the time and money they have cost, and their importance in the case just at this time?"

I knew all that only too well.

"And Peakerton," he added, "is the most business-like and punctual man in the world himself; one who has a right to be exacting of others."

"Yes," I said, "and I have no expectation that he will ever forgive me. After what he has said to me about my follies, — after all his kindness to me, — I

don't deserve to be forgiven. But if you will tell him, and save me from that, let me go, and never see him again, — that's all I ask."

"That I can't do," he said. "You must see him, but I will go with you, and make things as easy for you as I can."

We found Peakerton waiting in his library. He was always an early bird, and when he had a case in court, he would often be up at five in the morning, preparing for it.

I did not dare look him in the face or speak. I waited, like the culprit I was, for Fenholm to speak for me.

There was a cheery fire in the grate, and Fenholm sat down before it. But I hung back, and kept in shadow; I did not feel that I had a right even to the comfort of a hearth.

"Everything right?" said Peakerton, turning in his chair and taking a package which Fenholm produced from his pocket.

"I believe so," Fenholm said. "There are the originals. Here is the copy."

He opened a paper while Peakerton undid the package.

I was astounded. I thought I must be in a dream. The package contained the stolen letters; the other paper was the purloined copy.

I started forward, and stood staring like an idiot. Luckily, the judge did not observe me. I could only

tremble, and gasp, and flush, and turn pale, and wait for explanations.

Fenholm went on:

“As you requested, I walked round to Richard’s boarding-place last evening, to see if he needed help. I found he did. He had copied only about two-thirds of the letters; it was getting late; he was tired; so I took them all home and finished the copy. Now we will go through them and see if it is correct.”

“Thank you, boys!” Peakerton said, with great satisfaction. “Sit up to the fire here, Richard, and get warm. It’s a dreary day, but we’ll make it a cheery one for our client.”

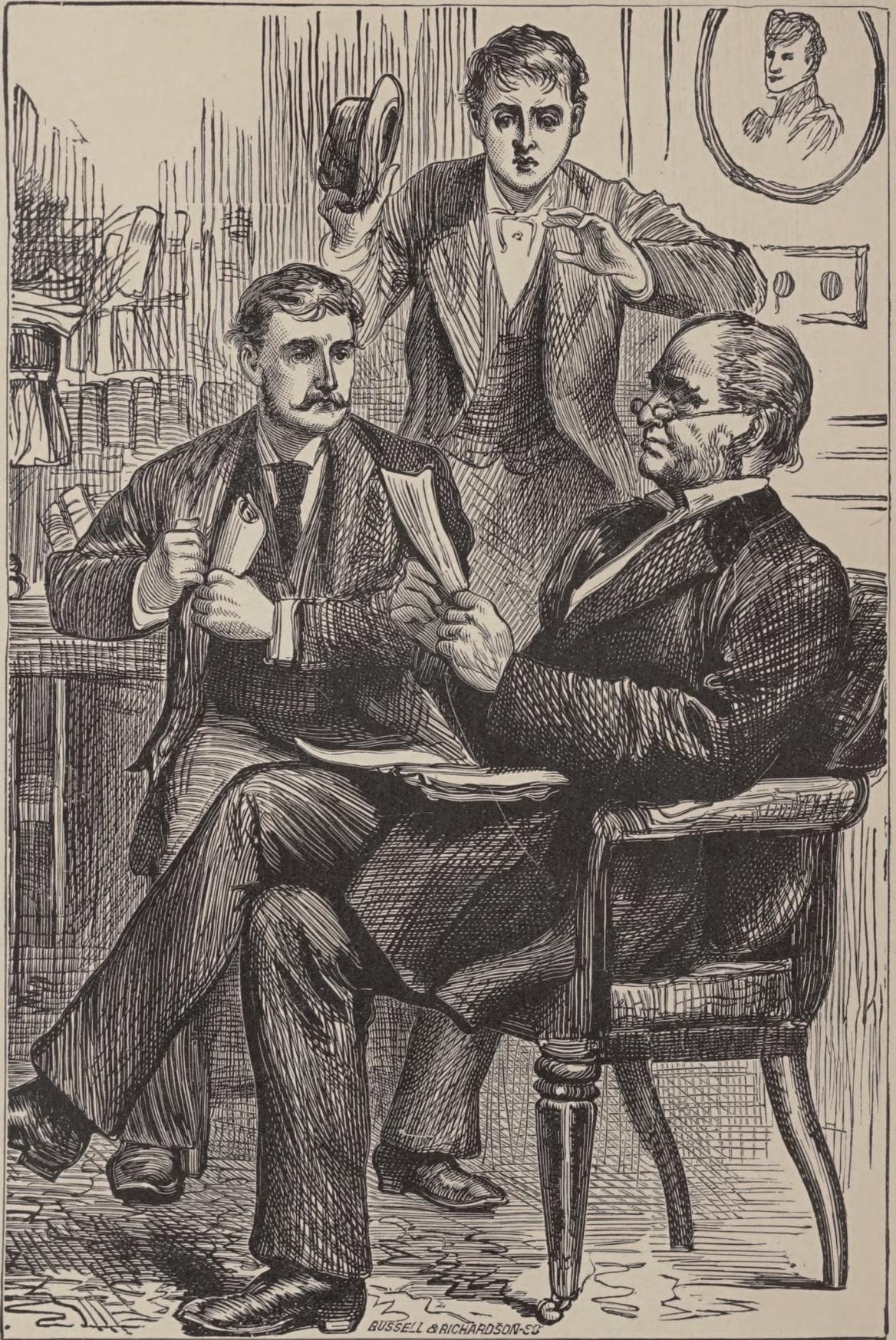
He gave me a look — how different from what I had expected! He was overflowing with geniality. But he noticed my face.

“Are you well, Richard?” he asked, kindly.

“Oh, yes, very well!” I stammered. “Only a little blue with — with —”

“I know,” he said. “Up late, and up early; an east wind, and you’ve had no breakfast. But business before everything, you know. We don’t often have a case like this. Now, Richard, take the copy and read it aloud, while Fenholm looks over the letters, and I listen for points with a pen in my hand. Wait a moment, though; let me tell the cook to hurry up breakfast, and put on two extra plates.”

It was an immense relief to me when he stepped out of the room for a minute. I was trembling from



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head to foot. The ague was in my voice, and I couldn't have read a line of the copy. I was consumed with anxiety.

"Fenholm!" — I gasped out, inquiringly; but my voice stuck in my throat, and I could not speak another word.

"Be quiet," he said, "and you are saved. When I first called for you last evening, you were out. I waited a while in the street, walking up and down. You were gone so long, I knew that something was not right. I came again; saw the light still shining through the blinds of your room; entered with a boarder who had a latch-key; found you asleep, or worse, on your bed; you had not even locked your door; and there was the package of letters on your table!

"I was indignant. I thought it would serve you right if I carried them off with the copy which I found in the drawer. I did so; and if you had not met me here, and appeared so contrite —"

Fenholm suddenly lowered his voice, for the judge was returning.

"Now it depends upon you," he added, "whether he ever knows of the adventure. I hope he never may!"

I have only to add that Peakerton never did know of it until I had so thoroughly gained his esteem and confidence by my future conduct, that I could, with a free heart, tell him how near he came to losing Gage's cause, and why.

He gained it, of course, thanks to those missing letters. And of course my suspicions of Robbins and Kneeland were unfounded. But I claim that I had good reason to suspect them, and if they grew cool towards me in consequence, I was not extremely sorry. The loss of such society was my gain.

THE DOMINIE'S WATCH.

IT was Saturday afternoon, and Rust Aiken came to get Alfred Everett to go a-fishing.

"I can't go very well," said Alfred, regretfully, looking at the pole on Rust's shoulder, and the box of bait in his hand. "I wish I could!"

"Why can't you?" said Rust.

"Oh, the dominie's away, and I've got to stay at home and look after things."

By *the dominie* Alfred meant old Mr. Whately, the minister.

"He would let you go, I know," Rust insisted. "Come, Alf! get your fishpole. I've dug bait enough for both. What is there for you to look after? The housekeeper's at home, isn't she?"

"Yes," said Alfred. "But he expects me to hoe the garden this afternoon. He'll look black if he comes home and finds the weeds all growing!"

Mr. Whately was a kind old man, but he was rather strict in his discipline of the orphan, to whom

he was giving a home and an education. He expected that the few duties which he imposed on Alfred would be faithfully done.

Alfred was grateful; he felt that what was required of him was but slight return for the bounty he received. But he was a boy, fond of fun, like other boys, and too easily diverted from his tasks by the pleasures of the moment. He looked ruefully at the garden, and again at Rust's fishpole, while Rust said:

"You can hoe that little patch after you come back. I'll help you."

"Do you mean it truly?" cried Alfred, brightening.

"Of course, I do. Let's see. It's about two hours' work for you alone. Together we can do it in an hour. Now that's fair, ain't it?"

It certainly seemed very fair on the part of Rust.

"Well, agreed!" said Alfred, gayly.

It did not occur to either of the boys that it would be better to do the work first, and go fishing afterwards. That is not boys' style.

"Come in while I change my clothes," Alfred said. "And now, look here, Rust! You must promise to start for home with me by half-past four, so there'll be no mistake about the hoeing."

"Oh, the dominie isn't such a hard master that you need be so very particular," Rust carelessly replied.

"He isn't a hard master at all," said Alfred. "But

he has his ideas of things ; and I dread to displease him. I'd rather never go a-fishing than see him come home again and look at that corn unhoed, and then look at me, and say, 'Your conduct, Alfred, is very discouraging, very discouraging!' as he did a week ago."

"That wasn't much to say!" And Rust laughed again.

"It would have been very little for some men, but it was a good deal for him. I don't think he would ever break out and scold, but if I should do anything very bad, after what he has done for me, he would just turn me off—and serve me right!" said Alfred.

"That's so!" Rust replied, more seriously. "He has done well by you, that's a fact!"

"Where would I be now, if it hadn't been for him?" Alfred went on. "And what would become of me, if he should send me away? I should have to just give up school, and the easy time I have, and put my back right down to hard work. I think of that sometimes, when I get a little discontented, and it's good for me."

"It would be good for lots of us boys to think of such things rather more than we do," said Rust. "We'll hoe that corn, any way. But how are we to know when it's half-past four o'clock? See here, Alf! where's that watch?"

"Hanging up in his room," said Alfred.

"Why not take that?"

“Take the dominie’s watch! You’re crazy, Rust!”

Alfred looked horrified at the mere idea of such a thing.

It was a valuable gold watch, which had been presented to the minister by his friends in the parish; and he prized it not only for its own sake, but for theirs.

“You had it at noon,” Rust urged.

“Yes; it was left at the jeweller’s to be cleaned; and the dominie wanted me to get it, so that he could have it to-morrow. He was gone off for the day when I brought it home, so I hung it up in the case over his mantelpiece.”

“Let’s see!” said Rust.

Alfred, who was now dressed for the fishing, reluctantly consented, and they entered the minister’s study.

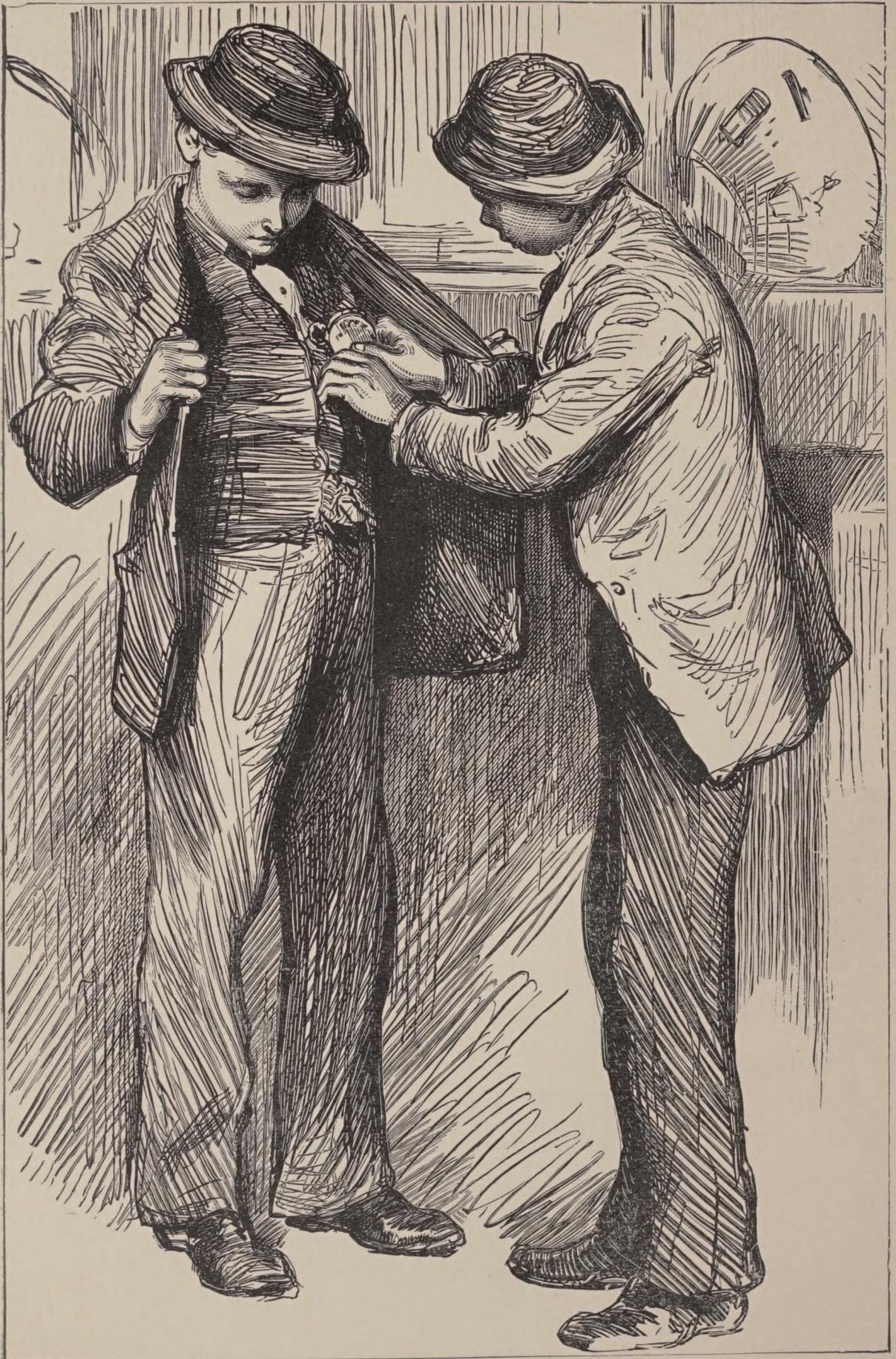
“Splendid, ain’t it?” said Rust, taking the watch out of its case and looking at it. “And it’s just the thing for us this afternoon. What are you afraid of?”

“Nothing — only — if anything should happen to it!” said Alfred.

“How can anything happen to it?” Rust persisted. “It’s just as safe in your pocket as it is in the dominie’s. Why not?”

“He carries it in his waistband pocket; I haven’t any,” said Alfred.

“But you’ve a watch-pocket in your vest there!” cried Rust, triumphantly. “That’s superb!”



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He placed the timepiece in Rust's watch-pocket, and dropped the chain — which had a dangling seal in place of a hook — in the vest-pocket below it.

“That's the way I brought it home from the jeweller's,” said Alfred. “He put it there himself.”

“Of course ; it's as safe there as it could be anywhere,” Rust rattled on. “Now you're a made man, Alf Everett ! ‘What's the time of day ?’ I says. And you hauls out your turnip, — ‘Four o'clock, a little past ; almost time to be starting for home,’ you say, — large as life, and solemn as the old dominie himself. I'll carry it if you're afraid to.”

“No ; I'll carry it, if anybody does.”

And after a little more opposition, Alfred allowed himself to be persuaded.

“We're going over to the pond ; we'll be back at five o'clock,” he called to the housekeeper, as they passed out through the shed, crossed the garden, and disappeared over the wall beyond.

The pond, or rather lake, was a mile and a half away. It was nearly two o'clock when the boys reached it.

“We have been just twenty-three minutes and a half coming,” said Alfred, consulting the watch, and returning it with an air of importance to his pocket.

“Then, if we begin to wind up at half-past four,” said Rust, “we shall have plenty of time to get back and begin the hoeing at five. Now don't you see how nice it is to have a watch ?”

“Of course, it's nice. I haven't disputed that,”

said Alfred. "Now let's go to fishing as soon as we can, for two hours and a half is little time enough."

The lake lay in a hollow of the wooded hills, with a central depth said to extend as far beneath its surface as the highest peak rose above. It would have been a beautifully clear sheet of water, had the bottom been of clear sand or gravel. But decaying leaves and fallen trunks around the shores had for ages contributed to form a muddy sediment, into which a fishing-pole could in some places be thrust down half its length.

The primeval forest still rose, mossy and shaggy and damp, from the western side. This was the best place for fishing, and there from the broad backs of two logs extending out into the water, the boys began their sport.

Yellow perch were the principal fish to be caught; and they began to bite at Rust's hook almost as soon as he threw it in. But Alfred had no luck.

"Get out farther on your log," cried Rust. "You can. Go clear to the end of it."

Alfred followed this advice, but still he got no bites. Perch after perch came flapping and plashing out of the water, at the end of Rust's line, while not one relieved the monotony of Alfred's patient waiting.

But all at once he had a bite. He pulled; the fish pulled; the pole bent; the tense line cut the water.

Rust heard his outcry, and saw the struggle.

"Gently! gently!" he shouted. "Don't break

your pole! It's a bass — and a whopper! There he goes! Now don't lose him!"

It was the biggest fish Alfred had ever hoisted. He was greatly excited. Once he had him completely out of the water, when the yielding of the pole let him splash back again.

The hook and line still held, and he should have waited to tire the fish out; but in his agitation he gave another sharp jerk. The pole bent nearly double. The line slipped from the end, and dropped into the water. Away went the fish.

Alfred gave a cry of dismay, but a moment later he saw the line, dragged by the bass, running over a sunken limb a little below the surface. By throwing himself down upon the log and thrusting in his hand, he might reach it. There was no time to think of anything else.

Down he went on his knees, and in went his hand, when suddenly, like a streak of yellow light, something shot out of his bosom, and with a splash disappeared in the lake.

"What was that?" said Rust.

Alfred, as he stooped, rested one hand on the log. He now drew the other up quickly out of the water, and clapped it to his breast.

"The watch!" he gasped out in a faint voice, raising himself on his knees. "Oh, the watch!"

In his bent position it had slipped out of his pocket, and watch and chain and seal had gone to the bottom.

The fish was forgotten in an instant. Rust left his log, and came around to his friend's assistance.

Again and again Alfred felt his pockets and then looked down into the water, straining his eyes to catch a golden glimmer below; but the sunshine on the rippling surface prevented his seeing anything so far down. The water, where the watch made its plunge, was about six feet deep.

"It was all your fault!" said Alfred, in wild despair. "You made me bring it, when I told you I didn't want to!"

"But I never thought you were going to stand on your head and spill things out of your pockets that way!" Rust replied. "We can get it again, so don't be a baby about it."

"The watch his friends gave him," said Alfred. "I'd rather have fallen in myself and got drowned. It has gone down in the mud twenty feet deep."

While he ran on in this way, Rust put his face close to the water, shaded his eyes, and searched the dark depths. In a little while he declared that he could "see something."

Then Alfred looked again. By this time the surface had become still.

"I see it! I see it!" he exclaimed. "But how can we get it?"

"I am going to dive for it," said Rust. "I got you into the scrape, and I am going to help you out."

Rust was a better swimmer than Alfred, but diving was not his strong point.

"I don't believe you can," said Alfred, doubtfully. "Wait! Who is that coming through the woods?"

"Lott Hammond and Dick Thorne," said Rust.

"Oh, good!" said Alfred. "Lott is the best diver in town. I've seen him throw a pebble into the mill-pond where it is fifteen feet deep, and go down and get it."

Rust laughed gleefully.

"We are in luck! Lott can get it if he will try; but he's a queer fellow. Let me speak to him."

Lott was, in fact, one of the most athletic, lazy, adroit, sagacious, foolish young chaps in the whole county. There seemed to be nothing in the range of a rural youth's powers which he did not know or could not do, but he had a strange aversion to anything useful; so at twenty years of age, instead of being one of the rising young men of the village, Lott remained a loafer.

Rust explained to him the situation, and asked him to dive for the watch.

"The dominie's?" said Lott, with a chuckle. "That's a good joke!"

Alfred did not think it a good joke at all, but his need of Lott's assistance kept him from saying so.

Lott came out on the log, looked down in the water, and saw the faint glimmer of gold at the bottom.

"Easy enough to get that," he said.

"Will you?" Alfred asked, with hopeful entreaty.

"I've been walking; I'm too warm to go into the water," replied Lott.

"You can come right out again; it won't hurt you," said Rust. "Alf and I will pay you."

"We'll give you a dollar if you'll get it!" cried Alfred, eagerly.

But Lott shook his head. Although he had probably not had a dollar in his pocket for six months, he could not be induced to risk his health by taking a single plunge. The more the boys pleaded the more stubborn he became, and finally he walked off with his friend, laughing at the funny thing that had happened to the dominie's watch.

"He was never careful of his health before," said Alfred, bitterly. "If it had been a sixpence, and he could have had it to get a glass of beer with, he'd have gone in soon enough."

"Now I am going in myself," said Rust, beginning to undress. "I'm sorry we said anything to him, for he and Dick will tell of it all over town."

He got his eye on the glimmer of light at the bottom, and dived from the log. Alfred waited with the utmost anxiety to see him come up again. In a few seconds Rust returned to the surface with something grasped in his right hand.

It was nothing but mud.

Once more Alfred was in despair. The bottom had been so stirred up that it would take a long time for the water to settle and become clear. Perhaps even then the watch would be buried from sight.

"I tried to keep my eyes open," said Rust, "but

as soon as I struck the water I couldn't see a thing. I'm sure I felt it, and I thought I had it."

"We can't get it now, any way," said Alfred. "See how muddy the water is."

"That don't make any difference," Rust replied. "If I can't see, I can feel. I'm going to dive again, and keep diving till I get it."

Again and again he plunged, and brought up nothing but mud and rotten sticks.

At length this became so common a thing with him that he had ceased to expect anything else. He would come to the surface and let the mud slip out of his fingers almost before he got his dripping eyes open.

"It's no use," said Alfred. "The watch is down in the mud now where nobody can find it. Don't try any more."

"What sort of a story shall we tell the dominie?" said Rust, now quite discouraged, as he sat on the log to rest.

"I don't know. I'd rather die than meet him!" said poor Alfred, ruefully.

"Tell him you carried home the watch from the village, and as he was gone, you were afraid to leave it in the house, so you kept it in your pocket, just where the jeweller put it."

"No, no, I can't lie to him!" said Alfred. "I shall have to tell him the truth if I tell him anything. Oh, Rust, you've got me into an awful scrape!"

"Well, don't I know it? and ain't I trying to get

you out of it? I've been diving for you, and now I'm inventing lies for you, — doing the very best I can, ain't I?"

"Lying won't help it, any way," said Alfred.

"Well, then, I'll dive again."

And once more — this time with a fully recovered breath — Rust made a journey to the bottom.

He came to the surface, opened his fingers to let the mud out, and —

"Oh, the watch!" shrieked Alfred.

Something yellow and bright as gold had, in fact, slipped out with the mud and gone again to the bottom.

It happened curiously enough. When Rust came up from his first plunge, and thought he had the watch, he did not have it. So now, when he came up from his last, and thought he did not have it, he had it, and it was lost again before he could wink the water out of his eyes.

"Are you sure you saw it?" he asked Alfred.

"Oh, I know it!" Alfred exclaimed. "Why didn't you hold on to it?"

Rust was hugely chagrined. He was for diving again immediately, but Alfred said:

"No; it is out of the mud now, and you might bury it again. Wait till the water settles."

Rust was obliged to admit that this was good advice, and after arguing some time against it, he put on his clothes.

But with so much at stake, it was distressing to

wait there for the water slowly to become clear once more. Quite useless, too, it seemed, for after all their anxious watching, even when the lake had grown tranquil and clear, they strained their eyes in vain looking down into the dim depths.

No watch was to be seen.

Still the boys remained on the log, unwilling to give up and go away.

"What time do you suppose it is?" Rust inquired.

"I don't know," muttered Alfred, despairingly. "We brought the watch; now what good does it do us?"

"Of course it doesn't do us any good, in the mud down there!" said Rust.

"That garden won't get hoed!" again Alfred muttered. "It must be five o'clock already."

"Who cares for the garden, if we can only get the watch!" said Rust, taking another long look down into the water.

"Get it!" Alfred exclaimed, with bitter irony. "The shadow of those trees will be here in a few minutes; that will darken the water so we can't see anything."

Slowly the cool shade of the mossy woods was creeping towards them. The deeper shades of night would soon be coming on. It was a dismal prospect to the two boys. Suddenly Rust exclaimed:

"I've an idea!"

"What is it?" Alfred asked, with a faint renewal of hope.

“Uncle Soper’s scoop-net! It has got a handle ten feet long. We can reach down with it, and scoop up that watch without half trying.”

“Yes!” cried Alfred, catching eagerly at the idea. “Why didn’t we think of the scoop-net? We can dip up any quantity of mud, and sift and wash it, till we find the watch.”

“Let’s go for it!” said Rust, already on his feet.

“But it won’t do for us both to go away,” Alfred objected.

“Why not?”

“I’m afraid of Lott Hammond. He wouldn’t dive and get the watch for us; and I know the reason. After we give it up, he means to come back and get it for himself.”

“I don’t believe that,” said Rust. “But if you’re afraid, I’ll stay, while you go for the net.”

“I won’t be gone long!” cried Alfred; and off he ran in high hope.

He was, however, gone much longer than he expected. When he reached Uncle Soper’s house, the old man was absent, and the women folks knew nothing about the net.

Then Alfred remembered that Sam Crookes had one. But he lived a mile away. The boy was in great perplexity for a minute; then off he started to find Sam Crookes.

Sam was at home. But the net was in much the same condition as everything else about him. He was a shiftless fellow; and it was provoking to see

him hitch up his trousers, turn his quid, and scratch his rough red head, before he answered the boy's question.

"That 'air net," said he at last. "Lemme see! Either the net part got tore out, or the hoop got lost, or the handle broke — or all three — or else I lent it to somebody. Oh, I remember! it's tucked up over the woodshed there now; but 'tain't good for nothing."

After a good deal of delay, which proved a severe trial to the boy's patience, Sam brought down the ruins of the ancient net; for only ruins were left of it, and they were past repair.

"Uncle Soper has got a first-rate net; why don't you borrow his'n?" said Sam.

Alfred told how he had tried to, and failed.

"Wa'n't to home? Of course, he wa'n't to home, now I think on't," said Sam. "Uncle Soper's down to the mill; or he was, half an hour ago."

Then Alfred started off on a chase after Uncle Soper. At last he tracked him to a grocery in the village.

"My net?" said the old man, who was *uncle* to everybody. "Lott Hammond has got it; I lent it to him a month ago."

Alfred was sorry to hear that. He had already lost so much time that he could not well afford to lose more by hunting up Lott. He explained the situation to the old man, who readily offered to go with him.

"I guess we can find the net, and get the watch

with it," said Uncle Soper. "I'd heard about your losing it."

How kind he seemed! How the poor boy's hopes clung to him, as they walked along!

But the old man was rheumatic, and it seemed to the impatient Alfred that he trudged at a snail's pace. Evening was approaching. The shadows of the forest must have stretched far out over the lake by that time; and the boy was afraid Rust would get tired of waiting for him, and go away.

As he walked with the old man through the village, he had to run the gauntlet of questions from a score of people. Boys ran after him; men stopped and turned; and shopkeepers stood in their doors to hear what he had to say on the exciting topic. For Lott Hammond and Dick Thorne had reported the news of his misfortune, and it had spread over half the town by this time.

"Did ye find the watch?" "How did ye lose it?" "Why didn't ye dive for it?" "Where's the domine?" "Was it his best watch — the one the parish gave him?"

Heated with running, still more flushed with excitement, anxious, angry, ashamed, Alfred had to face these people and answer their terrible inquiries. He was glad enough when he was once more out of the village, with nobody to talk to him but the slow-jogging old man.

Lott Hammond was not at home. But the net was found, to Alfred's great joy. And now, feeling certain

that the watch could be recovered before dark, he once more started for the lake, with the old man at his side.

This long delay, however, proved the cause of disappointment and trouble. When Alfred, running on ahead, reached the woods and the log where he had left Rust keeping guard, Rust was not there. Alf shouted his name, but no Rust replied.

"He has gone off!" Alfred exclaimed, resentfully.

"Gone to supper, may be," said the old man, coming up. "Can't blame him. Show me the spot where ye lost the watch, and I'm bound to — What's this?"

Something flapped on the moss at the old man's feet. It was a fish.

"A bass! and about the biggest one I ever see took out of this pond!" said Uncle Soper. "Who ketched him?"

"It must be the one I hooked," replied Alfred. "Yes, there's the line he dragged off from my pole, with the hook still in his mouth. But how did he ever get out of the water?"

It was a puzzling mystery, but a trifle, compared with the more important business in hand.

"We'll ketch a goldfish for ye that'll beat that!" chuckled the old man.

Alfred pointed out the spot where the watch had gone down. Still nothing of it was to be seen. The old man put down the scoop carefully, and brought it up half filled with mud and sticks.

"No watch!" Alfred was the first to exclaim, as they sifted out the mud and threw out the sticks on the other side of the log.

"Try again," said Uncle Soper, still confident.

And having washed the net, he made another dip. Still no watch.

A third and a fourth time the net was thrust down, moved along the bottom, and hauled up with its unsatisfactory contents.

"Yer big fish must have swallowed yer watch," at last the old man suggested. "I've heard of such things."

"That can't be," said Alfred; "for he was hooked when I lost it."

"Wal, if he didn't, then it's my opinion some other fish has got it; for I'll bet a dollar there ain't no watch anywheres in the mud I've been sarchin' with the net." And the old man added, turning to walk back on the log: "I'm agoin' to cut him open, any way."

Alfred had not much hope of seeing the watch produced by this process, and he was not disappointed. The bass was tried for the theft, and found not guilty.

Then, after a few more attempts with the net, Uncle Soper exclaimed:

"No use! *You* may keep on tryin' if you want tew, but *I've* got through, and I'm agoin' hum."

Alfred made a few feeble and hopeless efforts to recover the lost treasure; but it was now growing

dark, and at length, in utter despair of heart, he consented to go with the old man.

"What'll ye dew with the fish?" Uncle Soper inquired.

"I don't care for any fish," said the poor boy, with a sob. "You may have him, if you want him."

"Of course I want him, if you don't."

And, cutting a hooked stick, the old man strung the bass upon it, carrying him away in triumph. He, for one, was pretty well satisfied with the result of the adventure. "Though 'tis a mighty pity 'bout that watch!" he said, sympathizingly, as he trudged back from the lake with the broken-hearted boy.

Alfred carried the net, and soon he parted company with Uncle Soper, declaring that he would return in the morning and find the watch, if he had to scoop out half the mud in the pond.

"Wal, if ye dew that, and ketch and cut open all the big fish, ye may find it," replied the old man; "but it's a big job you've got afore ye."

Alfred hastened to find Rust, and learned that he had brought home his string of perch an hour before, but had gone off again.

Alfred walked miserably on to the dominie's house, but he did not have the courage to go in. He stood by the door, sick at heart and irresolute.

"What shall I do?" he said, desperately, to himself. "How can I stay and face *him*?"

While he was reflecting, or trying to reflect, the sound of wheels startled him. A wagon was coming

up the road. It appeared in the deepening dusk, and turned up at the gate.

"Whoa!" said a voice which struck terror to the boy's soul.

The dominie had come home.

Alfred's first impulse was to run away; but he could not; somehow he could do only what was always expected of him at such times. He went and opened the gate.

The dominie spoke to him kindly as he drove through, dismounted at the door, and left the boy to take care of the horse.

Alfred was a long time about that trifling task, and he might have remained half the night in the barn, or tucked somewhere else out of sight, if the housekeeper had not called him. "Mr. Whately wants you to come in!" she cried out from the door.

"He has heard," thought Alfred. "Now he is going to call me to an account. I wish I was dead!" But he went in.

To his surprise, the dominie again spoke to him kindly, asked him why he had not already eaten his supper, and desired him to sit down and eat with him.

"I hope you haven't been so hard at work in the garden that you've forgotten your appetite," said Mr. Whately, drawing up his chair to the well-lighted, cheerful table. "I never want you to work hard, you know that, Alfred."

He paused and looked at the boy, who stood before him, haggard and trembling.

"Why, what's the matter, Alfred?"

"I — haven't — worked — in the garden," Alfred confessed, chokingly.

"You've left those weeds another week?" said the dominie, sternly. "I trust you have some good reason for it, Alfred."

"No, sir," said Alfred, struggling to keep up. "I've no reason, — only — a bad one. Oh, sir!"

And out came the whole story, amid bursting sobs and tears.

The old gentleman, who had begun his supper, dropped his knife with a look of consternation.

"You've lost my watch, and can't find it!" he exclaimed, with more anger than the boy had ever seen him betray before. "What business had you with my watch?"

"I had no business with it," Alfred humbly admitted. "I ought not to have taken it. I've tried my best to find it, and I'm going to try again. I hope I can get it."

"No, you don't hope anything of the sort," said the dominie. "I see by your looks that you've no idea it can be found. The watch my friends gave me! Oh, Alfred, what shall I —"

He checked himself. His features were contracted with pain, and there was a long inward struggle, more terrible than words to poor Alfred.

"You will send me away, of course," said the boy. "I deserve it. I have repaid your kindness in a bad, ungrateful way; but say you forgive me, and I will

go off somewhere and work till I have paid for that watch, or bought a new one, if it takes all my life!"

The struggle in the good man's breast was over by this time.

"Alfred," he said, with kindly emotion, "come here."

But at that moment Rust Aiken burst into the room.

"Alf, come out," he whispered, drawing back at sight of the minister. "It's all right!"

"What's all right?" Alfred wonderingly inquired.

"The watch!" said Rust, with joyfully gleaming eyes.

"The watch," Alfred exclaimed, springing wildly towards him.

"Yes. I've been hunting everywhere for you. I've been here once before."

"Have you indeed got my watch?" Mr. Whately demanded, making Rust come into the room.

"Yes, sir, — no, sir, — I mean," Rust stammered in his excitement. "I'll tell you about it."

"Tell me, then, and be brief," said the dominie.

"Alf left me to stand guard while he went for the net," began Rust, "and I thought he never would come back; but," turning to Alfred, "if you'll believe it, the shadow of the trees we were afraid of had just the opposite effect from what we expected. The glimmer was gone from the surface; the little floating particles down in the water no longer had the sun to light them up, and I could see —"

"The watch!" broke in Alfred, trembling now in a perfect ague-fit of joy.

"Not a bit of it," said Rust, "only just one little link of the chain, and that was partly hidden by atoms of mud that had settled on it."

"And you dived for it?"

"No, sir; I'd had fun enough diving."

"Then how did you get it?"

"I took your fish-pole, bound a hook fast to the end of it with a piece of my line, and —"

"And hooked up the watch!" said Alfred.

"Not exactly," said Rust. "It wasn't so easy a thing as you imagine. You see, sir," — Rust addressed himself to the minister, who was listening with deep interest, — "after I got the pole into the water, with the hook on it, I couldn't see it, for it was dark-colored, and didn't shine like the gold chain."

"You couldn't tell when the hook approached the link?" said Mr. Whately.

"No, sir; and of course there was danger of stirring up the mud while I was reaching for it. So what did I do but wrap my handkerchief around the end of the pole close to the hook. I could see that. Then I put the hook down — down — and touched something.

"The water was muddied in a moment," Rust went on. "I couldn't see any more gold, but I had hooked something. And oh, didn't I lift carefully? and wasn't my heart in my throat? and didn't I tremble for fear the hook would pull out, or the thing

I had caught would somehow get off again? But at last I could see it, watch-chain, seal, and all, hanging by a single link! The next minute I had it in my hands, and — didn't you hear me shout? You might have heard me a mile!"

"And where is the watch now?" Mr. Whately asked.

"When I took it out and opened it, — the hunter's case, you understand," — said Rust, "it was going; but it must have been about two hours slow, so I knew some water had got into the works. That, of course, was to be attended to the first thing. I carried my fish home, hoping I should meet Alf on the way, and then went to the jeweller's as fast as I could with the watch. There it is now, and he says it won't be hurt at all."

"You have done well, Rust," said the minister; "you have fully atoned for the share you had in causing the accident."

"And I hope you forgive Alfred, too," said Rust. "It was really my fault that he took the watch to the lake."

"I had already forgiven him in my heart," said the old gentleman, "before you came in and said the watch was found. When I saw how truly humble and penitent he was, I must have forgiven him, even if the loss had been ten times as great."

"Oh, Mr. Whately!" Alfred sobbed out, as he hid his face on the kind old man's shoulder.

"I see now why you didn't hoe the garden," Mr.

Whately continued, putting his arm affectionately around Alfred. "And I forgive that, too. Yes, and I am thankful that you did not try to shirk the responsibility for your conduct by any falsehood or evasion."

Rust looked down. The dominie proceeded, still caressing Alfred with his hand.

"And now let this be a lesson to you both,—not to postpone your duties for self-gratification, but to attend cheerfully and faithfully to your duties first; and don't take liberties with other people's property. *Borrowing* in that reckless way is often a sure and straight road to ruin. Even this little thing might have proved your ruin, Alfred. Let us be thankful it is no worse."

"I am thankful," said Alfred, looking up. "I believe I was never so happy in my life."

"There's another thing for you to be proud of," said Rust. "You've got the biggest bass over there at the lake that was ever caught out of it. He was so heavy I wouldn't lug him away."

"I gave him to Uncle Soper," said Alfred. "But how did you get him?"

"Why, you see," said Rust, "when I grabbed the watch, I just threw the pole off, and the end went down into the water. Then, after I had been crazy over my luck for a minute or two, I thought of my handkerchief; but when I took up the pole, I found the hook in the end had caught something down by the tops of the fallen tree. It was your line; and

when I got hold of that, I found your big fish at the other end of it."

"If that wasn't luck!" exclaimed Alfred. "Well, I'm glad Uncle Soper has got pay for his trouble; but, as he said, our best fish is the goldfish. Oh, to think how we scooped up mud there to find it, and you had it all the time!"

"Well, boys," said Mr. Whately, smiling benignly, "you have had rather a lucky day, after all; and I think neither of you will ever forget your adventure with the dominie's watch."

BERT'S THANKSGIVING.

AT noon, on a dreary November day, a lonesome little fellow, looking very red about the ears and very blue about the mouth, stood, kicking his heels, at the door of a cheap eating-house in Boston, and offering a solitary copy of a morning paper for sale to the people passing.

But there were really not many people passing, for it was Thanksgiving day, and the shops were shut, and everybody who had a home to go to, and a dinner to eat, seemed to have gone home to eat that dinner, while Bert Hampton, the newsboy, stood trying in vain to sell the last "Extry" left on his hands by the dull business of the morning.

An old man, with a face that looked pinched, and who was dressed in a seedy black coat and a much-battered stovepipe hat, stopped at the same doorway, and with one hand on the latch, appeared to hesitate between hunger and a sense of poverty before going in.

It was possible, however, that he was considering whether he could afford himself the indulgence of a morning paper (seeing it was Thanksgiving day); so, at least, Bert thought, and accosted him accordingly.

“Buy a paper, sir? All about the fire in East Boston, and arrest of safe-burglars in Springfield. Only two cents.”

The little old man looked at the boy with keen gray eyes which seemed to light up the pinched and skinny face, and answered in a shrill voice that whistled through white front teeth:

“You ought to come down in your price this time of day. You can’t expect to sell a morning paper at twelve o’clock for full price.”

“Well, give me a cent, then,” said Bert. “That’s less’n cost; but never mind; I’m bound to sell out, anyhow.”

“You look cold,” said the old man.

“Cold!” replied Bert; “I’m froze. And I want my dinner. And I’m going to have a big dinner, too, seeing it’s Thanksgiving day.”

“Ah! lucky for you, my boy!” said the old man. “You’ve a home to go to, and friends too, I nope?”

“No, *sir*; nary home, and nary friend, — only my mother,” — Bert hesitated, and grew serious; then suddenly changed his tone, — “and Hop Houghton. I told him to meet me here, and we’d have a first-rate Thanksgiving dinner together; for it’s no fun

to be eatin' alone Thanksgiving day! It sets a feller thinking of everything, if he ever had a home and then hain't got a home any more."

"It's more lonesome not to eat at all," said the old man, his gray eyes twinkling. "And what can a boy like you have to think of? Here, I guess I can find one cent for you — though there's nothing in the paper, I know."

The old man spoke with some feeling, his fingers trembled, and somehow he dropped two cents instead of one into Bert's hand.

"Here! You've made a mistake!" cried Bert. "A bargain's a bargain. You've given me a cent too much."

"No, I didn't. I never give anybody a cent too much."

"But, see here!" And Bert showed the two cents, offering to return one.

"No matter," said the old man; "it will be so much less for *my* dinner, that's all."

Bert had instinctively pocketed the pennies, when, on a moment's reflection, his sympathies were excited.

"Poor old man!" he thought; "he's seen better days, I guess. Perhaps he's no home. A boy like me can stand it, but I guess it must be hard for *him*. He *meant* to give me the odd cent all the while; and I don't believe he has had a decent dinner for many a day."

All this, which I have been obliged to write out

slowly in words, went through Bert's mind like a flash. He was a generous little fellow, and any kindness shown him, no matter how trifling, made his heart overflow.

"Look here," he cried, "where are *you* going to get your dinner to-day?"

"I can get a bite here as well as anywhere. It don't matter much to me," replied the old man.

"Dine with *me*," said Bert, laughing. "I'd like to have you."

"I'm afraid I couldn't afford to dine as you are going to," said the man, with a smile, his eyes twinkling again, and his white front teeth shining.

"I'll pay for your dinner!" Bert exclaimed. "Come! We don't have a Thanksgiving but once a year; and a feller wants a good time then."

"But you are waiting for another boy."

"Oh, Hop Houghton! He won't come now, it's so late. He's gone to a place down in North Street, I guess, — a place I don't like, there's so much tobacco smoked and so much beer drank there." Bert cast a final glance up the street. "No, he won't come now. So much the worse for him! He likes the men down there; I don't."

"Ah!" said the man, taking off his hat, and giving it a brush with his elbow, as they entered the restaurant, — as if trying to appear as respectable as he could in the eyes of a newsboy of such fastidious tastes.

To make him feel quite comfortable in his mind on that point, Bert hastened to say :

“ I mean rowdies, and such. Poor people, if they behave themselves, are just as respectable to me as rich folks. I ain't the least mite aristocratic.”

“ Ah, indeed !” And the old man smiled again, and seemed to look relieved. “ I'm very glad to hear it.”

He placed his hat on the floor, and took a seat opposite Bert at a little table, which they had all to themselves.

Bert offered him the bill of fare.

“ No, I must ask you to choose for me ; but nothing very extravagant, you know. I'm used to plain fare.”

“ So am I. But I'm going to have a good dinner for once in my life, and so shall you !” cried Bert, generously. “ What do you say to chicken-soup, and then wind up with a thumping big piece of squash pie ? How's that for a Thanksgiving dinner ? ”

“ Sumptuous !” said the old man, appearing to glow with the warmth of the room and the prospect of a good dinner. “ But won't it cost you too much ? ”

“ Too much ? No, *sir* !” laughed Bert. “ Chicken-soup, fifteen cents ; pie — they give tremendous pieces here ; thick, I tell you ! — ten cents. That's twenty-five cents ; half a dollar for two. Of course, I don't do this way every day in the year. But

mother's glad to have me, once in a while. Here, waiter!" And Bert gave his princely order as if it were no very great thing for a liberal young fellow like him, after all.

"Where is your mother? Why don't you dine with her?" the little man asked.

Bert's face grew sober in a moment.

"That's the question: why don't I? I'll tell you why I don't. I've got the best mother in the world. What I'm trying to do is to make a home for her, so we can live together, and eat our Thanksgiving dinners together some time. Some boys want one thing, some another. There's one goes in for good times; another's in such a hurry to get rich he don't care much how he does it; but what I want most of anything is to be with my mother and my two sisters again, and I ain't ashamed to say so."

Bert's eyes grew very tender, and he went on, while his companion across the table watched him with a very gentle, searching look.

"I haven't been with her now for two years; hardly at all since father died. When his business was settled up, — he kept a little grocery store on Hanover Street, — it was found he hadn't left us anything. We had lived pretty well up to that time, and I and my two sisters had been to school; but then mother had to do something, and her friends got her places to go out nursing, and she's a nurse now. Everybody likes her, and she has enough to do. We couldn't be with her, of course. She got us boarded

at a good place, but I saw how hard it was going to be for her to support us, so I said, 'I'm a boy; *I* can do something for *myself*. You just pay their board, and keep 'em to school, and I'll go to work, and maybe help you a little, besides taking care of myself.' "

"What could *you* do?" said the little old man.

"That's it. I was only 'leven years old, and what could I? What I should have liked would have been some nice place, where I could do light work, and stand a chance of learning a good business. But beggars mustn't be choosers. I couldn't find such a place; and I wasn't going to be loafing about the streets, so I went to selling newspapers. I've sold newspapers ever since, and I shall be twelve years old next month."

"You like it?" said the old man.

"I like to get my own living," replied Bert, proudly. "But what I want is to learn some trade, or regular business, and settle down, and make a home for — But there's no use talking about that. Make the best of things, that's my motto. Don't this soup smell good? And don't it taste good, too? They haven't put so much chicken in yours as they have in mine. If you don't mind my having tasted it, we'll change."

The old man declined this liberal offer, took Bert's advice to help himself freely to bread, which "didn't cost anything," and ate his soup with prodigious relish, as it seemed to Bert, who grew more and

more hospitable and patronizing as the repast proceeded.

“Come now, won't you have something between the soup and the pie? Don't be afraid: I'll pay for it. Thanksgiving don't come but once a year. You won't? A cup of tea, then, to go with your pie?”

“I think I *will* have a cup of tea; you are so kind,” said the old man.

“All right! Here, waiter! Two pieces of your fattest and biggest squash pie; and a cup of tea, strong, for this gentleman.”

“I've told you about myself,” added Bert; “suppose, now, *you* tell *me* something.”

“About myself?”

“Yes. I think that would go pretty well with the pie.”

But the man shook his head. “I could go back and tell about my plans and hopes when I was a lad of your age; but it would be too much like your own story over again. Life isn't what we think it will be when we are young. You'll find that out soon enough. I am all alone in the world now, and I am sixty-seven years old.”

“Have some cheese with your pie, won't you? It must be so lonely at your age. What do you do for a living?”

“I have a little place in Devonshire Street. My name is Crooker. You'll find me up two flights of stairs, back room, at the right. Come and see me, and I'll tell you all about my business, and perhaps

help you to such a place as you want, for I know several business-men. Now don't fail."

And Mr. Crooker wrote his address with a little stub of a pencil on a corner of the newspaper which had led to their acquaintance, tore it off carefully, and gave it to Bert.

Thereupon the latter took a card from his pocket, — not a very clean one, I must say (I am speaking of the card, though the remark will apply equally well to the pocket), — and handed it across the table to his new friend.

"*Herbert Hampton, Dealer in Newspapers,*" the old man read, with his sharp gray eyes, which glanced up funnily at Bert, seeming to say, "Isn't this rather aristocratic for a twelve-year-old newsboy?"

Bert blushed, and explained. "Got up for me by a printer's boy I know. I'd done some favors for him, and so he made me a few cards. Handy to have sometimes, you know."

"Well, Herbert," said the little old man, "I'm glad to have made your acquaintance. The pie was excellent; — not any more, thank you; — and I hope you'll come and see me. You'll find me in very humble quarters; but you are not aristocratic, you say. Now, won't you let me pay for my dinner? I believe I have money enough. Let me see."

Bert would not hear of such a thing, but walked up to the desk and settled the bill, with the air of a person who did not regard a trifling expense.

When he looked round again, the little old man was gone.

“Never mind, I’ll go and see him the first chance I have,” said Bert, as he looked at the pencilled strip of newspaper margin again before putting it into his pocket.

He then went round to his miserable quarters, in the top of a cheap lodging-house, where he made himself ready, by means of soap and water and a broken comb, to walk five miles into the suburbs, and get a sight, if only for five minutes, of his mother.

On the following Monday, Bert, having a leisure hour, went to call on his new acquaintance in Devonshire Street.

Having climbed the two flights, he found the door of the back room at the right ajar, and looking in, saw Mr. Crooker at a desk, in the act of receiving a roll of money from a well-dressed visitor.

Bert entered unnoticed and waited till the money was counted and a receipt signed. Then, as the visitor departed, old Mr. Crooker looked round and saw Bert. He offered him a chair, then turned to lock up the money in a safe.

“So this is your place of business?” said Bert, glancing about the plain office-room. “What do you do here?”

“I buy real estate sometimes — sell — rent — and so forth.”

“Who for?” asked Bert.

“For myself,” said little old Mr. Crooker, with a smile.

Bert stared, perfectly aghast at the situation. This, then, was the man whom he had invited to dinner, and treated so patronizingly the preceding Thursday!

“I — I thought — you was a poor man.”

“I *am* a poor man,” said Mr. Crooker, locking his safe. “Money don’t make a man rich. I’ve money enough. I own houses in the city. They give me something to think of, and so keep me alive. I had truer riches once, but I lost them long ago.”

From the way the old man’s voice trembled, and eyes glistened, Bert thought he must have meant by these riches friends he had lost — wife and children, perhaps.

“To think of *me* inviting *you* to dinner!” he cried, abashed and ashamed.

“It *was* odd.” And Mr. Crooker showed his white front teeth with a smile. “But it may turn out to have been a lucky circumstance for both of us. I like you; I believe in you; and I’ve an offer to make to you. I want a trusty, bright boy in this office, — somebody I can bring up to my business, and leave it with, as I get too old to attend to it myself. What do you say?”

What *could* Bert say?

Again that afternoon he walked — or rather ran — to his mother; and after consulting with her, joyfully accepted Mr. Crooker’s offer.

Interviews between his mother and his employer soon followed, resulting in something for which at

first the boy had not dared to hope. The lonely, childless old man, who owned so many houses, wanted a home; and one of these houses he offered to Mrs. Hampton, with ample support for herself and her children, if she would also make it a home for him.

Of course this proposition was accepted; and Bert soon had the satisfaction of seeing the great ambition of his youth accomplished. He had employment which promised to become a profitable business (as indeed it did in a few years, he and the old man proved so useful to each other); and, more than that, he was united once more with his mother and sisters in a happy home, where he has since had a good many Thanksgiving dinners.

CARL ROBSON'S CHRISTMAS.

IT had been fully agreed that Carl Robson was to board with his uncle's family in town, and go to school that winter, when Aunt Robson's consumptive cough suddenly unsettled everything.

"She must go south," said the doctor; and Uncle Robson, who had business connections in Havana, resolved at once that he would accompany her thither.

"But the girls!" said poor Mrs. Robson, whose head was usually set in a whirl by her husband's swift way of deciding things.

"Take them with us."

"And the servants?"

"Take Molly, too. You have been wanting to get rid of the cook; now is your chance."

"And the house — with all our nice things in it?"

"Shut it up, or get somebody to come and sleep in it."

"I shall be worried to death about the house,"

said Aunt Robson, despairingly. "And Carl, who was to board with us! — what shall we do with him? It will be such a disappointment to the poor boy!"

"I have it!" cried Uncle Robson. "Carl shall come to sleep in the house, and take care of the things."

"Alone!"

"Why not? He's a plucky fellow, he won't mind. He can make his own bed, and get his meals at a restaurant. I'll write to him."

The migration of the family was a source of great disappointment to Carl, as his aunt had predicted. But he had much of his uncle's decisive turn of mind, and he consented at once to the new arrangement.

And so it happened that he found himself alone in the great house that winter. As he was a poor boy, with an education and a living to get, he had, fortunately, no very fastidious views of life; and what would have been a hardship to many, he accepted with thankfulness, even with glee.

Carl was then sixteen years old, healthy and hardy, and full of hope. Had he been without an object in life, he would have been lonesome and homesick enough in the large, empty house, where, I fear, but few of his spare hours would have been spent. But, fired with a noble ambition, he found a pleasure in the quiet life he lived there, a satisfaction even in getting his own frugal breakfasts, and baking his own corn-bread and potatoes.

Now Carl had never in his life had anything so much like an adventure as this; but he was destined

to meet with something much more like one before the winter was over.

It was Christmas eve. Carl's mind was filled with thoughts of home and memories of many a bygone Christmas. He could not study, so he threw his book aside and wrote long letters to his widowed mother and sisters, who he knew were thinking of him then. When he got through it was near midnight. He did not feel like sleeping, and, taking his lamp, he went to the top of the house, where he was accustomed to find a pleasant recreation, after poring late over his books, in studying the stars.

He used a table in one of the garret-rooms for his lamp and celestial atlas; and, for the observation of the heavens, a scuttle-window on the landing of the attic stairs.

Stepping upon an old trunk placed for the purpose, he was able to lift the skylight sash on its hinges, lay it back upon the sloping roof, and then stand with his head out under the starry hemisphere. The night was cold, and he wore his coat and cap as if he had been on the street.

When he wished to refer to his maps he stepped into the adjoining room, then once more returned to his hole in the roof, put out his head, and traced the constellations.

How beautiful, how far off, sparkled those starry fires! How silent slept the city roofs beneath! The town seemed not merely asleep, but dead; and only the burning eyes of the stars appeared alive.

There was something fascinating in the sublime solitude of that lonely outlook into infinite, glittering space. Having finished his studies for the night, and partly closed the window, Carl still stood there, remembering that it was Christmas time, and thinking how many childish heads lay sleeping all about him, dreaming perhaps even then of Santa Claus coming over those roofs, loaded with presents for good boys and girls.

Then the east brightened, and Carl waited to see the moon rise. How strange and wasted and ghastly it looked, pushing its pale horn up over the broken line of roofs, then floating away like the ghost of a white canoe into the dark ocean of space.

Carl was watching the moon when he became suddenly aware of an object moving between its light and him, something which he tried at first to think a cat, but which he was speedily convinced could be nothing less than a human head and shoulder.

It was on the roof of the third house, in the same block, creeping slowly over the ridge-pole — a black silhouette sharply defined for an instant against the moon. Then it slipped silently down the slope, and disappeared in shadow.

“It is somebody playing Santa Claus,” was Carl’s first natural thought.

His curiosity was strongly excited, however, and he continued to watch. Several minutes elapsed, during which he saw nothing, heard nothing. The figure, he concluded, must have got down upon an

intervening roof, which was lower by a few feet than the roofs each side of it.

Such proved to have been the case. Carl was still watching, when a head, in a close-fitting cap, was thrust up over the edge of the very roof where he was, and within fifteen feet of his scuttle. A pair of shoulders followed; then, after a brief pause, the entire figure hopped up on the roof, as soft and light as an ape, and sat there in the moonlight.

Now Carl was no coward, as the event proved. And yet it must be owned that the mystery of the thing vividly impressed his imagination, and made the roots of his hair thrill and stir for a few seconds. Then reason came to his aid.

“No Santa Claus that,” he said to himself. “Somebody who has no business on this roof. Most probably a burglar. Looks like a young fellow, a boy. He mustn't see me.”

Carl stepped noiselessly back, closed the door of the room in which his lamp was burning, then cautiously put his eyes up over the edge of the scuttle-frame once more.

The mysterious visitor had left his perch, and was moving along, hitch by hitch, in a half sitting, half reclining posture, towards the skylight.

Again the boy's blood curdled. But his resolution of mind did not waver for a moment. He crouched under the slope of the roof below the scuttle, to wait.

In a little while, without the slightest noise, a face

appeared over the skylight. Carl, from his dark corner, had but a glimpse of it; then a hand reached down to unfasten from its key the iron arm on which the raised sash rested. It was with difficulty that he resisted an impulse to seize hold of the hand and make trouble for the owner.

The iron arm freed, the sash was slowly and noiselessly lifted and laid back upon the roof. Then all was still for a few minutes. Carl could hear his own heart beat. Then a head was put down through the opening. He was tempted to make a dash at that, too, and haul the burglar in with fingers clutching his throat.

In a little while the head was withdrawn; afterwards a pair of feet appeared over the window-frame, then a pair of dangling legs. Another brief, intense silence; then the legs turned, and cautiously over the frame a slender human form let itself down into the house.

Before the legs touched the landing, however, Carl rose up, rushed forward, seized them, and bore them away. There was a brief struggle, during which the intruder tried in vain to maintain his hold upon the frame and get back his legs; then there was a heavy fall; the hands and arms, wrenched from their support while Carl tugged at the legs, had let the head and whole body drop with a crash and thump, partly upon the lid of the old trunk and partly upon the floor.



CARL ROBSON'S CHRISTMAS. — Page 259.

Carl still held the legs in the air, dragging their owner after him towards the room in which his lamp was left. But before he could throw open the door one foot had kicked itself free, and was beginning to play a lively tattoo upon his arms and chest. Had the burglar worn boots he would have made a bad job for his captor. But he had entered the house with nothing but stockings and soft rubber shoes on his feet, and the rubbers were lost off in the beginning of the struggle.

The freed foot was good, however, to aid in the rescue of its mate, and it gave Carl no leisure for opening the door. Suddenly he changed his tactics, let go the foot as it was escaping him, and flung himself headlong upon the prostrate burglar.

What happened afterwards he hardly knew, until he found himself rolling with his antagonist down the attic stairs.

Both were slightly stunned by the tumble. The burglar was the first to recover breath and strength. Flinging Carl off, he scrambled to his feet. Carl was up almost as soon as he; but he was on the lower landing, while the burglar was one or two steps above.

Back up the stairway the latter leaped, seized the first thing he could lay hold of, which happened to be a chair, hurled it down upon Carl, and made a spring at the window.

He was half out, when he once more felt the inexorable grip on his legs. Carl had somehow dodged

the chair; and all the fury of fight roused in him, he reached the upper landing in time to give his antagonist another and more damaging fall.

Hugging the captured legs with all his remaining strength, he went staggering back against the door, which he this time succeeded in throwing open.

When the burglar, whose head had struck the floor as he fell, fully regained his senses, he found himself lying on his back across the threshold of a lighted chamber, and his captor sitting heavily across his body, holding him down by the arms.

Up to this time neither had cried out; not a word had been uttered. Then the burglar spoke:

“I think I may as well give up.”

“I should say it was about time,” Carl answered.

There was a pause, during which both breathed fast and hard after their violent exertions, and looked steadily at each other.

Carl had judged rightly; his burglar was a youth not more than a year older than himself; taller, perhaps, but less stoutly built. Not a bad-looking youth, either, though his hair was tumbled and his face streaked with blood. He had lost both cap and shoes in the struggle, and his shirt-front was torn and bloody.

“Well,” he said at length, “what are you going to do about it?”

In spite of the smears of blood and shortened breath, something in the face and voice seemed familiar to Carl.

"I haven't thought so far as that," he replied. "Tell me what you were getting in at this window for."

"I came in to find a place to sleep," said the rogue, audaciously.

"You were very sly," said Carl.

"Certainly. I didn't want to disturb any one." And more and more it seemed to Carl that there was something in the face and voice with which he had before been acquainted.

"You are very considerate. No doubt you wore no boots for the same reason?"

"Of course," returned the captive. "You don't suppose I wanted to sleep in my boots?"

"Where did you come from?"

"My boarding-house. I gave up my bed to some fellows. I came out on a little voyage of discovery."

"Maybe you can make a judge and jury believe that," said Carl, sarcastically.

"I don't want the chance," replied the intruder, frankly. "Judges and juries are apt to take wrong views of things."

"I believe I know you," said Carl.

"I've no doubt of it; I know you," replied the burglar.

"Yes," added Carl; "you went to school where I do, a little while. What did you leave for?"

"Because I was a fool; I don't know of any other reason."

“Did you know I lived in this house?”

“No; I don’t even remember your name.”

“I remember yours — Wharton, isn’t it? After you left, there were a good many inquiries as to what had become of Wharton. I didn’t expect to meet you again in this way.”

There was genuine pity in Carl’s tones, and Wharton was touched. His lips twitched, but he said nothing.

“Wharton, I am sorry for you. Get up and wash yourself; then we’ll talk this thing over. But promise that you won’t try to get away.”

Wharton promised readily, and Carl let him up. The shoes were found and put on, and Carl, carrying the lamp, sent his captive before him down the stairs to his own room. Here water and towels were used by both, for Carl found to his surprise that he was almost as bloody and quite as tumbled as his antagonist; then, combed and brushed, they sat down and once more looked at each other.

“Ain’t there anybody else in the house?” Wharton inquired.

“Not just now. I live here all alone, take care of my own room, and get my own breakfast and supper.”

“Ain’t you lonesome as the dogs?”

“No; I’m happy as a prince. I have something to do. My studies interest me, and I make the housework a recreation.”

“You are a different fellow from me,” said Wharton, looking gloomily about the room.

"I suppose so. Now, tell me of yourself. I want to know how you ever came to do so strange, so wild a thing."

"I'm naturally wild — the most reckless fellow ever you saw. I'd give anything if I was like you. Do you suppose I am a scamp because I want to be?"

"Not wholly. I don't suppose anybody ever is so. How does it happen? I remember your father coming to school to inquire about you; he seemed a decent sort of man."

"My father is a good man enough, but he has never treated me right. Neither he nor my mother ever had any authority over me when I was little. I didn't want to go to school, and they didn't make me go, as they ought to have done. They tried to hire and coax me to go, and when I wouldn't they made all sorts of excuses for me, until I really thought I was a rare boy — an exceptional character — too delicate either to work or study. That's the way I was brought up. Then when they found out their mistake, it was too late. I was so ignorant for a boy of my age, that I was ashamed to go to the public school and be in the classes where I belonged; so at last I was sent to the private school where you saw me. You know how it was there. I couldn't get along and keep up with even the lowest class. I was too backward in everything. I had never learned to apply myself. I got mad, and left — ran away."

"Ran away from home?"

“Yes — for I had to, then, if I left school. My father has turned right round, lately, and I can’t blame him much,” muttered Wharton. “He is tired of getting me out of scrapes. For, you see, when I wasn’t doing one thing I was doing another, learning deviltry if not arithmetic. He told me if I left that school he would have nothing more to do with me, and he has kept his word. That put me in a hard place, especially as one of my chums had been sent to the house of correction, and two of them to the reform school. That’s why I happen to be out alone to-night. I was hard up. I didn’t dare to take anything in the house where I board, for I should have been the first one suspected. It was so easy getting out of my attic window, I thought I could get into some other in the block and find a pocket-book or some table-silver. I’m telling you the honest truth this time.”

Carl was deeply interested in this story.

“Wharton,” said he, earnestly, “you’re naturally a bright boy, and not a very bad one, I hope; and, see here, Wharton! you ought to do something better for yourself—you are worthy of something better, I am sure.”

The kindly emotion with which he spoke, and which brought tears to his eyes and a tremor to his voice, produced a singular effect on Wharton, who burst out with a strain of profanity, brushed his sleeve across his eyes, and cursed his luck.

“What can I do?” he asked.

“Begin an honest life,” exclaimed Carl. “There’s no safety or satisfaction in anything else. You know that as well as I do.”

“Yes, and a deuced sight better,” Wharton replied, only using a much more profane expression. “But how can I? I can’t earn my living, and my father won’t help me.”

“Your father will help you whenever he sees you in earnest to help yourself. Now don’t you think he will?”

“Well, maybe; but the fact is, he don’t believe in me any more. I’ve promised better fashions too often when he has got me out of scrapes. I don’t blame him.”

So the two talked for an hour or more. At last Carl said:

“Wharton, if I didn’t think you capable of better things, I would just hand you over to the police for your own good. But I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to be your friend, if you’ll let me. I’ll see your parents in the morning, and bring about a reconciliation with them, — I am sure I can, — only convince me first that you are in earnest, so that I can convince them, for I never can make them believe what I don’t believe myself.”

“If you mean that I am to go back to that school, and be at the foot of a class four or five years younger than I am, I simply can’t do it,” exclaimed Wharton. “If I had a private tutor — if you, now, would only

take me in hand, I'd promise — I'd promise anything, I'd do anything."

He spoke with so much feeling that Carl, thrilling with sympathy, grasped his hand.

"I'll do all I can for you. But, remember, you will have the most to do for yourself. I'll see your father — shall I?"

"Yes; but don't tell him how I came into this house."

"Nobody shall know that as long as you let me put faith in you. Now go, and come and see me to-morrow — or rather to-day — at about noon."

And, after exchanging promises and pledges with his strange visitor, Carl let him out of the house by the front door.

The young student was for a long time too much excited to sleep; and, although he could have lain as late as he pleased that Christmas morning, thoughts of young Wharton, in whom he took a deep interest, roused him early. By nine o'clock, his breakfast eaten and his housework done, he was on his way to the elder Wharton's residence.

He was shown into a pleasant sitting-room, where a boy of nine, and two pretty girls of twelve and fourteen, were still making merry over their Christmas presents. The mother sat by, smiling with a sad face. The father, a short, stout man, with a broad, red-whiskered face, presently came in, and looked inquiringly at his visitor.

Carl opened his business at once.

"I have come to speak with you about your son."

Mrs. Wharton gave a start, and an appealing look at her husband. His broad face was visibly agitated as he glanced from Carl to the children.

"Girls," he said, "you may take James out of the room." He closed the door after them, and approached Carl, drawing a long breath of anxiety. "You mean my son Elwood?"

"Yes, sir," replied Carl, though he had never heard the son's first name before; at school he was simply called Wharton. "I have seen him, and talked with him."

"Are you one of his crew?" demanded the father, speaking sternly, with an effort at self-control.

"I go to the school where he went. I had no other acquaintance with him — until — he called on me."

"How did he happen to call on *you*, if you had so little acquaintance with him?"

Carl looked the suspicious father calmly in the face, and answered in words which told, yet concealed the truth.

"He fell in with me — accidentally — and I asked him to my room, where we had a talk. I think that your son is changed. He makes solemn, and I believe sincere, pledges for future good behavior."

"He has made promises enough — too many promises — in the past. He would neither go to school nor learn any kind of business, though I've got him places, and given him the best chance ever

a boy had. Now, how can I believe — how can I trust him?”

“Remember,” sobbed out Mrs. Wharton, standing by his side, bowed, with clasped hands, “he is our own son!”

The emotion the father betrayed, spite of his efforts to conceal it, was not all anger; and Carl was encouraged to follow up the wife’s appeal with a strong petition in the erring son’s behalf.

“There’s just one thing,” suddenly exclaimed the father, walking the room with violent strides, and then standing with clinched, raised hand before Carl. “Will he go back to Professor Brown’s school?”

“I think, if you knew just how he is situated there, you would not ask that.”

“I do know. It’s his own fault. I ask just that. Will he go back?”

“Yes, in a little while, I am sure, he will. But he really needs a little private assistance in his studies first. Let him come to me; I’ll teach him, and report to you faithfully how he is getting on. A month will tell the story. You needn’t even take him home in the meanwhile; but just pay his board where he is — that can’t be much — and give a word of encouragement for me to take back to him.”

“And how much pay do you expect for your trouble?” Mr. Wharton asked — insultingly, Carl thought.

But he excused the suspicion of a father who had never learned to put faith in his son, or his son’s friends, and answered coolly:

“No pay whatever. I am interested in your son, and will gladly do this for him out of pure good-will. If I succeed in bringing him to serious views of life, I shall be more than paid for everything.”

The broad face worked convulsively, and Carl noticed two or three swift tears course down, and hide themselves in the thicket of the red whiskers.

Mrs. Wharton clung to her husband's arm, and pleaded, in broken tones, the boy's cause.

“He was my favorite child,” said Mr. Wharton, with another strong effort at self-control. “There was nothing I wouldn't do for him — nothing I didn't do.” He choked, and went on: “And do you think, this Christmas time, when our other children are around us and happy, do you suppose — ”

But here he quite broke down.

“I know he has been in your mind,” said Carl. “And you may be sure you are in his. He knows what kind parents and what a pleasant home he has lost — lost by his own folly. All I ask for him is, that you will give him a chance to regain them by good behavior.”

Then Mrs. Wharton spoke up:

“If this young man, a stranger almost to our son, is willing to try him, ought we not to be willing?”

“Well, I will try him once more,” exclaimed Mr. Wharton, seizing Carl's hand. “I believe you are an honest fellow. Make my son an honest fellow, like you, and you'll place us all under eternal obligations.”

"I'll try," said Carl.

"And, see here! We're to have a Christmas dinner; bring Elwood around with you, and — we'll talk the matter over."

Carl accepted the invitation, and left the house, elated with joy and hope.

The son came to see him again at noon, this time entering at the front door, and was deeply affected by the account Carl gave of his interview with the parents. Carl furnished him with a clean shirt, and then went with him to the Wharton's Christmas dinner.

Both were joyfully received; and, the dinner — which, by the way, was excellent — resulted in an arrangement by which Carl was to take Elwood as a private pupil on trial for one month.

The experiment was a gratifying success. Elwood, separated from his old associates, and brought under the influence of the genial, sympathetic Carl, soon became interested in studies which he had only detested before. Elwood went home to live. He used to visit Carl every evening, and Carl went to dine with him every day. That Elwood had many temptations to overcome cannot be denied. He was often impatient, restless, ready to give up, and rush out into his old, wild life once more; but Carl, by carefully watching him, and joining with him in moderate healthful recreation, kept his hold upon him, and brought about a complete change in his habits before the winter was over.

But Elwood was not born to be a student. He fancied an active life on board a steamboat or on a railroad, and, at Carl's recommendation, he was permitted to follow his bent. He is now a trusted, efficient agent of one of the largest express companies in the United States. His position is not high, but he is happy in it, and all his prosperity he refers and dates back to Carl Robson and that memorable Christmas.

As for Carl, he is now a successful physician in his native village, and the support and comfort of his widowed mother.

TOM CORTLAND'S GOLD WATCH.

HALLOO, Tom! You don't say! Gold watch?" Tom nodded as he returned the treasure to his pocket.

"Real gold?" said the boys.

"Real gold," replied Tom, coolly. "Hunter's case, full jewelled, stem-winder. Anything else you want to know?"

"Let's look at it!" "Pass it round!" "Oh, what a beauty!" clamored the boys, as Tom displayed the wonder.

"But isn't it a rather extravagant thing for a young man like you to carry?" said James Aiken, the oldest and gravest among them.

"Maybe 'tis," Tom answered, dryly; "but I don't object to it. Wouldn't you like to set your old town clock by it, and have the correct time out here in the rural districts for once? I'll accommodate ye, to a second."

Tom had run out for a holiday visit to his native

village, and he took a boyish pleasure in thus mystifying his old schoolmates. But there was nothing vain or stuck-up about Tom Cortland, and having shown them how the stem-winder worked — winding up their curiosity at the same time to the highest pitch — he went on to answer the important question, “How did you come by it?”

Now I don't suppose I shall be able to give Tom's exact words. But his manner of telling the story — which, I may as well say at the start, is not one of my own making up — was something like this:

“How did I come by it? Well, that *is* an interesting point, when you see a valuable timepiece in the pocket of a poor boy you've kept track of all your lives. You know I hadn't any money when I went up to town two years ago and got a place in old Peter Wagstaff's trunk shop. I hardly got wages enough the first year to pay my board.

“I've earned more this year. At the same time I've sent home regularly a dollar a week to my mother.

“Now I couldn't very well have bought that watch out of my wages, could I? And it isn't a borrowed one; for there you see my name engraved in the case; and I'm not a thief or a swindler, not if I know myself,—and I rather think I do in that respect.

“What's curious about it, for a long time it had been my ambition to own just such a watch as this, particularly after Rudolphe Rupey made his appear-

ance at our boarding-house. He was got up to kill: short black curls all over his head, stylish dress, four or five clean shirts a week (though I found out afterwards he didn't pay his washerwoman), stunning breastpin, diamond ring, and gold watch and chain.

"He took the shine from the rest of us, young Rupey did, and made me wish I was a clerk in a jewelry store, as he was, instead of a miserable trunkmaker's apprentice. The girls wouldn't so much as look at one of ~~the~~ the rest of us when he was around.

" 'O my!' said I, 'if I could only haul out a gold hunter's case when they ask the time, and give it to the half-second, as he pretends to!' You see, I was a trifle foolish. I know a little more now; so do the girls.

"I was wise enough to stick to my business though, and day after day you might have seen me hammering at the old trunks, — the new trunks, I mean; but they were old to me; there was a wonderful sameness about them.

"Well, one day a man came into the store with an order for something besides trunks. I pricked up my ears, and found he was an 'Henglishman,' who dropped his 'hatches,' and then picked 'em up and 'ooked 'em on to the 'eads of the wrong words. I saw that he was a tall, well-built, well-dressed man, but with a sort of cheap look about him under all his good clothes and politeness.

"You know what I mean. There are some men

who can't be gentlemen, if they try. Wash them up, brush them up, dress them up, put on the shine and the perfume, — goodness, what a whiff when he pulled out his handkerchief! — and still there'll be something coarse about them. The refinement shows that it's only varnish; it isn't in the grain. I declared that Rudolphe was very much that kind of character; but the girls only laughed at me, and said I was jealous.

“The Englishman had a singular order. It was for three boxes, and he had the exact descriptions of them all marked and written out.

“‘They must be heighteen-hinch boxes, you see,’ said he, ‘houtside measure; ten hanches deep; stout ’inges, hiron bands, hinch and a ’alf wide; then these brass corner-caps’ — he took out the trimmings from his pocket — ‘on hevery corner; then these ’asps and stout little padlocks, and these ’andles on the hends. Heverything must be made exact, or I don't want the goods.’

“Mr. Wagstaff, a bald-headed, little old man, almost all forehead, spectacles, and apron, winked and blinked as he looked at the figures, and finally said he thought he could make the boxes.

“‘Ow soon?’ says the Englishman. ‘I must ’ave ’em in four days, or they'll be of no use.’

“‘I might get the boxes made in that time,’ says the old man, ‘but if they're to be painted, how about that?’

“‘O yes!’ says the Englishman; ‘the painting is

very himportant. They're to be painted black — not a shiny black, but a dull, dead black, hall but the brass corner-caps, 'andles, and padlocks. Hany kind of 'alf-hinch 'ard wood will hanswer.'

“ ‘ And the insides — how are the insides to be finished? ’ said Mr. Wagstaff.

“ ‘ The hinsides? ’ said the Englishman, as if he hadn't considered that part of his boxes before, which I thought singular, since he was so particular about them. ‘ Oh, just as comes 'andy! ’ says he. ‘ Rough or plain — I don't care 'ow. ’

“ ‘ Well, ’ says Mr. Wagstaff, ‘ I think I can fill the order in every particular except the painting; they will want two good coats, and I won't promise paint will be hard in four days from now. Besides, to-day is Wednesday — Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, ’ says he, counting the days on his fingers.

“ ‘ Can't ye have 'em ready for delivery Sunday hafternoon? ’ said the Englishman.

“ You should have seen old Mr. Wagstaff stare! If the chap had asked him to take hold of the straps of his boots and jump over t e moon, he couldn't have been more astonished. I forgot to tell you he's a deacon. In a matter of life and death, I don't know but he might be induced to open his shop and do business on Sunday; but nothing short of that would bring him to it.

“ It was finally agreed that the boxes should be ready for delivery Monday morning, and the old

man figured out the cost. He thought they could be made for twenty dollars.

“ ‘Hall right,’ says the Englishman. ‘I’ll be in during the week and see ’ow you’re getting on with ’em. By the way,’ said he, ‘can’t ye manage to ’ave ’em kept out of sight? You see, this is a patent thing I’m hinventing, and it’s himportant nobody should get ’old of the hidea.’

“ Mr. Wagstaff agreed to have the work done privately in the back room. At that the fellow gave him a resounding slap on the shoulder, and cried out:

“ ‘Hold boy, you’re a brick! Now come round the corner with me and wet your w’istle, won’t ye?’

“ I had to laugh then. I don’t believe the deacon took a good breath, or winked his eyes, or shut his mouth, for half a minute; but there he just stood and gasped.

“ ‘Oh, you don’t drink!’ said the fellow. ‘Well, no offence.’ And the Englishman went away.

“ ‘That man’s a rogue,’ said I, ‘and his patent is just a patent swindle, I’ll bet a million dollars!’

“ ‘Thomas,’ said the old man, ‘don’t make foolish and extravagant remarks of that kind; and don’t be so quick to judge people.’

“ So I held my tongue about the rascal after that, though I didn’t change my mind.

“ He came every day to see how the boxes were getting along, and when they were about ready for painting, he brought in a sheet of paper with some curious drawings on it.

“ ‘On one of the boxes,’ said he, ‘I want a w’ite circle painted, just the size of this ’un, the centre of it to come just ’ere;’ and he put his finger on the front of the box, below the place for the padlock. ‘On the second box I want two w’ite circles, a ring within a ring, like this. On the third box I want two just such rings, and then a still smaller one like this hinside the hinside one. Then, when you get through and the paint is ’ard, I want you to tumble the boxes around a little, to take off the new look, — a few dents and scratches, you know, — then brush ’em, and have heverything bang-up, tip-top, ship-shape, when I call for ’em Monday morning.’

“ After that the chap surprised me very much by paying to old Wagstaff his twenty dollars, and went off again.

“ Well, the cases were finished and had the last coat of paint on by Saturday evening, with the brass corner-caps and white circles, all exactly according to order, and I waited with a good deal of curiosity to see what would happen when the fellow came to take them away on Monday. In the meanwhile, something unexpected happened on Sunday.

“ As I was passing a beer-shop on one of the by-streets, I saw my Henglishman with the dislocated haitches walk into it. Now I had such a strong suspicion that he was a scamp, and that I was somehow aiding him in his villany by working on those three black cases, that, after I had walked on a piece, I turned squarely about, pulled my hat over my eyes,

put on a swaggering air, and walked into the beer-shop. I went up to the bar, leaned my arms on the counter, and said :

“ ‘Do you know of a young fellow here of the name of Smithson?’

“ ‘No, I don't,’ said the barkeeper ; ‘but you can look around and see.’

“ There were a good many people in the saloon, some sitting at little tables in the back part, beyond the bar, where they had their pipes and glasses, and there I discovered not only my Englishman, but another chap I was a good deal more surprised to see. It was our boarding-house jeweller's clerk, Rudolphe Rupey.

“ The Englishman was sitting at the same table with him, and they were talking together. I saw enough in half a minute to satisfy my mind on one or two points. Then I left the shop.

“ What I had seen in the saloon excited me a good deal. I wondered if Watson Brothers, the jewellers, knew that Rupey frequented such places and kept such company. If he had slept in the store, or had had the keys to it, I should certainly have expected to hear of a burglary taking place there within eight-and-forty hours, and I could imagine him and the Englishman using the boxes I had helped make to carry off their plunder. But I knew that Rupey was seldom or never there alone. And when he came to tea that evening, looking as innocent as

a lamb, I began to think my suspicions, so far as he was concerned, were all wrong.

“The next morning the Englishman came for his boxes. He examined them carefully, and then had them done up in brown paper wrappers, and took them away in a carriage. I wafted a sigh after him, for I fancied I was never to see him and the three black cases again. A fellow hates to leave a mystery unsolved, you know.

“I started to go home to dinner at the usual hour, and for some reason — I never could tell just why — went a whole block out of my way to pass by Watson Brothers’ jewelry store. It sometimes seems as if we were made to do things by some power outside of our own minds, or so deep in our minds that we are not conscious of it. Such a power seemed to impel me to go that way. It certainly wasn’t to see Rupey and to walk home with him, for we were not on such good terms as that.

“Well, just before I got to the store, I saw a hack stop in front of it, and the driver jump down and open his coach-door. Then you can imagine, or, rather, you can’t imagine, my perfect bewilderment when I saw a gentleman come out of the store with a carpet-bag in his left hand, and what seemed to be one of the boxes we had just made under his right arm! It was the box that had the single white circle on it.

“After him came old Mr. Watson himself, bare-headed, carrying the other two boxes, one by the

handles, and the other on top of that. I had a glimpse of the two and three white circles as he passed them to the gentleman in the hack.

“Then suddenly an idea struck me that set my head whirling the other way, and that was that those were not my boxes at all. You know the effect, when you’ve turned one way till you’re dizzy, if then you turn the other? You somehow unwind your tangle. My head was clear again in a second, and stepping up to Rupey, who was standing just inside the store, I said, carelessly :

“ ‘ Is that man in the hack one of your firm ? ’

“ ‘ Not exactly,’ says he. ‘ That’s Mr. Rinkton, our travelling agent.’

“ ‘ Shouldn’t wonder,’ says I, ‘ if he’s got something nice in those boxes.’

“ ‘ A trifle,’ says he ; ‘ perhaps ten or twenty thousand dollars in watches and jewelry. He has carried fifty thousand dollars’ worth in those same boxes before now.’

“Of course that confirmed my suspicion about their being old boxes, and not the new ones we had just made.

“ ‘ I should think he would be afraid to travel with so much property ! ’ I said. •

“ ‘ What should he be afraid of ? ’ said Rupey, cool as an iced cucumber.

“ ‘ Robbers — railroad accidents,’ I said.

“ ‘ Oh, he has his eyes peeled ! ’ said he. ‘ Soon as he gets to the station, he has those boxes locked up

in the safe in the express-car, and he don't see 'em again till he gets to Chicago. The express agent receipts for 'em, and then the company is liable.'

"While Rupey was talking, I put this and that together, and it came over me like a flash that I must hurry to the station and tell Mr. Rinkton, for he had already rattled away in the hack, that there was a design—I felt sure of it, though of course I couldn't explain it—to rob him of those boxes of jewelry.

"'Going to dinner?' said Rupey. 'Wait a minute, and I'll walk along with you.'

"'I can't wait,' I said; 'I've an errand to do, and I've stopped too long already.'

"As soon as I was out of his sight I began to run. It was then twelve o'clock. The Western express train starts at half-past. It was a mile to the depot. I think I never made a mile in less time in my life. I got to the station all out of breath. I looked through the passenger rooms, at the ticket office, at the crowd going to the cars, but no Rinkton. I tried to get through the passenger gate, but the guard stopped me. I had no ticket, and had to turn back. Then I ran round to the freight-gate. I was in luck. There stood Mr. Rinkton, evidently waiting to speak to the express-agent, and there, resting on a hand-truck beside him with other packages, were his three black cases, set one on top of the other.

"Now we're curious made-up creatures, and the man that can understand and explain all his own

actions is wiser than I am. Eager as I had been to see Mr. Rinkton, I was put all aback when I found him. I didn't know what I was to say to him, after all. Suppose I had rushed up to him and said:

“ ‘ You'd better look out for those boxes ; there'll be an attempt to rob you of 'em between here and Chicago, I'm sure of it ! ’

“ The very least I could have expected would have been the polite information that he could attend to his own business, and the wholesome advice that I'd better go about mine. So I stopped, got behind one of the great pillars of the depot, and waited to think what I should do.

“ There I was, getting my breath and my thoughts, when another figure attracted my attention. It was my Englishman with the distracted hatches. He evidently wanted to speak to the express-agent, who was just then attending to putting some things in the express-car. My man had some sort of heavy bundle in his arms, covered with a piece of burlap. He came and rested it on the hand-truck, quite near Mr. Rinkton and his boxes.

“ ‘ Now, ’ I said to myself, ‘ I'll see what his little game is. I won't take my eye off from him for a second. ’

“ I had scarcely made this resolution when my eye was drawn off in spite of me. One of those things happened which make everybody look in one direction for a moment, no matter what they are interested in. It was a sudden quarrel that broke out

between two men close by. They were shouting, and had each other by the throat, and there was a mob rushing towards them. By the time a policeman reached the spot, the row was over, and the two men were gone.

“Then I looked again at my Englishman. There he stood, with his bundle covered with burlap beside him on the truck. Only I noticed that, while it had been at the left hand of Mr. Rinkton’s boxes before, now it was at the right hand. It seemed as if, in starting forward to look at the men fighting, he had jostled against Mr. Rinkton, and he was now asking his pardon. Then, as if tired of waiting there for the express-agent, he took up his bundle covered with burlap, and started to walk towards the baggage-room.

“It came to me all at once what he had done. I rushed up to Mr. Rinkton. I suppose I acted like an idiot. He looked as if he thought so, any way.

“‘That man has robbed you!’ I said.

“‘Robbed me? of what?’ he asked, quite deliberately feeling his pockets.’

“‘Of your cases of jewelry!’ I said.

“‘Here are my cases, if you mean these,’ he said.

“‘He has changed them,’ I said. ‘He took yours; he left these.’

“‘Impossible!’ said he, looking at the boxes. ‘You’re crazy, my lad. I haven’t had my eye off these cases for an instant.’

“‘Yes, you have,’ I said, ‘when the fight took

place. It was got up on purpose. That coarse brown cloth was over these boxes; he threw it over yours and walked off with them.'

"Rinkton began to be alarmed. 'Did you see him do it?' he asked.

" 'I saw part of the movement, and I saw that his pile and yours had changed places in a second. It was just as sleight-of-hand fellows do when they play a trick; they manage to call off everybody's attention for a moment. Shall I keep him in sight?'

" 'Yes!' said Rinkton, by this time pretty thoroughly frightened. And he called the policeman, while I ran out of the depot.

"I was just in time to see my Englishman getting into a coach with his bundle covered with burlap. In three seconds he would have been gone. I slipped round to the driver just as he was mounting to his seat.

" 'Wait a moment,' I said, 'and you'll be well paid for it.'

" 'Go a'ead! w'y don't ye?' roared the Englishman, putting his head out of the coach.

"I beckoned to Mr. Rinkton, as he just then came out with the policeman. The officer apologized for detaining the rogue, but said he must see what was under that bit of burlap. So saying, he reached in and twitched it off.

"You never saw a more astonished man than Mr. Rinkton. He had hardly believed my story. He had just left his cases in charge of an expressman, and here they were again!

“The Englishman took the matter coolly, considering the circumstances, and offered to prove by me that the cases were his. I replied that I had helped make similar cases for him, but that I didn't think these were the ones. Then he offered to leave the cases in the hands of the police until he could bring proof that they belonged to him; but the officer said he must detain him too; and he was well able to do that, for now another policeman had come up.

“‘Allow me to settle this question on the spot,’ said Mr. Rinkton; and selecting one from a bunch of keys, he inserted it into the padlock of one of the cases. The lock opened easily. He lifted the cover, and there was the box packed full of jewelry, just as he himself had packed it.

“When the imitation cases were afterwards opened by the police, they were found packed with pebblestones and old newspapers. And that was the precious freight Mr. Rinkton would have gone on to Chicago with, if it hadn't been for me.

“The Englishman was tried for the robbery at the last term of the court, and sent to prison for ten years. One of his supposed confederates who got up the row was also arrested, but nothing was proved against him. He was wanted, however, for a burglary he had committed in Philadelphia some time before, for he was recognized as an old rogue.

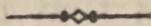
“Nothing could be proved against Rupey, either, though it was almost certain that he was another

confederate, and that the Englishman had got his information from him with regard to the jewelry-cases. He disappeared suddenly, with his short black curls, gold watch and diamonds, and the girls of our boarding-house sigh for him in vain.

“Meanwhile, as I was at work one day in the trunk-shop, a neat little box came in, addressed to me: ‘*With compliments of Watson Brothers.*’ I opened it with some eagerness, you may believe, and danced for joy on that old floor when I found what the box contained.

“Boys, it was this watch, marked with my name, as you see. Now you know how I came by it.”

THE WILD-CAT CLUB.



THE Wild Cats had their place of meeting in Whitaker's old barn.

To begin with, I must tell you that the Wild Cats were not cats at all, either wild or tame, but a "club"—so they called themselves—of village boys. They were wild enough, that's certain.

What village? No matter. More than one village in New England has its Wild Cat Club. So much the worse for the village!

They were a band of young miscreants, let me tell you. If a melon-patch was robbed in the neighborhood, the theft was at once charged, and justly, upon the Wild Cats.

If a couple of signs changed places in the night, and rough old Job Pollard appeared next morning as a "Milliner," and little Miss Jane Stetson as a dealer in "Wood and Coal," everybody laughed, except, possibly, Job and Jane, and exclaimed, knowingly, "The Wild Cats!"

If a school-house was broken into, and a wad of newspapers stuffed into the stove-pipe, causing clouds of suffocating smoke in the room the next day, and a great mystery as to the cause, — why, the Wild Cats !

You might have guessed their guilt by the heroism with which those members of the club who were present bore up under the affliction, laughing at that which made everybody else cry. Isn't it strange that the fun of making other people suffer should carry a boy gayly through things which would be so hard to bear if they were not looked upon as jokes ?

The club met, as I have said, in Whitaker's old barn, and one Saturday afternoon an exciting debate took place there.

Old Job, whose wood and coal office had once been converted into a milliner's shop in the way we have mentioned, was frequently a victim of Wild-Cat jokes.

He was a little, shrivelled, bent old man, with a rheumatic back, and a thin, squeaky voice, and a soul so small, as the boys said, that it would have found more room in a pea-pod than a flounder in Lake Ontario.

Because he was so mean, they thought it right to show him no mercy. It never occurred to them, I suppose, that there was any meanness in their own mischief-making. A new raid upon him was now proposed: his grape-vines were to be rifled.

“He's got the splendidest lot of Concords !” said

Hi Hicks, one of the most active of the Wild Cats, a tall, lank lad of seventeen. "He 's too mean ever to give one away, or even to eat one himself."

"He has been letting 'em hang on the vines to get just ripe enough, and he has hired old Canning, who don't like grapes, to pick 'em for market next Monday; but we'll have our share first," said Luff Redmond.

"And won't it be fun," cried Shote Waters, "to have him wake up in the morning and find not a cluster worth picking left on his vines?"

"Jolly!" some one replied; and then all the boys laughed.

All but one. That was Herbert Amsden, commonly called "Herb." Every Wild Cat had to have his nickname. "Hi" for Hiram, and "Herb" for Herbert, were natural enough; but why Amos Redmond should be dubbed "Luff," and John Waters "Shote," does not so plainly appear.

Herbert looked serious.

"The old man has bushels of grapes," he said. "What can we do with 'em all?"

"Oh, eat what we want," Hi replied, "hide a quantity, and then — grapes are worth two dollars a bushel, Luff says."

"Yes," spoke up Luff; "and we might sell enough to keep the club in whiskey and tobacco for a month."

"How are you going to get the grapes to market?" Herb inquired.

"Oh, Shote will see to that!" replied Luff; while

Shote grinned and nodded. "He knows a man in the city who will buy grapes, if they are cheap enough, and ask no questions."

"But see here!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Well, what is it?" said Hi, as he sat on the side of the old mow and whittled the beam with his knife.

Herb hesitated. He was not so unscrupulous a boy as some of the rest. If ever he joined them in their mischief, it was solely for the love of fun; and if in the pursuit of fun he helped to injure others, it was from a habit of thoughtlessness. I don't state this as a very good excuse for him. Thoughtlessness itself may be criminal, and we know that it is a source of many wrongs and vices.

But what was now proposed made Herbert stop to think. After a while he said:

"I've been with you a good many times, and I believe I've always shown myself a true Wild Cat."

"Boss!" "Bully!" cried the boys, approvingly.

There was one great trouble with this club, and it was one which makes all such connections so dangerous. If you are a Wild Cat, you must show yourself a "true Wild Cat." That is to say, you must be as reckless a mischief-maker as you pretend to be, and keep your scruples of conscience to yourself, if you have any.

It is always a help to feel that we have a reputation for good behavior to maintain.

It is always a curse to believe that we have our credit for reckless "good fellowship" to keep up.

Herbert went on:

"I like fun as well as any one, but now you are going a little too far. When you talk of taking grapes and selling them for money, that looks to me a little too much like —"

"Like what? Speak it out!" cried Luff, bluntly.

"Like stealing," said Herbert, blushing to the whites of his eyes, as he played with the straw he was sitting on.

Luff gave a contemptuous snort. "Now look here, Herb," he said; "seems to me you went with us the other night to Whitman's melon-patch!"

"Yes," added Shote, "and showed us how to pick out the ripe cantaloupes by smellin' on 'em."

"That — that's different," stammered Herb. "A few melons to eat, — just for fun, you know."

"Well, this is just for fun," said Luff. "We git a few grapes to eat; we git a few more — to smoke and drink. We don't steal; we are not so mean as to want to get money out of the old man. But we want grapes, and I suppose you wouldn't object to taking what we can eat. We want tobacco and whiskey, too, and why not supply ourselves in the same way?"

"That's it!" chimed in Shote. "Don't be a goose, Herb Amsden!"

Herb's face was crimson. Perhaps he was a goose! Perhaps there was no such distinction as he had drawn in the different motives for taking what did not belong to him! This thought struck him with stun-

ning force, and it was followed by the uncomfortable reflection that stealing was stealing, any way.

Herb's mind was sadly confused on the subject, and he was not prepared to speak all his thoughts. The raid upon the old man's grapes was finally agreed upon, in spite of his feeble objections, and the Wild Cats separated, to meet again, with baskets and everything prepared for the robbery, at ten o'clock that night.

Herbert went home miserably melancholy. The talk with the boys had given him something to think of which neither work nor play could drive out of his mind. The more he reflected, the more his conscience became enlightened, and the more he was astonished at some things he had permitted himself to do in his character as a Wild Cat.

At first he tried to pluck up resolution to go and join the boys at ten o'clock, as if nothing had been said. But no; he couldn't do that.

Then he said to himself, "I'll stay away, and let them do as they please; it's none of my business."

But something within him would not permit that, either. It *was* his business. The Wild Cats were his most intimate companions; they were merely going to do what he had helped them do more than once, or something not very different; and was he not in some way responsible?

If they were about to commit a crime, and he knew of it, and took no measures to hinder them, could he sit down with folded hands and say, "I am innocent"?

Herbert was not such a boy as that.

Then it occurred to him that he might go and denounce them to the man whose vineyard was to be robbed. Some boys would have done just that, expecting, perhaps, a reward from old Job; but Herbert felt a thrill of horror at the thought. He could not betray his friends.

Only one course seemed left, — to meet them and again endeavor to dissuade them from their purpose; but he felt how hard it would be for a boy who had always been a true Wild Cat to appear among them in any more serious character. He believed he would only get laughed at for his appeals, and that they would do no good.

At last, like a flash of inspiration, came a thought which resulted in the plan he finally resolved upon. Instead of informing Job Pollard, he would himself act the part of Job, and prevent the robbery.

First, how to disguise himself? This was not very difficult. He lived with his grandfather, an old man whose wardrobe furnished ample material for his purpose.

He selected an old coat and a very bad hat, which resembled those worn by Job, took them to his room, and put them on over his own coat and cap. Then he bent his back, walked with his elbows out before the glass, and laughed heartily at his own comical imitation of old Pollard.

A few white locks of hair, and a gray whisker on each cheek, were still necessary, and these he manu-

factured out of cotton cloth, strips of which he pinned to the hat, leaving some short ones to dangle, while he fastened the longer ones under his chin.

This part of his disguise would hardly bear inspection; but he was getting himself up for a moonlight performance, and did not expect to be looked at very closely.

For the rest, he was a capital mimic, and he relied upon his powers in that way to carry him safely through the adventure.

The disguise prepared, it was carefully put aside, and Herbert went out to walk in the street.

He met Shote Waters, who gave a little Wild-Cat cry, and said:

“Remember ten o’clock.”

“Yes,” replied Herbert, languidly.

“You’ll be there?” said Shote.

“No—yes—I don’t know,” said Herbert. “I don’t believe in what you’re going to do. I told you that, and I didn’t promise to help.”

“Oh, now, don’t back out, Herb!”

“I don’t back out, for I haven’t gone in; but you needn’t be surprised if I don’t go to-night.”

“But it’s just what we’ve been up to lots of times before,” Shote insisted.

“That may be; for I guess we’ve been up to a good many things we ought to be ashamed of,” said Herbert. “I’ve been thinking ’em over a little.”

“Pshaw!” Shote exclaimed. “If ye stop to think things over, there’s never no fun at all. I’m going;

you can do as you like. Only promise not to blow on us."

"You know very well I won't do that," said Herbert, as they separated.

At ten o'clock that night, when all the rest of the family were asleep in their beds, Herbert got out of his window upon a shed, with a bundle and a good stout stick which he dropped to the ground. Then he let himself down by the limbs of an apple-tree, picked up stick and bundle, and hastened away, but not in the direction of Whitaker's old barn.

The other Wild Cats met, meanwhile, and after waiting for him a short time, started off on their raid without him.

As they approached old Job's premises, they went around through an orchard, and finally climbed upon a wall, beyond which appeared the grape-trellises, perfectly still, in the bright moonlight.

It was a calm, cool night in September. Not a leaf stirred. Only the crickets sang.

"Splendid!" whispered Hi Hicks, — not speaking of the beauty of the scene before them (he was insensible to that), but of the chance for a quiet robbery of the vines.

"Don't Herb wish he was here!" chuckled Luff Redmond.

"Don't he, though!" whispered somebody — not loud enough to be heard — hidden in a shadow of the wall, very near the spot where the boys were sitting.

It was Herbert, who had reached the grounds

before them, and placed himself there in ambush among some barberry-bushes to watch their operations.

"I never thought he would flunk out in this style," said Shote Waters.

"I d'n' know," Hi answered; "Herb was always a little soft. Come to right-down genuyne pluck, he hain't got it."

"I'll show you, Hi Hicks, whether I have or not!" muttered Herbert, in the shadow.

"That's so, Hi," Shote rejoined; "he's a kind of coward."

"Oh, am I?" thought Herbert, grasping his stick tightly.

"I say, boys," whispered Luff, "let's agree not to give him any grapes."

"No, nor any whiskey or cigars we buy with 'em, either," replied Shote.

Herbert trembled with shame and anger. Were these his familiar companions? Were whiskey and cigars so necessary to them that they must steal in order to procure them? Had it indeed come to this? What would his good old grandfather, who trusted him and loved him so,—what would he think, if he knew?

"I'll give you a lesson, young fellows!" he said to himself, as they presently got down from the wall with their baskets, and began to rustle the vines.

The full dark clusters looked luscious in the moonlight, and they were just beginning to fall

lightly into the baskets, when some one gave a low cry of alarm, and somebody else immediately called out:

“The old man!”

“I’ll *old man* ye!” cried a thin, cracked voice. “I’ve caught ye this time, ye young ruffians! Stealing my grapes, air ye? Take that! and that!” The old man rushed after them, and *thwack* went his stick over the backs of Luff first, then Hi, and again of Shote, as he attempted to hide behind a trellis.

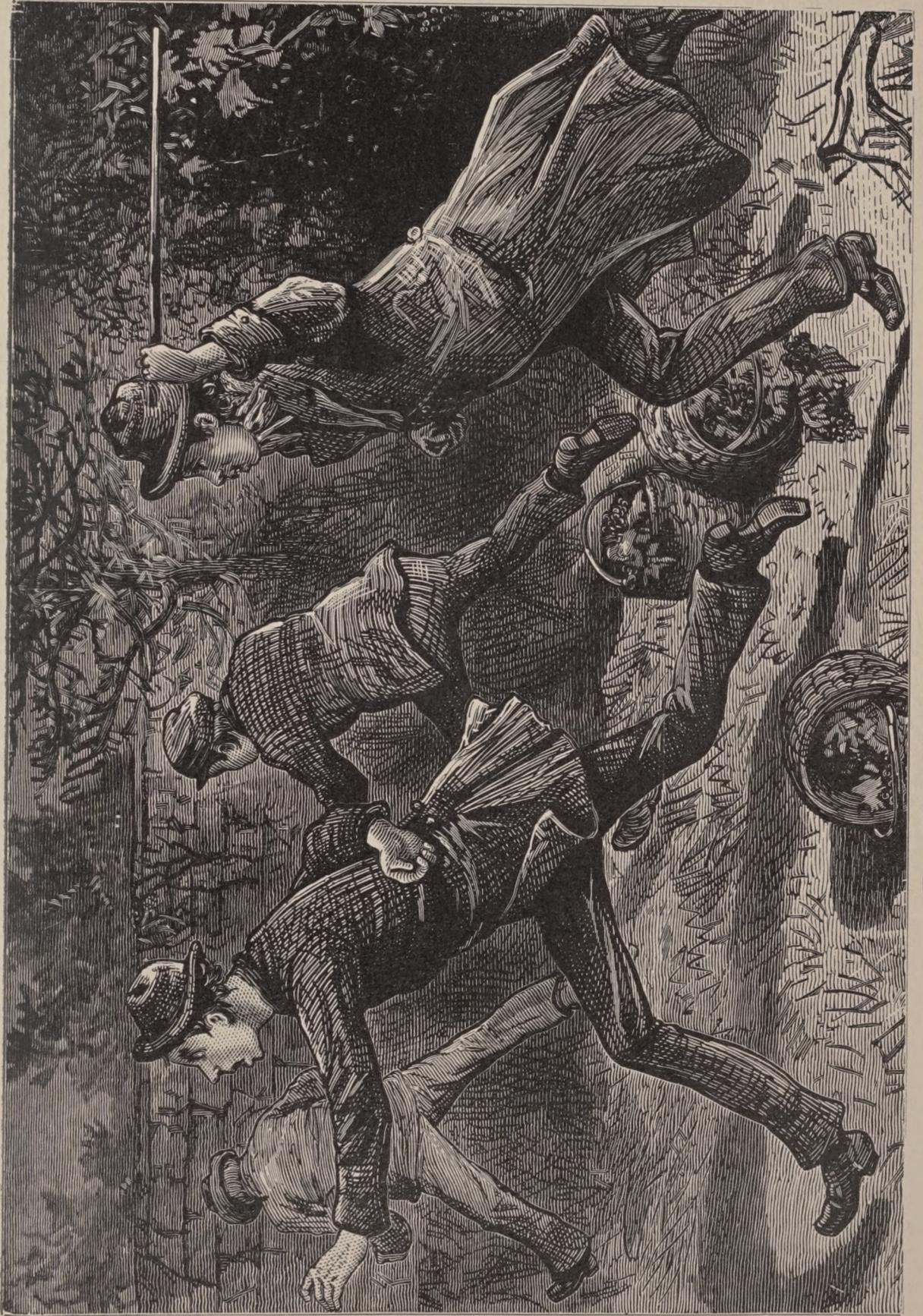
“I’ll larn ye a lesson!” — *Thwack!* — “I’ve been watching for ye!” — *Thwack! thwack!* — “I know ye, ye pesky Wild Cats, every one of ye!” — *Thwack! thwack! thwack!*

Sometimes the stick hit a back or shoulder, sometimes a basket, and sometimes a trellis; while the young marauders ran as if for their lives, with the little bent old man at their heels.

He had got between them and the orchard, and the moonlight was behind him. They escaped through the vineyard, tumbled over another wall into a field, and separated, running in various directions. The sound of their footsteps died in the distance, and then suddenly all was still.

The old man stopped at the wall, picked up a basket that had been dropped, and went swiftly through the vines, to make sure that no Wild Cat was lurking among them.

Then, any one who had been watching might have seen that he was merely a counterfeit old man, after



THE WILD-CAT CLUB. — Page 298.

all ; for off came the coat and hat and rag whiskers, the bent figure straightened up, and Herbert Amsden stood among the trellises.

“ I’ve no pluck, have I? A coward, am I?” he said to himself, with a little laugh. “ Their backs will ache and elbows sing for one while, to pay for that !”

He packed his disguise in the basket, hid it in some bushes on the other side of the orchard, and crept into Whitaker’s barn by a hole the Wild Cats knew.

All was still there. But he felt pretty sure the boys would come in presently, to talk over their escape.

He was not mistaken. Soon Luff and Hi crawled through the hole, and Shote and others followed. Concealed in the dark mow, Herbert heard every word they said.

“ He did hit me an awful crack right on my crazy-bone,” said Luff.

“ I got it over the head and ears !” exclaimed Shote. “ There’s a bunch on my skull as big as a butt’nut.”

“ He jest about broke my shoulder !” complained Hi. “ Who would have thought the old feller was so smart !”

“ Or that he could run so !” said Luff.

“ I thought of course I could get away from him,” remarked another ; “ but he legged it like a deer. Talk about old Pollard havin’ the rheumatics !”

"I left my basket," said Luff; "that's the most I care about."

"I bet ye, Herb told on us," some one suggested.

And a sharp discussion of that point ensued; during which Herbert heard some remarks about himself that made his ears tingle. On the whole, however, the Wild Cats were inclined to acquit him of that treachery.

He waited until they had all left the barn; then he, too, crawled out, found the captured basket, ran home with it, climbed the apple-tree to the roof of the shed, and got in at the window.

"It's the last time I ever leave the house or get back into it in any such foolish or dishonest way as this!" he vowed to himself as he hurriedly threw off his clothes and went to bed.

And he kept that vow. *His* Wild-Cat days were over.

Not long after, he met Hi and Shote in the street. They accosted him in a friendly way, and Hi said:

"Why didn't you come with us Saturday night?"

"I thought I wouldn't," Herbert answered, soberly; "had something else to do. Did you have a good time?"

"Oh, boss!" said Shote.

"Tip-top!" said Hi.

"Get any grapes?" Herbert inquired.

"A few, — not very many," said Hi.

"What was the matter? Sour?"

“No, — good grapes, — but — look here, Herb! did you tell on us?”

“I?” cried Herbert. “I never breathed a syllable to a living soul!”

“So I told the boys,” said Hi, more convinced than ever that Herbert had not betrayed them.

“What made you think I did?” Herbert wished to know.

“Well, I’ll tell you,” said Hi, with a foolish sort of laugh. “The old man came out and met us.”

“The old man Pollard?”

“Yes; just as we were going to help ourselves.”

“And what did he do?”

“*He gave us some.*”

“Job Pollard gave you some!” exclaimed Herbert. “I don’t believe that!”

“He did — didn’t he, Shote?” said Hi, with a wink at his companion.

“Yes,” Shote stoutly averred; “*he gave us all we wanted.*”

“*And more too,*” said Hi.

“In your baskets?”

“Well, no, not in our baskets,” said Shote. “I’d a great deal rather have had mine in my basket.”

The boys separated; and as soon as Herbert was alone, you should have seen him hold his sides and double up with laughter.

The next time the Wild Cats met in the barn, they found Luff’s basket on the beam of the mow, with a paper pinned to the handle.

On the paper was written, in a cramped and trembling hand, this notice :

“ Here is your basket, boys, and I hope you will make a better use on't another time than to go hookin' an old man's grapes. I forgive ye, if ye'll behave yerselves in futur'. But I know every one of you, and don't let me hear any more of your pranks if you know what is good for yerselves. A FRIEND.”

This affair broke up the Wild-Cat Club. In time most of the members, following the example of Herbert, became industrious and sober.

He was of too honest a nature to keep the others long deceived as to his conduct in the affair. But when at last he confessed that *he* was the old man who had met them in the vineyard, and “ given them more than they wanted,” they were ready not only to forgive him, but even to thank him for the timely lesson they had learned.

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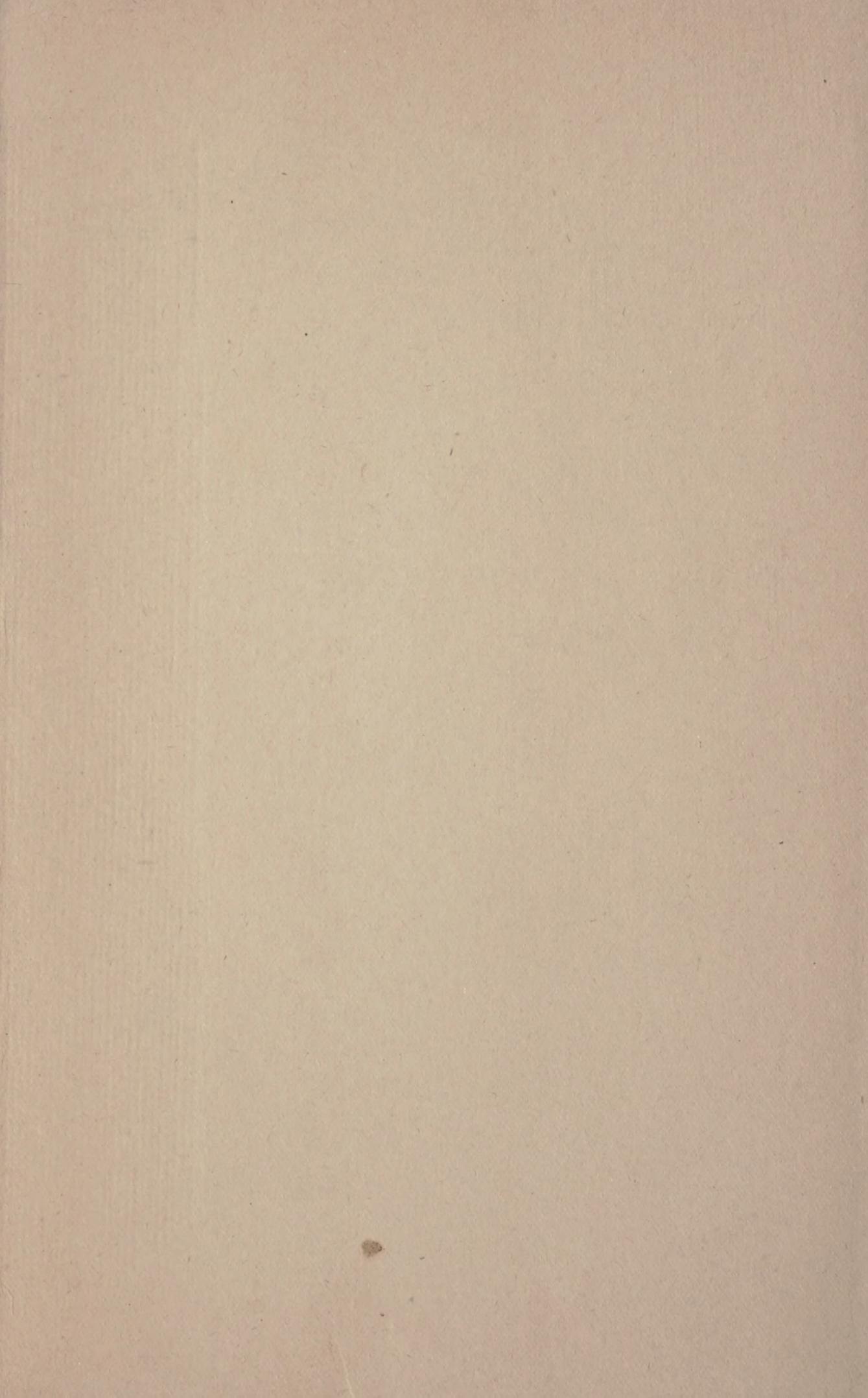
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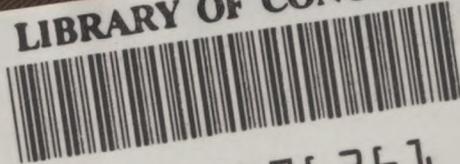
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