





THE SILVER MEDAL STORIES.

BY J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

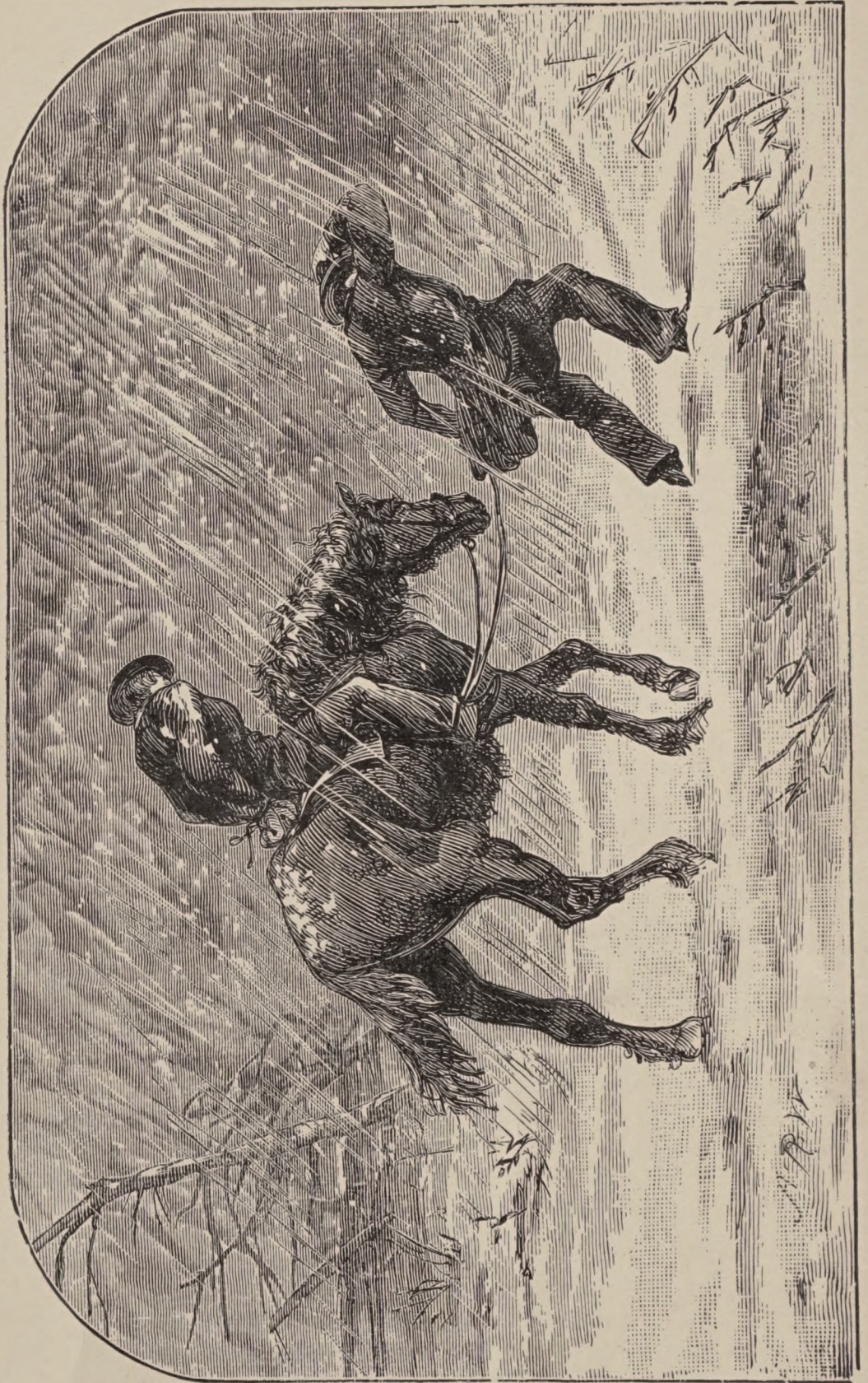
1. THE SILVER MEDAL.
2. YOUNG JOE AND OTHER BOYS.
3. HIS OWN MASTER.
4. BOUND IN HONOR.
5. THE POCKET RIFLE.
6. THE JOLLY ROVER.

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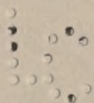
BOUND IN HONOR;

OR,

A HARVEST OF WILD OATS.

John Townsend
BY
J. T. TROWBRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "HIS OWN MASTER," "COUPON BONDS," "NEIGHBOR
JACKWOOD," ETC.



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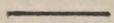
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BOUND IN HONOR



W. M. P. Jan. 17, 1913

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BOUND IN HONOR.

CHAPTER I.

SOME VILLAGE YOUNGSTERS PREPARE FOR A LITTLE FUN.

AWAY in the heart of New England, the village of Bayfield nestles among its wooded hills.

Here, from a little seed carelessly scattered, one winter's night, a sudden and tremendous crop was grown. For there is this peculiarity about the seed in question, that it may be sown at any season of the year, and you may look to see it spring up and flourish, and perhaps plague the youthful sower during the best part of his life.

It is the story of those wild oats which I am now going to relate.

The evening had been still, and not very cold. There was no moon. One bright star hung low in the west. A gauzy cloud overspread the dim upper sky.

It was growing late. The sober village folks were in their beds. Only the less sober sort were abroad.

On the village green — now a pallid sheet of snow — stood the ghost of a white meeting-house. Behind the meeting-house were the long, low horse-sheds; about one of which you might have seen, had you been passing, unusual and mysterious movements.

Some three rods back from it stood an old barn; and from the corner of the shed, past the side of the barn, ran a stone wall. Along by this wall two dark figures crept over the frozen crust, which now and then, stealthily as they moved, cracked beneath their weight.

Suddenly, a low whistle from the shed, like a pre-concerted signal. Down drop the crawling figures, and lie like black logs beside the wall.

For the meaning of the signal they did not have long to wait.

Creak — creak — creak!

The sound of footsteps on the crisp, hard-packed snow, advancing along the icy village sidewalk.

Louder, louder, louder; *creak — creak — creak!* They have turned from the sidewalk into a path which passes behind the meeting-house, and in front of the row of sheds, a short cut between two streets.

“See him, Turkey?” said an earnest whisper under the shed.

“Turkey” seemed to be the long-necked, lanky youth who had his eye at a knot-hole in one of the boards.

“ Yes ; keep still ! He’s coming right here.”

“ Who is’t ? ”

“ Do’no’ — young feller. Git down, Herky.”

“ Herky ” must have been the short youth who was trying to set his feet upon a sill, in order to bring his eye up to the level of his companion’s knot-hole. Two other youngsters were peeping through cracks between the boards.

Creak — creak — creak — creak !

“ Something in his hand,” whispered one.

“ Roy, with his fiddle,” whispered another.

“ Oh ! ” from the lanky one, in any thing but a whisper.

It was an outcry of pain, in fact ; Herky, in climbing, having pinched a claw — that is to say, two fingers of Turkey’s right hand — between his boot-sole and the beam.

The creaking suddenly ceased. The comer stood outside the corner of the shed, listening. Herky and the two youngsters at the cracks were laughing and chuckling noiselessly, and Turkey was sucking his injured digits, also without noise, though he was swearing a good deal inside.

Just then one of the figures by the wall, tired of resting on one elbow, turned a little, in order to rest on the other.

Creak, creak, went the breaking snow-crust.

“ Who’s there ? ” cried the listener, sharply.

Half-suppressed laughter from the shed. Then a low voice : —

“ Porcupine.”

This was a pass-word current among the young rogues of the village. The new-comer responded readily with another, which showed him to be one of them.

“ Beaver.”

“ St! Come here, Roy; keep dark!”

“ What’s the fun, Moke?” said Roy, joining his friends in the shed.

“ Promise not to tell if you don’t help.”

“ Of course I won’t tell. But why couldn’t you keep still and let me go home?”

“ Go on home now and hold your tongue,” said Moke.

“ Catch me,” said Roy. “ If any sport is up I always stay. You know that.”

Yes, they knew that; so did Roy’s family; so did Roy himself, only too well. His love of wild companions, and what they called “ gay times,” counter-balanced many fine qualities, and threatened to develop into a reprobate one of the brightest and bravest lads in the village.

Sixteen years old, hardy, athletic, with a quick wit of his own — an orphan, but adopted by a kind, an almost too kind uncle — the best swimmer, skater, runner, and wrestler of his age and weight in the district; good-looking, and aware of it, Roydon Rockwood seemed fitted to excel in whatever he undertook.

Unfortunately he did not undertake what his best

friends wished to have him ; nor stick to any thing very long. They urged him to make the most of his advantages, instead of squandering them until youth and opportunity were gone ; to put himself earnestly to his studies, and prepare to enter upon some useful career — be a physician, perhaps, like his worthy uncle. Good advice, as Roy knew well in his heart. But he had always something else on hand, so much more interesting to him at the moment than any serious studies.

The last attraction was a violin, in which his uncle indulged him, hoping that it would serve as an outlet to the boy's exuberant spirits, and save him from worse things.

He had been to practice with a more experienced player, when, taking the short cut past the meeting-house that evening, he unluckily fell in with a crew he had promised to avoid.

There was Moses Meredith — nicknamed Moke — one of the wildest boys in town, though his father was a minister, and preached in that white meeting-house.

John Burnet, called Turkey from his long neck and gawky ways. His father was a butcher.

Herky Little, the tailor's son, christened Hercules by an ambitious parent, who meant to have at least one strong name in the family. From this powerful graft, one would think that stalwart proportions should have grown even upon an insignificant stock. But Hercules Little, oddly enough, remained Little, both in name and stature, like his father, and in spite of his father.

George Alcott, sometimes called Dod, and sometimes Eyeteeth Alcott, he was so sharp. His father kept a grocery, where more rum was sold than molasses.

Roy recognized these four good-for-naughts, and one of them — it was Moke, the minister's son — took him to an opening in the back part of the shed, made by knocking off a board, and showed him the two figures by the wall. They were no longer logs but stumps — tired of lying in the snow, they were sitting up.

“Who's that?” Roy asked.

“Tommy Twombly and Iry Bradish.”

Tommy Twombly, a young vagabond from the hotel stables, and Ira Bradish, son of a respectable farmer. Vice is a great leveler, and roguery is a common ground on which well-born and low-born meet.

One of the stumps stirred its roots, changed to a creature with legs and arms, and, coming back to the shed on all fours, thrust a paw into the opening.

“Nobody but Roy,” said Moke, in answer to a whispered question. “He's O. K.”

“Any thing the matter, Iry?” Herky inquired.

“I dropped my matches in the snow,” replied the face at the opening. “Put my knee onto 'em. Who has got some?”

There was a quick inquiry for matches, and a hasty fumbling of fingers in vest pockets in the dark.

“I have some,” said the ready Roy, and handed out a card. “What are you going to do with matches?”

“Hain’t you guessed?” said cunning Dod Alcott. “Old D. W.’s got to come out to-night.”

“D. W.” was Daniel Webster — name, not of the statesman, but of the town fire-engine.

Roy understood the situation in a moment. This was not the first time young rascals in the village had deliberately set about firing old buildings, in order to see them burn, get up a lively alarm, and have out that big plaything with the hose and brakes. The poor fellows were weary of the monotony of life, and pined for a little excitement. And what was the use of a fire-engine if it was to be kept quietly housed all winter?

Not one of these precious rogues, by the way, belonged to the fire-company, but only to that class of idlers and hangers-on who “run with the machine,” and think of a good blaze, no matter who suffers by it, only as the occasion of a few hours’ glorious frolic, — the class, in a word, which has brought fire-companies into disrepute, and changed so often what is intended as a protection to society into an instrument of mischief. The more fire-engines the more fires.

Roy, to do him justice, was a little startled.

“Morey’s barn?”

“Of course. There’s nothing in it but a little moldy hay, and some old plows, and broken horse-rakes.”

“But these sheds may catch from the barn; and then the church may catch from the sheds. Your father’ll be out of business, Moke, if the meeting-house burns.”

“Let it burn ; I don’t care ! Then I sha’n’t have to set through the old man’s long sermons,” said the irreverent Moke, son of the minister.

But the other boys insisted that there was no danger : it was a still night ; and, even if the sheds should take fire, “old D. W.” would be on the spot to put it out before it could make much headway.

Now Roy, too good-natured to wish to do any person a wanton injury, was also too good-natured to strenuously oppose the schemes of these reckless rogues. Moreover, a bottle was passing around ; and, after tipping it once or twice to his mouth, he was more willing than ever to stay and see the sport.

“I wish I had back my matches,” he said, smacking his lips. “But never mind. Where did you get this ?”

“Dod Alcott furnishes the stuff,” said Dod himself, proudly.

This was one of those shrewd things which had earned for him the name of “Eyeteeth Alcott,” though I dare say old Alcott would have thought it any thing but shrewd. When ever the boys wanted molasses for a candy frolic, or something to keep them warm on a cold night like this, — any thing, in short, which the paternal grocery afforded, — they had only to praise the son’s superior cunning in order to get it. Cunning, indeed, to rob his own father for the sake of a little poor fun and cheap flattery !

“How are they managng it ?” said Roy, growing interested.

“There’s a hole in the underpinning,” replied Herky. “A lot of us brought hay under our coats from Tommy’s stable. They’ve stuffed it, with a pile of sticks, through the hole, and now they’re ready to touch her off.”

“Dod’s plan — ain’t it cute?” said Moke, nudging Roy, to let him know that the cunning one must be praised. “Don’t you see? We’ve a splendid chance to hide here and watch; then, when the alarm comes, we can start out and run either way, and it will look as though we had come past the sheds, if anybody happens to see us. Now look sharp.”

Five eager faces peered through the opening in the back of the shed.

“There’s Iry comin’ to cover,” said Turkey Burnet. “Tommy’s at the hole; he’s scratchin’ matches.”

Roy remembered, with an uneasy feeling, that they were his matches, and hoped the fire would not kindle.

“He’s done it! he’s done it!” two or three wild whispers ran through the dark, empty shed; and Tommy came scrambling fast on hands and knees back to the opening, where his friends made way for him to crawl in.

CHAPTER II.

THE FUN GROWS RATHER SERIOUS.

THE star had set. The village homes were dark. Chill and dim lay the white world without; wrapped in comfort and slumber lay the peaceful dwellers within.

Suddenly wild cries ring through the deserted streets.

“Fire! fire! fire! fire!”

Then upon the terrified night breaks the alarm of a bell—clang! clang! clang! clang!

The sleepers wake; startled ears leave their pillows; eyes of fear open wide. Householders think of their homes and goods, purchased with so much toil, kept with so much care. Mothers tremble for their little ones, who may in an hour be left houseless in the winter night.

All seemed peace and serenity a minute before; now no man's roof is safe.

A strange, ruddy glow shines in at the windows, crimsons the snow-mantled earth far and near, and changes the hazy clouds to a canopy of fire.

The silent, sacred night is invaded by mad uproar and lurid glare.

Fire! fire! fire! Clang! clang! clang! Hurrying footsteps echo along the icy streets; and now, with shout and clatter and tinkling bells and red gleams of the swinging lantern, the fire-engine comes rushing down the street.

“Old D. W.” is out at last.

Firemen starting from sleep and bed at the first alarm, leaping into trousers and boots, and striking the sidewalk almost at a bound, vie with each other in reaching the doors of the engine-house, and launching the machine. Few the hands at the rope at first, but presently, from up street, from down street, out of by-streets, out of every court and alley, come flying feet of men and boys; eager hands of men and boys lay hold, and an ever-increasing crowd hurls the Juggernaut-car of our young village heathen noisily along its course.

Where is the fire? Many, relieved to find that it is at a distance from their own homes, forget that it is near the homes of others, perhaps in those homes, and turn to sleep again.

Some say, “It is the meeting-house!” But no—there is the calm, tall steeple shining ruddy-white in the glare of the flames.

“The horse-sheds, then!” But there are the sheds broadly lighted up to the eyes of those who hurry from one direction, and sharply outlined against the light to those coming from another.

“Morey’s old barn!” Who would have thought that it could make so good a blaze, and pour such vol-

umes of smoke and flames and sparks—as from a fiery crater—up into the sky?

The barn, with its moldy hay, and straw not so moldy, below and aloft, and its old farm-tools, was a mere gulf of fire by the time the engine reached the spot. No saving that! But here were the house-sheds, and yonder was Morey's new barn, only a half-dozen rods off—his house just beyond—the meeting-house on this side—every roof shingled, and dry as tinder, and showers of sparks falling, as if the clouds rained fire.

Still as the night was a little while before, now a rushing wind set in toward the burning building from every direction, the upward-surgng fountain of flames and rarefied air drawing in torrents of fresh air to fan the blaze.

The frightened Morey family heard the roaring and crackling, and, looking from their windows, saw the fire almost at their doors. What outcries! what terror and dismay! Half-dressed children running from room to room, unmindful of the cold, their appalled faces painted with the red flashes through the panes: the father sharing the panic, not knowing whether to stand in the door and shriek for help, or run and save his horses in the new barn, or stay and pack his household goods for a sudden removal.

It is but a few minutes, and yet it seems almost an hour, before the engine arrives, and a wild, shouting crowd fills the door-yard, and the suction-hose is pushed into the cistern (cellar-window broken for the

purpose—how frightful the sound of shattered glass at such a time!) and the brakes are manned. The hose-pipe is run forward across the snow-covered field; helmeted heads show in the glare of the flames; the order is shouted back:—

“Play away!”

The brakes rise and fall—clank, clank! The filling hose-pipe spits at leaks and joints, and struggles like a live thing in the head man’s guiding hands. Then out bursts a silver stream from the nozzle, sways, tosses like a plume, mounts higher and higher, and strikes, hissing, upon the flames.

“Fools, to waste water on that old shell!” cried a clear voice in the midst of the tumult.

The voice of Roy Rockwood, who had been one of the most active hands at rope and brakes, but had turned away in disgust when he saw the engineer’s design.

“What *would* you do with the water?” cried the owner of the property, in an agitated voice.

“Wet down these roofs the first thing, your house and new barn, and then those sheds,” said Roy, greatly excited. “A stream on the church-roof may be needed by that time.”

“I don’t know but the boy is right!” exclaimed Seth Morey, taking fresh alarm. “Cistern don’t hold much water.”

“Give us a pail,” said Roy. “I’ll go up on the new barn, for one, and watch for sparks. What’s the good of the ladders down there?”

“Quickest way will be to go up through the barn and get out on the roof from the scuttle,” said Mr. Morey, bringing a couple of pails, which were quickly filled at the well.

Just then a fresh chorus of shouts went up:—

“The sheds! — the meeting-house sheds are afire!”

The shingles of the low roof, parched by the tremendous heat, and sprinkled by the meteoric showers of sparks, were blazing in two or three places. A dash of water from the hose soon changed the kindling flames to clouds of vapor; but the incident served to quicken the preparations for wetting down Mr. Morey’s roofs.

Up through the new barn, by stairway, to the hay-loft, thence by a short ladder to the scuttle, and out of the scuttle upon the roof, went Roy, like a squirrel. Ira Bradish followed, and passed up to him a pail of water from hands below, after Roy had reached the ridge-pole.

In a minute there were three or four young fellows on the roof, passing and repassing pails, in the wild fire-light. One crept up to Roy, who was dashing water upon the shingles wherever a spark fell, and said, in a suppressed voice:—

“Couldn’t find it!”

“Couldn’t find it, Dod Alcott!” said Roy, angrily. “I told you it was on the beam, up in the corner, where your bottle was.”

“I know it,” said Dod. “But ’tain’t there; nor the bottle, either. Somebody’s took ’em.”

Roy had hidden his violin in the shed when he hurried forth to give the alarm and run with the engine, and had afterward commissioned Dod to take care of it. The result did not please Roy, for good reasons; and he charged the cunning one with stupidity.

“Go again,” he said. “You *must* find it. I can’t leave here, or I’d go myself.” And he muttered, in a fierce tone, his face glowering upon Dod in the red gleam: “We’ve done mischief enough for one night. *This* barn sha’n’t burn, unless I burn with it.”

Safe enough the roof seemed, surely, with him on it and buckets of water coming up to him through the scuttle.

And yet he had scarcely spoken, when another yell of alarm burst from the crowd below, and frantic gestures pointed to the new barn.

Roy looked all about him, standing erect on the ridge-pole, poised, pail in hand, ready to dash at a spark in any direction.

But the roof was now pretty well drenched, and sparks were extinguished almost as soon as they touched the shingles.

Roy, turning again, nearly lost his footing in his excitement, and cried out:—

“Where? Where?”

The barn—the very barn he was on—was mysteriously on fire.

“Here!” shrieked a voice behind him.

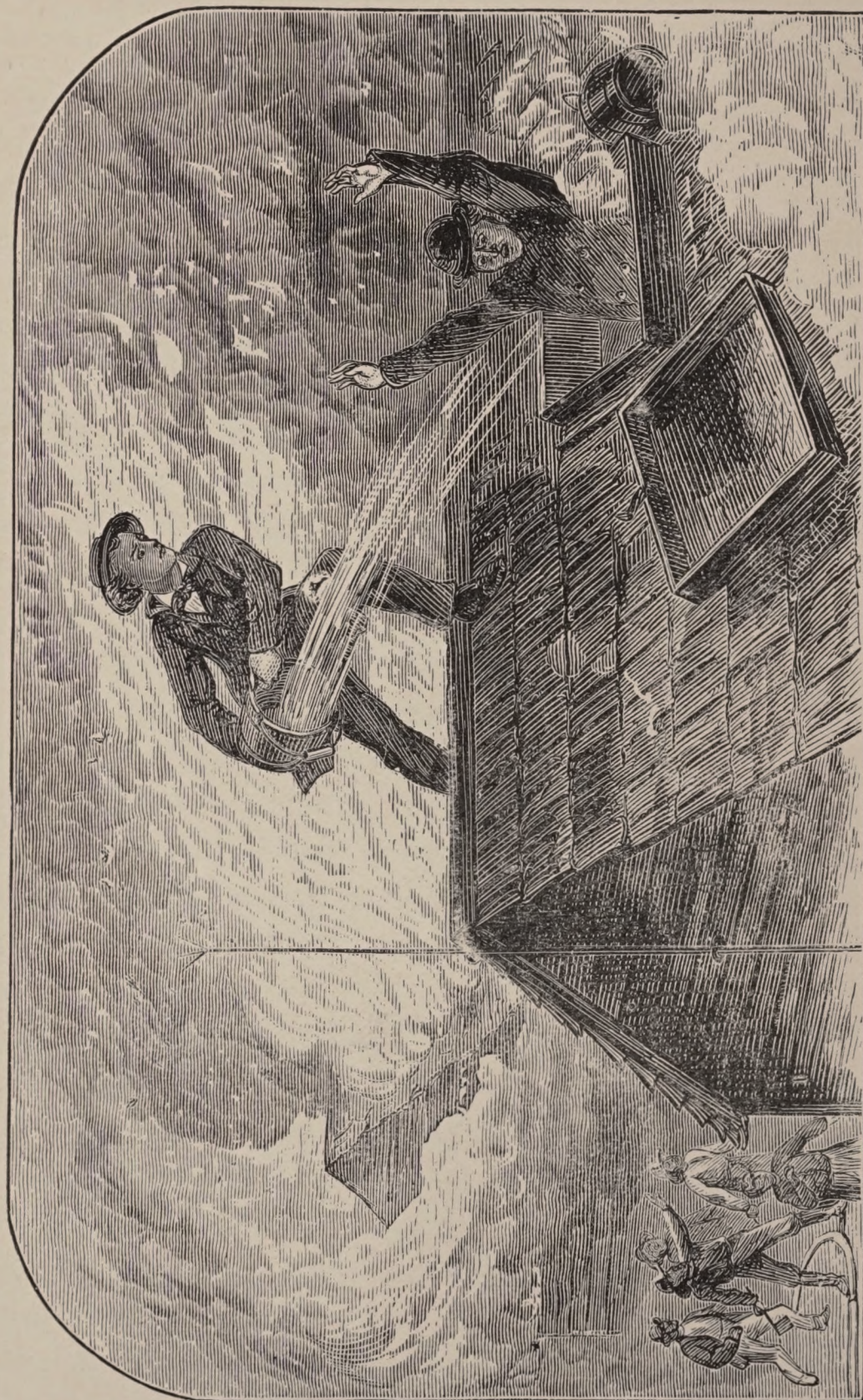
He looked, saw a sudden puff of smoke rising from the roof, and shot half a pail of water into it, through

it, through roof and all, without finding fire, or any resisting substance, save Turkey Burnet's head, which chanced to be there and received the charge full in the face.

Then Roy saw that the fire was *in* the barn, and that the smoke aimed at was surging up through the scuttle, down which Turkey was making his escape.

Dod and Ira followed Turkey, running the gauntlet of the smoke, and Roy found himself alone on the roof with a new fire roaring and snapping its teeth in the hay-loft under him.

At the same moment rose a cry of dismay from the yard. The water in the cistern had given out.



ON THE BURNING ROOF. — Page 26.

CHAPTER III.

SHOWS HOW A GLORIOUS FROLIC ENDED.

THE suction-hose was shifted to the well, while the long service-hose came coiling about on the snowy field toward the new barn, like a huge captured anaconda in the hands of howling natives of the forest.

Up went a ladder against the end of the barn, mounted instantly by helmeted men, dragging the great snake after them.

Meanwhile, an attempt was made to get Mr. Morey's horses out of the barn, but, maddened by the tumult without, and the sight of flames, they broke from the hands that held them, and rushed frantically back to their stalls.

Somebody yelled to Roy : —

“Shut that scuttle ! Shut that scuttle !”

The opening in the roof acted as a chimney to the fire raging below. Roy sprang to it, and, after a brief but fearful struggle, smoke pouring into his face and tongues of flame darting out at him, licking his hands, closed it from above. The smothered roar and crackle in the loft, between hay and rafter, was now something terrific.

The ladder did not reach the roof, but stopped at the mouth of the loft in the end of the barn. The door there had been unhooked from within, and pushed open a few inches, by some person unknown, propably one of our young lovers of fun looking for a good place to see the old barn burn.

Whoever it was, his reckless curiosity had caused all this later mischief; for, while Roy was resolutely at work above wetting the shingles, a fatal spark, drawn in through that slight opening by a draft from the scuttle, sailed down upon the sloping bank of hay, which in a moment burst into a blaze. If the rogue was still there, he did not stop to put it out, but scrambled back over the hay that crowded the loft, perhaps waiting to see the new barn burn with the old.

“Play away!” yells the fireman on the ladder, bringing the hose-nozzle to the door of the loft.

But no water came. The well was deep, and the suction-hose had to be lengthened before it would work. And now, since the scuttle was closed, fresh air rushed in at the open stable doors, and flame and smoke burst out from the loft into the faces of the men on the ladder.

They recoiled, descending a round or two, and yelled again:—

“Play away! Play away there!” not yet comprehending why no water came.

Meanwhile the horses, blindfolded with blankets, had been got out of the barn.

At last the engine drew, and a good stream went into the loft. Roy, still on the roof, desperately keeping his station, even after his efforts there had become useless, heard the smiting volley wash the rafters under him and hiss in the burning hay.

Only for a few moments. Again the engine sucked air, the stream sank, failed; there was no more water. The supply had been scanty in the first place, and two sets of hands rapidly sending up full buckets to the roofs of the barn and house, had nearly exhausted it before old D. W. came to drink.

Mr. Morey, seeing no hope for any of his buildings now, tossed his arms in the air and groaned aloud: —

“I am ruined! I am ruined!”

His family meanwhile prepared for flight, and a strong force of neighbors were carrying out his household goods and stacking them in the orchard.

The fire in the loft, choked for awhile, was now raging again, and smoke issued through chinks in the roof. Roy saw that if he was to leave it alive, he had no time to lose. He did not wait for a ladder the firemen were placing for him, but, sliding to the peak, threw himself over, and went down the lightning-rod, hand over hand, like an athlete.

The engine was run out of the yard and up the street, to take water from a neighbor's well and cistern. But, before it got fairly to work, two fire-companies from adjoining towns arrived almost simultaneously from opposite directions, with shouts and clattering machinery, amid acclamations of joy from the assembled crowd.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR HERO HAS A POOR APPETITE.

ROY did not make his appearance the next morning until after the family had breakfasted and the table had been cleared, with the exception of a solitary plate.

He came down stairs looking pale and haggard, but brightened a little on meeting his cousin Mabel, a sprightly girl of about his own age, with sparkling dark eyes, and a temper given to teasing.

“Sleepy-head!” said Mabel, archly laughing.

“Reason why,” said Roy, not inclined to laugh.

“Blue?” said Mabel, with a charmingly saucy air, peering into his face, her dilating eyes full of dazzling brightness and merriment.

“Black,” Roy answered, smiling now in spite of himself. “Am I going to have any breakfast?” seating himself at the table.

“Do you think you deserve any?” retorted his pretty cousin.

“If you and I had only our deserts,” he replied, “we might both go hungry sometimes.”

“Well, here’s what you don’t deserve then,” and

Mabel brought in coffee and chops, which she had been keeping warm for him. "Skylarking again last night, young gentleman!" she said, placing his breakfast before him.

"Skylarking? That's good!" said Roy, with a grim laugh. "Look at that!" And he showed a blistered hand.

The merry girl was sobered in an instant.

"O Roy! How did that happen?"

"You see," said Roy, with an indifferent air, as if he didn't care to brag about trifles, "I was at the fire, working like fury to save Morey's barn — on the roof, you know — when the hay in the loft under me took fire, and, to smother it, I sprung to shut the scuttle. The flames were bursting into my face, something about the fastenings caught, and — that's what's the matter with the back of that hand. Then, like a fool, I came down the lightning-rod. That was a bad job for the inside of both hands."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel, her face all pain and pity, "why did you?"

"I don't know. I had mittens in my pocket, but never thought to put them on. A fellow gets excited, such times, and don't care for little hurts. Lost my violin — that's the worst of all."

"That beautiful violin — your Christmas present! O Roy!"

"I shall get it again. Somebody carried it off for safe keeping, I suppose. I laid it up under one of the meeting-house sheds when I went to fight the fire.

Dod Alcott promised to look for it. When the sheds threatened to burn he went for it, but couldn't find it."

"Bright in you, I should think, to trust that fellow to take care of any thing you pretend to think so much of," said Mabel. "You won't get another very soon."

"That's consoling," said Roy, cutting his chop. "How just and considerate girls always are! Of course I was a silly fool to risk my violin and blister my hands trying to save another man's property. And now, of course, I don't know what a loss I've met with, but need to be told of it by my kind, my dear, kind cousin."

"Forgive me; it is too bad," said the penitent Mabel. "Your lost violin, and your blistered hands, I mean. And to think it is all on account of those abominable scamps."

"What abominable scamps?"

"Those who set the fire; for father says it must have been set."

"Of course," said Roy, carelessly, pouring out his coffee. "An old barn like that doesn't commit suicide. I heard talk last night about some enemy of Morey's having fired the building for revenge."

"Father doesn't think it was an enemy," Mabel replied. "Three barns have been burned within a year, — all set on fire, — and it isn't to be supposed the owners all have enemies. He says there's a gang of desperate rowdies in town, who set fires just for the sake of the mischief."

“I wish he would tell who the rowdies are,” said Roy, and recklessly gulped down his coffee.

“I wish somebody would, and have them punished,” replied Mabel; “every one of them.”

“Yes, I suppose ’twould be a good thing,” said Roy, using his napkin. “Little more coffee, Mabe. Not quite so much milk.”

“Though I don’t know what punishment would be severe enough,” she added. “I’ve no patience with such villains.”

“Needn’t slop my coffee so, if you haven’t,” replied Roy. “That ain’t to blame.”

Mabel set down the coffee-pot with a spiteful air, and wound up her sweeping condemnation of the offenders with, “Hanging is too good for them.”

“No doubt,” said Roy, stirring sugar into his cup. “But, good heavens, Mabe! what a ferocious little animal you are. I always thought you were rather tender-hearted, but now you show your claws.”

“I don’t care” — Mabel had heard her father talk at the breakfast-table, until she was full of indignation. “I wonder at *you*, Roy. I believe you would find excuses for the scoundrels.”

“I?” laughed Roy. “If I had my way about it, I’d hang ’em all together — the tallest in the middle, and the shorter ones on each side, like a row of organ pipes. It’s you that would make excuses for ’em, come case in hand. You’d find that each of these fellows had a father and mother and sisters, or some friends who would feel bad about them, and that he probably

didn't mean to do any thing so very wrong, and wouldn't do so again. That's the way with you women folks."

Roy was trying so hard to appear at his ease that he rather overdid the business. He was uncomfortably aware of Mabel's searching eyes upon him, and, with a guilty conscience and sick heart to hide, it was no easy part he had to play.

"Roy!" said Mabel.

And as he looked up he saw those bright, dilating eyes reading him, with a strange expression.

She said not another word, and he made no reply. The glance that passed between them was enough.

CHAPTER V.

AN INVITATION TO CALL ON THE SELECTMEN.

WITH troubled mind and shaky nerves, masked under an air of bravado, which he flattered himself was an air of innocence, Roy left the table, and sauntered back to his room, whistling a cheerful tune.

He hoped to have another talk with Mabel ; for, the more he thought of that strange look she gave him, the more it disturbed him. But she kept out of his way ; and, finally, with a handkerchief wrapped around his scorched hand, he sauntered into the street, still whistling with a show of excellent spirits.

He thought he would talk freely of the fire and of his lost violin, and carry off his trouble of mind with a bright and smiling countenance. But he had not gone far before he heard bad news.

The bearer was Moke Meredith, who came over to him from across the street, grinning, with a pale and sickly face.

“ You’ve heard — ”

“ What ? ” inquired Roy, nerving himself.

“ They’ve got Eyeteeth Alcott.”

“Where?”

“In the selectmen’s room. They’re skinning him alive with their cross-questions. They’ll be after you next.”

And Moke laughed.

Roy had tried hard not to be startled by what was coming; but he was now pale with consternation.

“Dod will bring us all in!” he said.

“He’s welcome to bring me in,” Moke answered. “I had nothing to do with it. I didn’t carry the bag nor help in any way.”

“Nor I, as for that matter,” said Roy.

“Why, yes, you furnished matches.”

And the small, dissipated eyes of the minister’s son twinkled with vicious satisfaction.

Roy was angry.

“Somebody called for matches, and I gave ’em before I knew what they were wanted for. But let me tell you, Moke Meredith, neither you nor I will get off on the plea of innocence if it’s proved that we were on the spot last night, and saw what was going on. And I don’t like to see you so quick to pull your fingers out of the crack, and leave the other fellows’ fingers to be pinched. You were in the scrape as deep as any one, and you’re not going to shirk your share of the blame.”

“It’s a state prison job, if it’s proved,” said Moke. “Any fellow’ll save himself from that if he can. But you and I needn’t be afraid, Roy. Our families stand too high. They never’ll touch a minister’s son.”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” Roy replied. “If they’ve got hold of Dod Alcott they’ve got hold of a loose end, and the whole thing is going to unravel. There’s Dumpy Drollers now!”

Drollers was a village constable, a man of stocky build, with a coarse, red face, whom the boys nicknamed “Dumpy,” and treated (behind his back) with familiar disrespect.

Roy did not like the looks of him just then. His manner showed that there was exciting business on hand; and he walked straight up to the boys.

“Rockwood,” said he, “the selectmen ’ud like to see you at their room.”

The words, though quietly spoken, were a blow to Roy. Sheer force of will helped him to keep a steady countenance and play his part.

“What do the honorable gentlemen want of me?”

“They think you know suthin’ about last night’s fire.”

“Well, I should rather think I did! I got a blistered hand by it. But what particular thing am I supposed to know about?”

Drollers answered evasively.

“They’ve been pumping George Alcott, I hear,” said Roy. “Does he know any thing about the fire?”

Drollers smiled.

“He does and he doesn’t. Truth is, George has got a leetle mite tangled up a-tryin’ to explain things, and now George himself needs explaining. Only way for a boy in his place is to tell a straightforward story. Will you come?”

“Certainly,” said Roy, with the utmost apparent frankness.

“Can I go, too?” said Moke, looking as if he might like to see any fun that was going on.

“If you’ve any thing to tell, they’ll be glad to have you in your turn,” said Drollers. “One at a time, though.” Whereat Moke’s ardor seemed suddenly quenched.

With head erect and a light step, but with a heart like lead in his breast, Roy walked on with the officer.

That the circumstantial evidence of the violin and Dod’s contradictory statements had fully implicated him in the terrible crime of the night before, he could not doubt. And now, if he appeared before the selectmen, he must either tell the truth and criminate his companions, which he deemed a dishonorable and cowardly act, or attempt to evade the truth with perhaps as poor success as Dod seemed to have had.

What should he do? He had but a moment to consider.

“Moke’s mother is going to give me something to put on my burnt hand,” he said, calmly enough, but with pale and nervous lips. “Can you wait a minute at the door?”

“I can go in with you and wait,” Drollers replied.

This was the first Meredith had heard of his mother’s benevolent intention. But he and Roy had been in too many scrapes together not to understand each other now.

“Of course,” he said to the officer, “that will be

more comfortable than freezing your stumps on the door-step. Though it won't take her but about a second and a half," nudging Roy. "She's got the poultice all ready."

They turned into a little court, at the end of which was the parsonage. Meredith conducted Roy and the constable through a neat cottage door, into a small sitting-room, where he offered them chairs, saying he believed his mother was in the kitchen.

Drollers sat down, but Roy hesitated, and said:—

"Hadn't I better go right to the kitchen and find her? It will save time and trouble."

"All right," said the son of the house, and led the way, closing doors behind them.

They passed quickly through the kitchen, not stopping till they reached the woodshed. Then Roy's suppressed excitement broke forth.

"Moke, it won't do for me to appear before the selectmen. I shall be arrested or held as a witness, sure. Keep Drollers waiting as long as you can; then tell him I suddenly remembered an engagement."

"What! you—" Moke began to stammer.

"Yes, I'm off; good-bye!"

And Roy, running from the shed, crossed the garden, leaped the fence, and disappeared down the long slope of a snowy field.

CHAPTER VI.

EYETEETH ALCOTT MEASURES HEADS WITH THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN.

MILES HOCUM, village store-keeper and post-master, was also chairman of the board of selectmen, — that august body which governed the affairs of our little New-England town.

The board held its meetings in Hocum's back room; and here three of the five members were assembled, that morning, when Alcott, the grocer, father of Dod, came over, at Hocum's request, in great haste and astonishment, bringing his son.

Hocum and Alcott were not very good friends, — a certain class of groceries being also in Hocum's line, — and Alcott had taken the request as a sort of insult. Drollers, who conveyed it, was a steady patron of the grocery, where he smoked more pipes and drank more beer than seemed altogether becoming in a public officer; and he had let fall a friendly word regarding the matter in hand.

“Mr. Ho-co-co-hocum,” began Alcott, — he was a short, fiery-faced person, who talked fast and stammered when excited, — “what's this you want of my b-b-b-boy?”

Hocum — a tall, gaunt, dry man, with a face like the bark of a tree, which wrinkled into a conciliatory smile, showing a hard, dry mouth and some scraggy front teeth — answered with extreme mildness of manner: —

“Take a seat, Mr. Alcott. We hardly know yet what we do want of your boy; but we hoped he might be able to tell us something about last night’s fire.”

“He — he don’ know nothin’ about the f-f-f-fire!” spluttered the father. “D-d-d-do ye, bub?”

“No,” said bub, with a scared and sullen look, hanging back toward the door.

“We rather think he can give us a little help in looking into some things,” Miles Hocum replied, with his most open smile and harmless drawl. “We’d like to have you stand here at the end of the table, George, and answer just a few questions, if you will.”

“I don’ know nothin’ about it,” protested Dod.

“In that case, you won’t have much to tell, and we sha’n’t keep you long. I suppose you want to be out to play, don’t ye? ’long with the rest of the boys. I don’t blame ye. I was once a boy myself. Stand a little further this way, if you just as lives.”

The chairman of the board was so very kind and persuasive, that the elder Alcott began to cool down a little, and the younger to take courage, thinking he would be out again in about five minutes.

“Thank you, George,” said Hocum, as the boy sidled to the place assigned him. “We’ve always

been pretty good friends, haven't we, George? And always will be, I hope. I like boys that tell the truth."

Then the scraggy teeth, still assisting at the genial smile which was gradually thawing the youngster, turned to the constable.

"Mr. Drollers, I'll thank you to stand by the door and prevent anybody else from coming in just now. I'd like our talk to be ruther private, for I think George is going to be pretty confidential, ain't ye, George?" And, without waiting for a reply, "Yes, I thought so; George and I always get along well together."

The chief magistrate of the village — the chairman of the board of selectmen is a sort of mayor on a small scale — had never given poor Dod six words in his life before, except to reprimand him for coasting on the sidewalk, or for playing hockey in front of his store; and, as for winning smiles, Dod had usually found them about as plenty on the dry bark of that wrinkled countenance as daisies in December. But now the amiable Hocum's manner was such as almost to persuade him that he and Miles had been on intimate terms for ten or a dozen years, at the lowest calculation.

Dod had expected to be asked direct questions by a terrible voice, backed up by a dreadful frown, and he had his answers ready. But how strangely he had been deceived! Miles Hocum's next remark was as pleasant and harmless as those which had gone before.

“Let me see — how old are you, George?”

“Fifteen next March,” answered the father, promptly, standing beside the son.

The scraggy teeth lifted in the speaker’s direction, and Miles Hocum smilingly said: —

“If you please, I prefer that the boy himself should answer my questions. You’d better sit down, Mr. Alcott.”

And Mr. Alcott finally sat down.

“I’ve heard you are a pretty shrewd boy, George,” added Miles; and you wouldn’t have believed till you saw it, that the aforesaid bark could twist itself into so curious and amusing a pucker.

Dod felt himself flattered, and made his first spontaneous answer, “Hev ye?” at the same time sniffing and grinning.

“I’ve heard you called Eyeteeth Alcott. Is that because you are so smart?”

“Ya-a-as.” And Dod grinned and sniffed again, and used his sleeve.

“You’re just the boy we want,” said Miles Hocum, patting him on the shoulder, — “a boy that’s got his eyeteeth all cut, and knows a thing or two. I believe you was at the fire last night?”

“Yaas,” replied Dod, beginning to close his shell.

“And saw as much of what was going on as any boy or man on the spot, I warrant. George, I want to know what you think of our present engine company. Speak out; don’t be afraid.”

Thereupon the silly bivalve opened again.

“I think it’s fust-rate.”

“Do you really think it’s as good as either of the other companies that were here last night?”

“I d’n know but what ’tis.” And Dod, still on a broad grin, put down his eyebrows, and pushed up his lip, and sniffed once more — a long and strong sniff, as if he were taking in sagacity through his moist nostrils.

“You run with our engine sometimes, don’t you?”

“Sometimes.”

“And know as much about it, probably, as any of the boys.”

“I guess so.”

Mr. Alcott fidgeted, not seeing just what these trivial questions and answers were leading to, and being anxious to get back to his business. Perhaps he did not place quite so high an estimate on Dod’s opinions as Dod himself was beginning to think they deserved.

“Mr. Ho-co-co-hocum, why don’t you come to the p-p-p-pint?”

“If you will allow me to come to it in my own way, we shall reach the *pint*, Mr. Alcott, quite as soon as we shall be apt to if we are interrupted. We thought it well that you should be present at this interview; but, if your business is pressing, we’ll try to git along without you, and treat George” — Miles laid a protecting hand on George’s shoulder, and added with a smile, — “just as well as if you were present.”

Alcott pulled out a big silver watch and looked at it impatiently, but settled back in his chair again.

“George, how long after the alarm was given last night do you think it was before our engine was out?”

“Not very long.”

“Twenty minutes?”

“Not so long as that.”

“A minute?”

“Longer, I guess.”

“Three minutes?”

“May be about that.” And the lip went up, and the brows went down, while the nose sniffed.

“I suppose a smart boy like you gits to the engine-house about as soon as anybody? Was you on time last night?”

“I got there 'bout as soon as the doors was open, I guess.”

“Did you have your sled or any thing with you?”

“No, sir.”

“Nothing in your hands?”

“No, sir.”

“You didn't take any thing out of your father's grocery?”

“I didn't come out of the grocery; grocery was shet up.”

“Where was you when the alarm was given?”

“I was to home,” said George, all innocence.

“Abed, I suppose?”

“No, I hadn't gone to bed; I was jest goin' to bed.”

“In the house, then?”

“No, I wasn’t exac’ly in the house.” Dod glanced uneasily at his father. “I was jest goin’ into the house.”

“Been out to play, I suppose?”

“I’d been out some o’ the time.”

“Do you remember where you’d been?”

“Around our grocery, and over to the tavern, and down to the stable, and around.”

“Who was with ye?”

“Oh, the fellers.”

“What fellers? Name some of ’em, George.”

“I don’t remember, pa’tic’lar. Fire alarm put every thing else out of my head.” And George grinned, having got in one of his cunningly prepared answers.

“Yes, it was pretty exciting, I suppose,” said the amiable selectman. “But you can recollect one or two of the boys you was with, at least. Was Mr. Little’s son one?”

“Herky Little? I don’t remember; he might ’a’ been.”

“Did you see him last evening any where before the fire?”

“I might ’a’, but I ain’t sure.”

“Did you see William Jeffreys?”

As William Jeffreys was not one of those engaged in setting the fire, Dod remembered very well having seen him.

“Did you see the Twombly boy?”

“I believe I seen him to the stables— perty sure I did.”

“Did he go any where else with you?”

“I don’t remember; he might ’a’ been round.”

“Was any body with you when you heard the alarm?”

“No,” said George, squarely.

“Did you go straight up the street to the engine-house, or go first to take a look at the fire?”

Here again Dod was ready with an answer designed to meet all points in the case.

“I seen the fire over the meetin’-house sheds, and jest scud acrost to see what was burnin’, and then went on up the street.”

“Didn’t stop?”

“No, sir,” emphasized with a prodigious sniff.

“Didn’t go into the sheds?”

“No: I cut ’tween the sheds and the meetin’-house, and come out t’other side.”

“Did you see anybody about there at the time?”

“Some fellers was ahead of me, and some was a-runnin’ behind, but I didn’t see who they was. We was all runnin’ and yellin’ fire.”

“Had the fire got much of a start then?”

“It seemed to be perty well under way in the barn; it was shinin’ through the cracks, and bustin’ out of a winder.”

“What firemen were at the engine-house when you got there?”

Dod named three or four, and others who arrived immediately after, and told how the engine was started out.

“What boys were there?”

Dod couldn't possibly remember.

“Isn't it rather strange, George,” said Miles Hocum, with his blandest expression, “that your memory should be so clear with regard to the firemen and the engine, and shut down so sudden when I ask ye about the boys?”

“'Twas the engine and the firemen I was thinkin' most about; I didn't care for the boys,” said cunning Dod.

“That's natural;” and Miles, baffled in his investigation in one direction, came round upon another track, which he had purposely left open. “About how fur is it, George, from your house to the engine-house?”

“I d'n'know; a perty good piece.”

“Quarter of a mile?”

“Nigher half a mile; it's over a quarter of a mile to the meetin'-house.”

“And do you re'ly think, George, that you ran more than half a mile in three minutes, let alone the time it took you to pass round between the church and the sheds, and inspect the fire?”

Dod felt dizzy for a moment, and found it necessary to take two good sniffs with an interval between, before framing his reply.

“Might 'a' been more'n three minutes.”

“Do you think you could do it in four minutes?”

“I wan't quite home when I heard the alarm.”

“Ah! You were not just going into the house, then. You must have been up nearer the church.”

“Guess I was, come to think.”

The elder Alcott fidgeted, and pulled out his watch again.

“I don’t see but what the boy makes a purty straight story. Can’t expect him to remember every thing. What ye tryin’ to co-co-come at?”

“That will appear all in good time, friend Alcott, if you will have the kindness not to interrupt us. Don’t you think you must have been quite near the church, George, to have got to the engine-house, so soon after the alarm?”

“I was down street a *little* ways,” Dod insisted.

“Did you see Roydon Rockwood on your way?”

“Not to know him; there was fellers runnin’.”

“Did you see him at all last night?”

“I seen him to the fire. He was on the ruf of the barn.”

“Did you speak with him there?”

“I don’t remember. Guess I did.”

“Had you spoken with him before that?”

“Don’t think I had.”

“Now, George, I want you to remember if you can, the talk you had with Roy on the roof.”

Dod sniffed hard, but couldn’t remember a word of it. His hands played with the ends of his red tippet, and he looked listlessly about the room, as if the interview were growing monotonous.

Miles brought him up with a sharp question.

“Was it any thing about a fiddle?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE SELECTMAN'S HEAD PROVES THE LONGER OF THE TWO.

A DREADFUL gulf seemed to open suddenly under Dod's feet. He leaned his hands on the table, and forgot to sniff.

The selectman's manner had, in the meantime, undergone a change. His smiles had grown harder and drier, and more unamiable, and finally faded into a sort of crocodile grin; and his glassy eyes gleamed.

"I don't jest remember," gasped poor Dod, when the last question was repeated.

"I can't force you to remember," said Miles Hocom; "and you are not *obliged* to answer my questions. But I hoped you might be able to, so that you wouldn't have to be arrested and taken before a justice."

"Arrested?" cried the elder Alcott, springing from his chair. "My b-b-b-boy taken before a j-j-j-justice!"

"There are circumstances which will render that step necessary, if he don't choose to make a private explanation here among his friends," replied the selectman. "I've done my best to make it easy for him."

“ He'll answer. Answer Mr. Ho-co-co-hocum! ”

“ I will if I can, ” whimpered Dod, as his father shook him rudely by the shoulder.

“ Well, George, please tell me what you were looking for under the shed a little while before you went up to Roy on the roof. ”

“ Wan't lookin' for nothin', not as I remember! ”

“ Then what did you mean, when you were heard to say to the Twombly boy, ‘ Where in thunder is that fiddle? ’ ”

Dod felt as if those proverbial eyeteeth of his were being pulled. He sniffed, and twisted his tippet, and finally — thinking it was not, after all, *his* fiddle — made answer : —

“ I wanted to know where it was, but I hadn't been lookin' for't. ”

“ You were looking for something else, then. I understand. But you knew it was Roy's fiddle? ”

“ I didn't know, but I thought it was. ”

“ What made you think so, if you had had no talk with him? ”

“ I did talk with him on the ruf. ”

“ About the fiddle? ”

“ I believe something was said about the fiddle. ”

“ And you told him it was gone? ”

“ I s'pose I did. ”

“ Now, George, what is there in all that to make you so reluctant to tell the simple truth about it? ”

Dod hung his head.

“ And now, if you had had no previous talk with

Roy, how did you know his fiddle was under the shed?"

"I seen him put somethin' up there — I thought it was a fiddle."

"What made you think so?"

"It had a cloth over it; but it was shaped like a fiddle."

"When did you see him put it there?"

"I d'n know — some time after the fire broke out."

"Think again. Roy was at the engine-house, I am told, among the very first. He ran with the engine, and he had no fiddle then. So he must have placed it under the shed *before* he went to the engine-house. In fact, that is what he said. He made inquiries after the fire, and said that he was on his way home from Matthew Bemis's, where he had been to practice, when, seeing a fire in Mr. Morey's old barn, he placed his fiddle on a brace under the shed, and ran to give the alarm, and help with the engine."

"I believe that *was* the way of it," said Dod, and wondered why he hadn't told so much of the truth in the first place.

"Then, if you saw him place his fiddle there, it must have been when you ran between the church and the sheds, to see where the fire was."

"I guess it was, now I think on't."

"But you said before, that you saw no boy that you recognized. Now it appears that you not only saw Roy, and knew him, but took notice of the thing he put up under the shed, that it was in a cloth cover, and was shaped like a fiddle."

The cunning one could only twist his tippet, and look wildly around. His father came to the rescue.

“Mr. Ho-co-co-ho-co-cum, you’re tanglin’ the boy all up.”

“He’s tangling himself up,” Mr. Hocum mildly replied. “But perhaps he can untangle himself yet by making true answers to my questions. Did you hide your bottle in the shed, George, before or after Roy placed his fiddle there?”

Dod turned faint, and leaned on the table again, his face showing a pale sea-green through its archipelago of freckles. The cunning one was surprised into telling the truth for once.

“’Twas about the same time, I guess.”

The selectman made a sign to one of his associates, who took from a closet behind him a black pint bottle, and placed it on the table.

And now Miles Hocum must have his little joke.

“This is the *pint* we’ve been coming to all this time, Mr. Alcott, and now we’ve got to it. Is this the bottle, George?”

“Looks like it,” gasped George, with white lips.

“May be your father would like to know where you got it: I ain’t so particular about it,” said Miles, blandly.

The elder Alcott looked red and volcanic, as he held the bottle a moment, then set it down on the table again with a thump.

“Did you get it out of your father’s grocery on your way to the fire?”

“ No ; grocery was shet up then.”

“ Ah, yes, I remember. You had taken it before, and had it with you when you went to the fire.”

“ I had it with me, but didn't want to be bothered with it, so I put it up under the shed jest as Roy did his fiddle.”

Dod seemed to think he had made a good point here, and brightened a trifle.

“ But you said before that you had nothing with you at all,” Miles reminded him.

“ You asked about my *sled*. I said I had no sled.”

“ Mr. Paris, let's hear just what he did say.”

Mr. Paris was the other of Mr. Hocum's associates in office then present, and a very solemn one. He had been busily writing all the time ; and it now appeared that he had got Dod's answers all in black and white.

Mr. Paris read : —

“ *Question.* ‘ Did you have your sled or any thing with you ? ’

“ *Answer.* ‘ No, sir.’

“ *Question.* ‘ Nothing in your hands ? ’

“ *Answer.* ‘ No, sir.’”

Dod saw a loop-hole to creep out, and crept out of it.

“ Wal, I didn't have it in my hand ; I had it in my pocket.”

And he showed how he had carried the bottle buttoned under his coat.

“ How many times did Roy drink out of your bottle ? ”

“Not morn'n once, I guess.”

“What other boys dranked out of it?”

“I d'n know as any.”

“It's nearly empty, you see,” said Miles Hocum. “I don't suppose you took the trouble to carry an empty bottle with you; and you and Roy couldn't have dranked a pint of whisky between you.”

“'Twan't all whisky; 'twas about half water, with sugar in it.”

“I'm glad you boys had the good taste to put water and sugar into your grog, George. Did you give the Twombly boy a drink?”

“I might 'a' — don't remember.”

“Did he drink before or after Roy?”

“Before, I guess, if he dranked at all.”

“I suppose it was when you met Roy at the shed that you offered him a drink?”

“I believe it was.”

“But you was running to the fire; and you said you didn't go into the sheds at all. How about that, Mr. Paris?”

Solemn Mr. Paris turned over the pages of his notes, and confirmed Mr. Hocum's recollection.

“I must a-forgot.”

“But, George, you was at the engine-house about as soon as anybody. You could hardly have had time to stop at the sheds on your way, offer whisky to the boys, put up your bottle, and make this distance in three, or four, or even five minutes. Try and remember: don't you think you and Roy hap-

pened to meet there, and you gave him a taste before the alarm?"

Dod stammered both yes and no to this question, and finally couldn't remember at all.

"You co-co-co-confuse the boy so!" ejaculated the father, thrown into a violent perspiration by these late developments.

"I've tried not to confuse him," smiled the selectman. "I've tried to encourage him to tell a truthful story. I'm afraid now we shall have to send for some of the other boys to help him out. Mr. Drollers, I wonder if you can find Roy Rockwood. Please ask him to come in and have a little talk with us."

Drollers went out, pushing his way through a crowd collected in the store; for Dod's presence in the selectman's room, and the mystery of the closed doors, together with vague rumors of circumstantial evidence likely to lead to the detection of the culprits, had already stirred up an intense excitement in the village.

Two or three persons attempted to slip through the door, but a selectman pushed them back and locked them out.

"Now, George," said Miles Hocum, "to save time, while we're waiting for others to explain what you can't, please tell us about the hay found under the shed near where the bottle and fiddle were."

Dod made haste to say, —

"'Twas there when I fust went into the shed last night."

“ True ? ”

Dod was very sure : he didn't mean that the suspicion of carrying the hay there should rest upon him.

“ Singular,” said Mr. Hocum, with his crocodile smile. “ You was in a tremenjous hurry to run to the fire. The excitement of the alarm put every thing else out of your head, so that you can't even remember what boys had been with you late in the evening. And yet you took time to notice a little litter of hay in a dark corner ; and you remember it well. Now look me in the face, George. Why do you turn away ? ”

“ Cos your breath is bad ! ” was the lad's desperate answer.

It was not so lame an explanation, either, as some he had been making ; the scraggy teeth being in notoriously bad odor with everybody who was on speaking terms with their owner. It was even reported that a respectable citizen had declined to serve on the board with Hocum, until the latter should have opened an account with the dentist.

For the first time during the examination, Mr. Paris smiled and Mr. Hocum didn't.

Dod perceived that he had made a hit ; and down went the brows and up went the lip, with a sniff of returning confidence.

“ Well, George,” said Mr. Hocum, studying great moderation and gentleness in his drawl, and smiling again, after a pause. “ I have had my eyeteeth cut

a little longer than you have, and it's no wonder if they're beginning to decay. I am sorry you find my breath offensive. And now, if you will be so kind as to use your handkerchief, and snuff less, I will try to keep my mouth shut a little more ; so I hope we may be mutually a little more agreeable to each other."

"Hain't got no handkerchief," said Dod, feeling himself crushed again.

Upon which the elder Alcott began to pull one from his pocket — a flaming red silk, redder even than his face, and large enough for a family handkerchief.

"Here! B-b-b-blow your nose, bub."

Miles was questioning Dod again with regard to the mysterious circumstance of the hay, without arriving at any very satisfactory results, when Drollers returned, in great heat, and reported that Roy had given him the slip.

"He promised to come, plausible as could be," said the indignant officer ; "but he wanted me to wait for him a minute at the minister's, while Mrs. Meredith put a poultice on his hand. And there I sot and sot, till bimeby I smelt a rat, and went out into the kitchen ; and there was Mrs. Meredith, and she didn't know nothing about no poultice ; and Roy was gone."

"The thing is growing perty serious," remarked the selectman, in his dry, mild way. "We'll have in the Twombly boy next, and see what he knows about the hay and the fire. Meanwhile, I am sorry to say, Mr. Alcott, we shall have to have your boy placed under arrest."

“Mr. Ho-co-co-hocum!” exploded the volcanic parent, springing to his feet, “after your p-p-p-promise!”

“I made no promise; but I hoped the boy’s explanations would be so satisfactory that this step might not be necessary. His answers have been very unsatisfactory; and we shall be obliged to use an instrument with which I believe Mr. Drollers is provided.”

The instrument was a justice’s warrant for Dod’s arrest, which Drollers had been carrying in his pocket all this time, awaiting the selectman’s motions. How many more such instruments he carried, for the apprehension of other offenders, could only be guessed by the terror-stricken Dod.

Dod was now quite broken down. He whimpered, while his father stormed. But nothing could move the gentle Miles Hocum; and even the friendly Drollers had to do his duty.

Dod was taken out; and Tommy Twombly was brought in.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROY DECLINES TO MEASURE HEADS WITH ANYBODY, BUT TAKES HIS OWN OUT OF THE WAY.

THE escape of Roy, under such circumstances, was the town talk in an hour; and it carried grief and consternation to the hearts of his friends.

All day he was not heard from; but, late in the evening, as the family sat talking of this last strange act of his, suddenly the door opened, and in he stepped.

All eyes turned to him, of course; but not a word of greeting. There was a dead silence for a moment. Mabel bent her flushed face over the worsted she was working.

Mrs. Rockwood, a nervous, dark little woman, still pretty, compressed her lips, and looked away.

The good doctor alone kept his eyes fixed kindly and inquiringly on his nephew.

“Well!” said Roy, with an attempt at careless gayety which was not a perfect success, “I should think I had come to my own funeral. Don’t let me interrupt the solemnity.”

“Your funeral could hardly be a sadder occasion to

us, if the things we hear about you are true," said the doctor. "To bury our hopes of you at last is worse than burying your body, Roy."

"So! it's the funeral of your hopes of me, is it?" said Roy, his countenance changing, and his voice sinking. "Do you feel that way? Do you, Mabel?"

A flash of her eyes, full of intense meaning, was the only reply.

"Can you wonder if we do?" said Mrs. Rockwood, taking a pinch of snuff with her delicate fingers, her face still turned away from him. "Would your own father have borne more from you than your uncle here has?"

"No, Aunt Dolly," Roy answered, with a gush of feeling; "nor my own mother more than you have."

The delicate fingers trembled.

"Roy," said Mrs. Rockwood, almost sharply, "have you had any supper?"

"Never mind about any supper for me," he replied, huskily. "I'm a weak, good-for-nothing, miserable wretch, that don't deserve another favor, or a single kind look from one of you."

Yet his eyes silently besought Mabel for one such look. She kept her face still bowed over her worsted, and did not give it.

As no one replied, he went on, thinking he would say something to touch her.

"Perhaps I shall never eat supper again in this house."

"Don't talk like that, Roy," said his uncle.

“ I mean it ! ” said Roy, desperately.

“ Well, then, ” replied the doctor, calmly, but with an undertone of feeling, “ tell us what you have done to drive you away from a home, where you have always been well treated ; for it’s certainly nothing we have done. ”

“ I’ve done what I’m to blame for, but not so much to blame as people will think, ” said Roy. “ I had nothing to do with setting the fire last night, and yet I don’t expect to make anybody believe it. ”

“ It may be hard now, since you ran away from Mr. Drollers in the way you did. But, if you had appeared before the selectmen and told the simple truth, why shouldn’t it have been believed ? If their suspicions have been confirmed, you have your own conduct to blame. ”

“ I know it. And yet I couldn’t tell the truth. For, though I didn’t set the fire, nor help set it, nor approve of it, I was accidentally present when it was set. ”

“ Very well, ” exclaimed the doctor. “ Testify to that, and convict the actual culprits ; for of course you know who they are. ”

“ That’s just it, ” said poor Roy. “ I am in honor bound not to betray them. ”

“ In honor bound to such rascals ! ” repeated the doctor, with rising anger. “ Then you will be regarded as one with them. ”

“ I suppose so. But I can’t help it. I might have prevented the mischief, and didn’t ; and to turn

against them now, — when I was trusted not to tell of them, if I didn't assist, — that I shall never do. I am not so base."

Roy had sat down ; and now the doctor, usually so calm, rose, and walked the room in great agitation.

Roy looked, and saw Mabel's eyes fixed upon him, as if they would pierce him through.

"I've just a word to say, Roy," began the doctor, leaning upon the back of a chair. "I've tried to do my duty by you since your father died," — the good man's voice trembled, and his features worked convulsively a moment, — "and I shall try to do it still. But things have reached a pass where forbearance becomes a weakness rather than a virtue. This gang of night-prowlers and marauders is to be crushed out. I'll give what I have, even to my right hand, to see it broken up, and the ringleaders punished to the extent of the law. All good citizens are with me in this. Now, are you with us or against us?"

"I'm not against you. But I can't tell."

"Then you countenanced the crime."

"Crime, Uncle Jason!"

"Crime," sternly repeated the doctor. "It's a state-prison offence, as you know. But, if your complicity was accidental, your course is clear, and I will make it safe for you. What we want is the ringleaders. Give evidence against them, make a clean breast of it, and you will be let off. Side with them, and you will be treated like them. I can't shield you, and I wouldn't if I could. I suppose you know a

warrant has been issued for your apprehension?"

"I guessed as much."

Hesitating between his sense of duty to society and himself, and what he deemed his honor pledged to his companions, Roy felt his heart crushed between two millstones.

"Go to Mr. Hocum, and tell what you know, and that warrant will not be served; I have his word for it," continued the doctor. "But no half-way work, no prevarication, will answer."

"I know it; and for that reason I preferred not to go with Mr. Drollers to-day," said Roy.

"You've no time to lose, either. Go this very evening," the doctor insisted.

"I must have till to-morrow to think of it," faltered Roy; and a wild thought flashed through his brain, that he would kill himself in the meantime.

The doctor was called into his study to see a patient.

"Mabel," said Mrs. Rockwood, "take Roy to the kitchen, and see what you can find for his supper."

Mabel quietly laid down her worsted, and went out. Roy did not follow at first, but sat sullenly nursing his dark thoughts, in the chair where his uncle's last stern words had left him.

"Roy, come here," said his aunt, in a quick, nervous way. He went, and stood by her chair, flushed and sulky. "You look as if some of us had injured you. Have you been wronged by anybody in this house?"

"By nobody but myself."

“I’m glad you think so. I’m not going to lecture you, Roy.” The little fingers carried up a pinch of snuff again. “You know better than anybody that you’ve been a bad boy. Now take your uncle’s advice. He is your best friend. We all like you, Roy, spite of every thing. I do — I always shall. The more’s the pity that you can’t — well, you know.” And the little woman brushed away a tear. “Now go, and eat your supper.”

“Aunt Dolly,” said Roy, in a thick voice, “I shall always be grateful to you. Whatever happens, I shall always remember your kindness.”

He stooped, and kissed her forehead, and went out. He did not know that he left her weeping.

“There’s your supper, Master Roy,” said Mabel, coldly.

“Thank you, Miss Mabel.”

“Don’t thank me; thank my mother.”

“You wouldn’t have given me any supper?”

“I didn’t say that. I would never turn a beggar away hungry.”

“I am a beggar, am I?”

“I haven’t called you names.”

Roy placed himself before her.

“You don’t believe in me, Mabel.”

“Is there any reason why I should?”

“No,” said Roy, bitterly, “if you don’t see any.”

“I see more than you think I do,” she answered, relenting a little toward him. “You can’t hide. Didn’t I know this morning, as well as I do to-night,

that you had something to do with setting that fire? I can read you."

"And you hate me?"

"I hate your bad conduct. It seems a great deal worse than it would if you didn't have friends, whose patience you are wearing out. Now eat your supper. I am going."

"I won't eat a mouthful unless you sit down with me."

"Then you will go hungry."

"Mighty little you care for me," he said, still detaining her. "You haven't asked me about my hand."

"Why should I care for your hand? You've other hurts of a good deal more importance. I wish *you* cared as much for them as you do for a little blister of the skin. Now let me go, Roy."

"You may never see me again after to-night, Mabel," he said, darkly, with struggling passion, as he stepped aside to let her pass.

"I don't know why I should wish to, unless you are different."

"Well, do me a favor."

"Any thing in reason."

"Have your father get back my fiddle. It's in Mr. Hocum's hands. Keep it till I call for it."

"Can't you get it yourself?"

"Perhaps not."

"Well, I'll do so much for you. And you may be sure I'll keep your Christmas gift more carefully than you did."

She was gone. Roy walked up and down the room, full of wrath and grief, forming wild schemes and angry resolutions.

His uncle walked in.

“Do you know who has just been in to see me, Roy?”

“No, sir.”

“Constable Drollers. And he came to arrest you.”

“Well, why didn't he?” said Roy, with a flash of defiance.

“Because I dissuaded him. I had hoped you would appear voluntarily before Squire Davis tomorrow, and give evidence against young Alcott and the Twombly boy. They and Mr. Little's son are all in custody, I suppose you know.”

“I made no promise to give evidence against anybody.”

“You did not. And I have no more reasons to urge. Take the night to think of it, and decide what you will do. And remember, Roy, how much depends upon your decision — your whole future happiness, Roy.”

The doctor withdrew. And now Roy changed his mind about supper. He ate hurriedly and hungrily, but thinking all the time intently of something else. He afterward retired to his room, and may have slept a little, in spite of his many troubles, for he had youth and health.

But, late in the night, — it must have been near three o'clock, — when all else was still in the house,

he was up, lighting his lamp, silently dressing himself, and packing a few things into a small traveling-bag.

All this took him but a few minutes. Then he wrote half a dozen lines on a piece of paper, and left it unfolded on his table. Then he blew out the light, and went softly down the stairs, and out of the house, and away into the wintry night, with his small earthly possessions stuffed into the little bag he carried.

CHAPTER IX.

WHY MABEL OPENED THE BLINDS OF HER WINDOW AT THREE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

MABEL had been a little perverse. She was deeply grieved at Roy's conduct, which seemed to her almost unpardonable; and she had meant to show him that he could not presume too much upon her good nature. But having punished him with severe words and looks, and left him to his solitary supper, all her resentment vanished, and she thought of him with remorseful pity.

Pride alone prevented her from going back and comforting him in his trouble. The actual danger he was in, which she had hardly realized until told that a constable, armed with a warrant for his arrest, had just been in the house, quickened her sympathy, and filled her with alarm. She hoped he would return to the sitting-room, or seek some opportunity of seeing her again, and was disappointed when he went off alone to his room.

She was somewhat piqued too.

“Does he flatter himself that *I* am going to put myself in *his* way? Or doesn't he care to make up

with me? As if he had done nothing to be forgiven!"

On the way to her own room she passed his door. It was closed. He seemed to have shut his heart against her too.

She lay awake a long while thinking of the darkly threatening words which had been wrung from him in his despair and misery. Did he really mean them?

"No, he can't go away from us," she tried to assure herself. "He has no money to speak of, and no other friends. In the morning I will be kind to him, only I won't let him know that these quarrels hurt me as much as they do him."

So she fell asleep.

Toward morning, she thought she heard a noise in the house. Something had startled her from a not very profound slumber, and she listened.

Silence. A stair creaked. Then silence again. Then the sound of a door softly closed. Was it the outer door of the house? Hark! footsteps on the walk! Slow, stealthy steps at first—now quicker and sharper, and now they seemed moving rapidly away.

Mabel flew to the window, threw it open, and put out her head. The old moon, rising late—a ghastly fragment of a moon, casting a cold glimmer over the wintry scene—shone suddenly upon a frightened girl's face, one little hand pushing back the blind, and the other clasping a white night-dress about a white throat.

The stillness without was broken only by those fast receding steps. And there, not fifty yards away, was

the only moving thing to be seen — a youthful human figure hurrying up the street.

Mabel never could tell why she did not shriek, "Roy! Roy! come back!" But for a moment she was quite stunned by what she saw; and, before she could command her thoughts or get her voice, he was out of sight.

She remained some moments at the window, straining ears and eyes, regardless of the cold. When at last the sounds died away, a terrible sense of loneliness and dread came over her, and she drew back shivering into her chamber.

"He cannot have gone for good!" she said to herself. "He *must* come back! And may be it wasn't Roy at all."

No more sleep for her till she had satisfied herself as to that.

She hastily threw on a morning gown, and glided from the room. Had Roy's door been closed, it is uncertain what she would have done. Perhaps she would have taken it as a sign that he was there, and have returned, re-assured, to her bed. It was his habit to sleep with his door closed, and to leave it open when he went out. It was open now.

Alarm nerved her resolution; she went in; she whispered his name to the hollow walls. She knew where his matches were; she struck one, and lighted his lamp.

There was his empty bed, a few garments scattered about, one bureau drawer left open in the hurry of flight, and a written paper on his table.

Mabel bent over it and read:—

“Good-by, uncle and aunt. I am going. It is all my own fault, and you will think me an ungrateful wretch, but I see no other way out of my trouble. Good-by, Mabel. Roy.”

Cold in the lamp-light she stood, holding the paper with icy fingers that trembled with excitement.

He was gone, then, and her last words to him had been unkind. Perhaps they helped to drive him away.

But he was hardly yet out of the village. Not a moment was to be lost. Bearing the lamp in one hand and the paper in the other, she hurried to the room where her parents slept.

The good doctor, accustomed to wake at all hours, started up on his pillow, and asked what was wanted. In a few words she told him what had happened.

“Foolish boy!” said the doctor, taking the paper and looking at it while she held the lamp. “You think I ought to harness up and drive after him? I might overtake him and bring him back.”

“Oh, do!” Mabel pleaded.

“Go to your bed,” replied the doctor. “Leave the lamp. I’ll think about it.”

She returned to her bed-chamber, and listened long in vain to hear the horses’ hoofs on the barn floor, the jingling sleigh-bells, and the runners starting off in the squeaking snow.

“No,” the doctor said to his wife, who added her entreaty to Mabel’s, “I won’t do it. He has chosen

his own course. A little experience of the world may be the best thing for him. He'll get sick enough of it. Poor, foolish boy, I pity him!"

So saying, he blew out the light, and turned again on his pillow, but not to sleep.

Little sleep indeed was there in the house for either of those three during the rest of the night.

CHAPTER X.

ROY SETS OFF ON A LONG JOURNEY.

ROY, in the meanwhile, tramped on in the moonlight, through the gray waste of snow-clad hills and fields bordering the country road. Carrying his sachel by a strap passed over his right shoulder and under his left, his hands free, his feet cased in stout winter boots, he felt himself a soldier of fortune setting off in light marching order to do battle with fate.

But was his heart so light? Proud and passionate and courageous thoughts bore it well up at first, — a boat on tossing waves. Ah, would youth and hope ride ever upon that wild, high sea! What storms of misfortune might we endure, what dangers dare to face!

Roy thought too little of the pain he was inflicting upon those he left behind. He was even willing to make Mabel suffer. She should see what a spirit she had slighted, what a great and scornful heart she had flung away. It might be all the consequence of his own wrong doing, — no doubt it was, — but, accustomed to be petted when he was sulky and forgiven when he was in fault, he felt himself injured now be-

cause he had not met with the indulgence which he had learned to think was his due. Boys are just so reasonable.

Roy knew little of practical life. His good-natured uncle had not brought him up to hard work. To cut a few kindlings for the kitchen fire, to do a few chores about the stable, to hoe a little in the garden, — these were about all the tasks with which those agile hands of his had been made acquainted. Yet he was an active and ingenious young fellow; and there was no end to the cat and dog carts, panoramas, velocipedes, toy ships, elder flutes, double-runners, squirrel-traps, and bird-cages, with which he cluttered work-shop and garret. He fancied that life out in the world was something like that — gaining a subsistence by doing just what one had a mind to.

His notions of the future he was braving were, therefore, rather vague. He was not afraid of hardships; and he had heard his uncle say, that labor could always be had by those who were able and willing to do it. He did not know what sad exceptions there were to that general rule.

He would labor, he would do any thing that came to his hand; and he cherished a secret belief that he would strike some vein of good luck, out of which a future might be gained.

In addition to this large capital of foolish ideas, he had nine dollars in his pocket.

He would have preferred the summer time for his adventure; and so dreary seemed the white, frozen

world he was traversing, that now and then a terrible shadow of doubt would settle upon his heart ; and he could not help wishing it might at any time be safe for him to turn back.

“ What a fool and idiot I have been ! A pretty set of young blockheads I was with ! Well, this may be a good thing for me in one way — it will separate me from them in spite of myself. Why didn't I follow my better impulses, and leave them of my own accord ? What did I really care for such low, miserable fun as we had ? Fun ! ” he repeated, aloud, grinding the word wrathfully in his teeth. “ It makes me hate myself when I think of it ! ”

Such were his reflections after a walk of seven or eight miles had taken off the edge of youthful spirits with which he set out.

The stars paled, and lights in the farm-houses appeared. The moon grew filmy, and his shadow faded in the snow. The east brightened ; low-hanging bars of cloud changed to golden stairs and a throne of fire ; a pure, soft light suffused the world.

Tired and hungry as he was, Roy could not help feeling something of the exhilaration which God meant that the birth of a day should carry to the hearts of men. The past is buried in the night. With fresh life, with hope and strength renewed, comes the beautiful dawn. From that ethereal fountain, a subtle and infinite joy overflows. Even the wrinkled and hoary face of winter warms into a smile.

Perhaps his very weariness of body favored a certain exaltation of the mind, which his vision of the sunrise inspired.

“This is freedom!” thought he.

Old habits, old associations, were shaken off. Chains were broken. Now, for a new, wild, glad life at whatever cost! No more meanness and folly.

“I begin new to-day.”

Ah! could he also have felt that he was beginning right!

So on he tramped while the dawn grew to day, and the golden stairs and fiery throne were lost in the ascending glory.

And now, with a strange contraction of the heart, Roy thought:—

“They know by this time. They have seen my door open, and read that paper. What do they think? What do they say?”

He pictured to himself the astonishment of his friends at that moment. For he never once suspected that Mabel’s quick ear had heard him leave the house, and that Mabel’s face had looked from the window in the moonlight just as he passed from sight. Had he heard the blind open, and looked back and seen that face, perhaps his resolution might have failed and his whole future have been different.

CHAPTER XI.

ROY MAKES A LARGE NUMBER OF SMALL ACQUAINTANCES.

ROY now grew anxious about breakfast. Seeing a man come out of a barn, carrying a pail, he accosted him.

“How far is it to a public house?”

“Little over two miles, straight ahead.”

The man was crossing from the barn, which was on one side of the road, to a farm-house on the other side. He looked with some curiosity at Roy, who stepped up to him, and said, —

“Do you know if I can get a breakfast at this house?”

“We’ve been to breakfast,” said the man, “an hour’n’ a half ago.”

Roy had not thought that country people breakfasted so early. Noticing that the pail the man carried held rich and frothy milk, he added: —

“A bite of any thing — a bowl of bread and milk — will answer my purpose till I can get to the tavern.”

“Wal, walk in,” said the man. “I’ll see what the women folks say.”

He showed Roy into a kitchen, from which burst a

wild jargon of children's voices as the door opened, — laughing, crying, scolding, screaming.

A sudden hush followed the introduction of a stranger; and in a moment Roy found himself the center of a staring group — tow-heads of all heights, from the creeping baby on the floor to the girl of sixteen washing dishes at a sink. On two or three of the little faces that turned to gaze at him, tears of recent grief were not yet dry.

Roy was rather glad that he had not come in time to feed with that small menagerie; and he was about to excuse himself, and back out of so uninviting a place, when the man with the milk-pail said to a woman putting wood into a stove, —

“This stranger'd like a bite o' sunthin' — can ye 'commodate him, think? Take a seat and set down, stranger.”

The woman looked at Roy with a scowl of discontent.

“I'll see. Breakfast things all cleared away. He'll find us in a terrible clutter; hope he ain't very partic'lar.”

“Not in the least,” said Roy, finding the comfort of a chair by the stove so great after his long tramp, that he resolved to stay and risk the breakfast.

The truth is, he was an extremely “particular” young man at home, and his experience in Aunt Dolly's neat and orderly household had not fitted him for roughing it in over-populated farm-kitchens.

“Shall I fry ye a slice o' pork?” said the woman, consulting his appetite.

If there was an article of diet which Roy detested more than another, it was fried pork. He concealed his disgust, however, and smilingly replied that he would not put her to so much trouble — that he would be satisfied with any thing, if only boiled eggs and a glass of milk.

“ ‘ Only ! ’ ” the woman’s face said, as she looked again at Roy, appearing to wonder where he had lived all his life. “ Eggs is skurce and high this time o’ year, and it’s jest as *easy* to fry the pork if you perfer it.”

Roy, with the happy consciousness of money in his pocket, said he rather thought the eggs would relish better ; and the man remarked : —

“ Guess ye may as well bile him a couple. Yaller hen’s begun to lay. Eggs was only twenty cents to the store yis’ day, when I inquired.”

The woman set a skillet on the stove, poured hot water into it from the tea-kettle, and then produced the egg-basket.

Roy had by this time almost ceased to be an object of curiosity and awe to the children ; and at sight of the eggs their clamor broke forth again.

“ Bile me a egg, ma ! ” “ Bile me one ! ” “ Me, too ! me too, ma ! ”

And the small army of tow-heads that had besieged him so closely, now rushed to a violent attack upon the mother, clinging to her gown, getting before her feet, and trying to reach the basket which she held above their heads. For a few moments, nothing was heard but “ Egg, egg ! bile me ! bile ! bile ! me too, ma ! ma ! ma ! egg ! ”

It took a vigorous cuff or two at the leaders to repel the assault and silence the deafening chorus.

“One would think you had never seen a biled egg more’n two times in your lives,” she exclaimed, which Roy judged could not have been far from the truth. “Out of the way now, or you’ll git somethin’ ’sides biled eggs, every one of ye.”

Roy was glad to see three eggs go into the skillet, but not so well pleased when she added :

“I’ll divide one between ye ; now, don’t lemme hear another word out of your heads.”

“Oh, goody-good!” “I’ll have some!” “I’ll take the first bite!” “No, you sha’n’t, I will!”

And the little tribe set up a sort of war-dance around the skillet of hot water.

“Now it begins to bile.”

“See the little eyes come up from the bottom, an wink ’emselves out.”

“That little egg’ll be ourn.”

“No, that’s a rooster’s egg. We’ll have the biggest one.”

“O, now don’t it bile, I bet ye!”

“Hush, every soul of ye!” exclaimed the woman. And, having again subdued the tumult for a moment, she asked Roy whether he would have his eggs “biled hard or soft.”

“Soft,” he replied, thinking he would have his breakfast sooner than if he said hard.

She set one of the larger girls to watch the clock, accordingly.

“Soon as ever the pinter gits there,” said she, placing her thumb-nail over the dial, “spring for the skimmer, and have out the two big ones quicker.”

The girl watched the clock, the younger children watched the boiling, the oldest at the sink watched Roy, casting sheep’s-eyes at him over her dishes, while he watched impartially the whole of this interesting family.

Suddenly there was a scream louder than the rest.

“Quick! quick! Out of my way!”

And the girl who had been watching the clock made a dive for the skimmer, knocking over two little ones, and stepping on one of them in her haste to get the eggs out of the skillet. She seemed to think it a matter of life and death to stop the boiling the instant the pointer reached the spot indicated by the maternal thumb-nail.

Meanwhile, the woman had put up a leaf of the kitchen table, and placed upon it a plate, a knife and fork, an ample supply of bread and butter, and a bowl of milk.

“Mebbe you’d like a cup of tea? Can have it as well as not,” she said, seizing a tea-pot which had been simmering on the stove.

“If you please,” said Roy.

And she poured him a cup of dark fluid, which afterward proved as bitter to taste as it was black to sight. If there was any drink Roy detested it was boiled tea.

The “rooster’s egg” was left to cook hard for the children, while Roy was invited to “lay off his outside

coat and draw up his chair," by which welcome words he understood that his breakfast was ready.

He was certainly ready to eat it. And it was not so bad a breakfast, either, notwithstanding the quality of the tea and the fact that the bread was heavy and the milk skimmed, the good woman having given him a bowl of yesterday's, and prudently taken off the cream. Roy was hungry enough for almost any thing; and it was only in the presence of too much company at table that his appetite afterward quailed.

The "rooster's egg" (it seemed to be a popular notion that any very small eggs found in the hens' nests must have been laid by the father of the flock) was pronounced "biled hard enough." It was cooled in a saucer of snow; and one of the youngers was commissioned to peel and divide it.

Never was magistrate more puffed up by a little brief authority. It was Alexander the Little partitioning the world among his followers.

The boy stood up to his business at the end of the table, in the midst of a frightful scrambling and reaching and screeching, each little share-owner being eager to pull off a bit of the shell or touch a finger to the smooth, warm, shining sphere. But the Lord High Commissioner kept back the vulgar crowd.

"Here, Dick, you stop! Sammy, quit! Hands off, or I'll punch ye both! You, Sue and Sal, if you stick your fingers in agin, ye sha'n't have a mouthful!" *Mouthful* was good, Roy thought, the entire egg scarcely meriting so dignified an epithet. "Now I'm

goin' to slice it, and give you each a piece; and, if any one snatches 'fore I call their names and say, 'Yourn!' they sha'n't have none."

Then commenced the division.

"Sue, be on hand! Yourn!" and a morsel was held out in the fingers of authority.

"Hah! that ain't none — for a big girl like me!" complained the dissatisfied Sue.

"It's all you'll git, any way, for it's got to go round; and, if you don't take it darned quick, somebody else will. Dick, be on hand now! Yourn! Sal, look alive! Yourn!"

There was plenty of snatching before the egg was eaten: those who thought their shares too small endeavored to right their wrongs by seizing upon fragments on the way to mouths to which fortune seemed to have been more partial. In a few minutes, hands and faces — I had almost said paws and muzzles — were smeared and streaked with the mashed white and yolk, very little of which could have reached the palate, Roy fancied, since so much went for mere ornamental purposes.

In the meantime, the jargon beat all that he had heard before.

He remembered his quiet breakfasts at home, and began to be sick of his adventure. Was this the fine, free world he had set out to brave?

Weary as he was, he would have been glad to sit a little while by the kitchen fire; but he couldn't stand the clamor.

The farmer, who had gone out again after bringing in the pail of milk, now returned, and seemed inclined to be sociable with his guest. He wanted to know if he was "travelin' fur," and how long "sence he left hum," to which questions he received vague replies.

At last, Roy cut short the conversation by asking how much he was to pay for his entertainment.

"I d'n' know," said the man; "don't often get breakfast for strangers. What do ye think, ma?"

The worthy pair consulted together a moment. The sight of Roy's pocket-book had occasioned a lull in the children's racket; and he could hear, "Twenty or thirty cents, somewhere along there," — "Wal, say a quarter," — whispered from the corner by the cupboard, where the parents stood.

"Guess about a quarter," said the man, turning again to his guest.

Roy did not think a quarter was enough; and he handed the man half a dollar, saying, —

"Never mind about any change."

The man took it, looked pleasantly surprised, and said, —

"Why, this — this is rather too much, ain't it?"

Roy, putting on his coat, said he did not think so. and took his leave.

"Rather 'ristocratic young chap, I must say," remarked the man, as all eyes watched from the windows to see the stranger depart.

"He's the handsomest feller ever I see!" said the

oldest daughter, smiling with undisguised admiration.

“I hoped you’d git out of him who he is and where he’s goin’,” said the mother.

“Perty clust he was,” laughed the father. “I was a leetle in doubt about takin’ his money; but I guess he’s got plenty more, — well-dressed young chap like him.”

Having thus reconciled his conscience to the half-dollar, the good man put it into his pocket.

“Shouldn’t object to entertainin’ travelers every day at that price,” he added, with a smile. “Hope he’ll come back this way.”

“So do I,” simpered the eldest daughter.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR HERO HELPS A WHOLE FAMILY TO RIDE WHILE HE GOES AFOOT.

ROY had walked about two miles farther, when, on the outskirts of a small village, he saw a group of men and boys gathered around some object by the roadside. There seemed to be a wagon loaded with household goods; and, on joining the group of idlers, he saw a dead horse lying before the shafts on the snow.

It was an old, rickety one-horse wagon; the household goods were of the queerest, and the animal appeared to have been constructed by stretching an old horsehide over a hollow framework of bones. How so miserable a quadruped had even drawn that wagon to that spot was a marvel and a mystery. It seemed no wonder at all that the poor beast had fallen dead after he got there.

"Them chairs and that clumsy bedstead was never made in this country," Roy heard one of the bystanders remark.

"They come from Canady," said another, "and look as if they was brought over from Payris afore

the French an' Ingin war. Might know sich a team as that belonged to one o' them Cannucks," — a nickname by which French Canadians are known in the United States.

"Every darned Cannuck thinks he must have his old crow-bait," said a third. "No family is complete without one. Here comes the boss of this job now."

A short, swarthy, black-eyed man, with a troubled countenance, was approaching from the village. Roy approached him, and cried out: —

"Hallo, Lizard! This your horse?"

The Canadian's name was Lassarde, which had easily become transformed to Lizard in the mouths of the uncouth natives of Bayfield, where Roy had known him for some years.

"I s'pose he belong to me. I lef' your town; I movin' my family; I git so fur wen my 'oss ups an' die."

"Where are you going?" Roy inquired.

"I got a place on some brick-yards, t'irty mile from here. I been dere all las' summer. Good many my people dere; we works brick-makin' summer, an' winter we spec's big job cuttin' ice. So I tink I move my family, and I git so fur wen my 'oss ups an' die."

"When did this happen?"

"Las' night, 'bout nine o'clock. I t'ought I could git t'rough to dis place in one day; I know family here, ware we could stop over night; it is no more twelve, t'irteen mile from your town — not mush more; but dat 'oss — I do'no' wat matter dat 'oss: he wouldn' draw; an' wen I git so fur, he ups an' die."

“ Why, Lizard, you’re in a bad fix ! ”

“ I never been so bad fix all my life. I trade ver’ good ’oss for dis ’oss ; I take my family to ride Sundays, all fall, an’ he work more ; an’ I t’ink I make him work on ice, an’ drawin’ clay in brick-yards nex’ summer. He is all my property I got, on’y wot you see here, jes’ my family goods. I been goin’ make somet’in’ out dat ’oss, but, wen we git so fur, he give out ; I try to w’ip him some furdér, an’ he ups an’ die.”

“ Where’s your family now ? ”

“ Dem two boys mine ; I lef’ ’em to watch w’ile I go see, wot I shall do. My wife an’ some more children stop now ware I took ’em las’ night, some our own people, poor people, like us ; leetle small house, much too small. We stop one night ver’ well. An’ I mus’ go on, begin cuttin’ ice, or I lose my job. It was all right — I reckon I make journey in t’ree four days — but, wen I git so fur, dat ’oss he ups an’ die.”

“ How many children have you, Lizard ? ”

“ Dem two boys an’ five more.”

“ Seven children, your wife, and yourself, and those goods. I should think that a pretty good load for a much better horse,” said Roy. “ And isn’t it bad wheeling ? ”

“ W’eelin’ is not good ; but I have got no sleigh ; an’ I mus’ take all my fam’ly one load ; — leetle small shavers, all but dem boys ; — an’ we go foot wen we fin’ dat ’oss won’t draw ; but it was no use ; we git so fur, wen he ups an’ — ”

“ Yes, Lizard, so I heard you say. And what are you going to do now ? ”

“Dat’s wot I do’no’. I am poor man. I git not’n’ do in dis place, an’ no ’ouse for my fam’ly; ’ere is wagon load stuff; I git putty short; have jes’ bout t’ree, four dollar; I cannot go back, an’ I cannot go on; it is t’irty mile yet; an’ I git so fur wen dat ’oss—”

“Don’t talk about the dead horse any more,” exclaimed Roy. “Isn’t there anybody in this place who will help you?”

“I do’no’; my frien’s ’ere poor folks like me; I ask some people, an’ dey say we mus’ go to poorhouse till we can be send back to some town ware we come from; but dere is not’n’ for poor man do dis ’ard winter. I ’ave find nuder ’oss, by frien’s show me; he is ver’ good ’oss; if I ’ave him I can go on; but he cos’ some money, not ver’ much.”

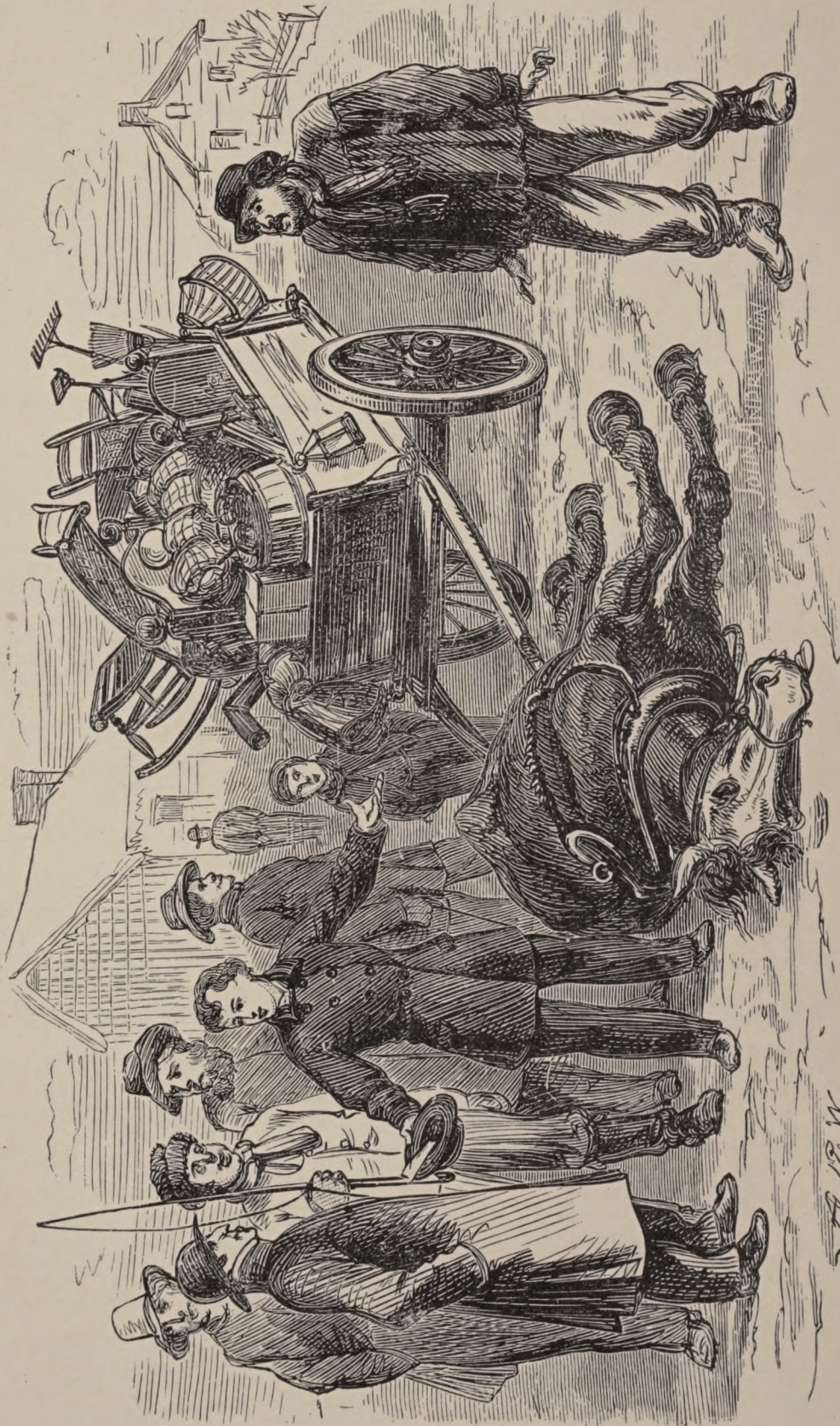
The crowd had by this time left the dead horse and gathered around Roy and the Canadian.

“We’ll take up a contribution for you and help you buy the horse, if he doesn’t cost too much.”

And Roy, forgetting his own hard fortune in his sympathy for poor Lassarde, addressed the bystanders.

“I know this man,” he said; “and I know him to be a hard-working, honest fellow. You see the scrape he is in. Now, by clubbing together, and each giving a trifle, we can help him out. I’ll start the contribution with one dollar. You, I am sure, will give another,” turning to a respectable-looking citizen whose influence he thought it wise to secure.

The man smiled, and, as the other bystanders were watching his face, they smiled too.



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A. B. W.

“I don’t know as I’ve got a dollar to invest in horse-flesh for one of these vagabond Cannucks,” he said; and this view of the case was immediately adopted by the crowd.

In vain Roy assured them that Lassarde was no vagabond. Not a dollar was forthcoming to help the poor man.

“If gen’lmen won’t give dollar apiece, let some give half, some quarter, some few cents, dat will do,” said the Canadian. “I git dat odder ’oss for five dollars.”

“Five dollars!” exclaimed Roy. “And are you sure the horse you can buy for five dollars will take you through?”

Lassarde was sure.

Again Roy appealed to the crowd. One man contributed ten cents, a boy gave five, a few others gave one or two cents apiece, not out of benevolence, but for the joke of the thing.

Roy was indignant. He took out his pocket-book, and said, sarcastically:—

“After getting such a heavy contribution from the rest, I am ashamed of having given only one dollar. I’m not a man of means, like some of these gentlemen. You shall have your horse, though, Lizard.”

And he gave five dollars in place of one.

The Canadian’s black eyes glistened.

“Tank you, Roy. Now I can git on. You save my fam’ly. I take de money, but I shall pay it back.”

Roy smiled rather ruefully.

“Very well. I suppose the time may come when I shall need it more than you. But just now you need it more than I. Luck to you, my friend!”

“Oh, I shall ’ave luck now. I was all right before, you see. I ’ave my ’ouse engage; I ’ave big job on ice; I move my family, but, wen I git so fur, my ’oss ups and die. If it wasn’t been for dat —”

“Well, good-by!” said Roy, interrupting him. “I hope your new horse won’t die before you get to your journey’s end. My respects to Mrs. Lizard and the little Lizards.”

And he walked off, with a cheerful air.

He was now little more than ten or eleven miles from home, and the nine dollars with which he had set out had become reduced to three dollars and a half.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROY SETS UP AS A CLOCKMAKER.

IT was Roy's habit to act impulsively and to reflect afterward. As he walked on, it occurred to him that he had possibly done two foolish things.

He had acted in such a way as to attract attention in a village where it was pretty certain that he would be inquired after.

In doing kindness to a poor man, he had shown very little consideration for a poor horse. He had also been sadly negligent of the interests of another unfortunate, named Roydon Rockwood.

"Suppose Lizard's second horse should *ups and die?*" thought he ; and, for a moment, Roy wished he had back his five dollars.

One of the saddest things in life is to have cause to regret a kind action. To regret a bad action is a wholesome bitter ; but to feel that you have been too impulsively good, to learn to suspect and chide your own generous impulses,— this is a bitter which is not wholesome ; and this is what Roy tasted now.

His one great fault, as we see, was imprudence. That is sometimes a noble fault — the rich soil from

which springs the glorious flower of heroic conduct; as we shall also see before we are through with his story. Occasions there are when it is well to forget every consideration of personal safety and comfort in the performance of supreme duty — when imprudence becomes the higher prudence.

But unfortunately this indiscreet impulsiveness governed too much all Roy's actions, good as well as bad. It was this which had caused him to choose wild companions and present pleasure instead of serious studies and future usefulness. Governed by this he had countenanced a foolish and criminal act; and then, believing he was in honor bound not to give evidence against the culprits, he had run away from a good home and the best of friends, in midwinter. And now it had betrayed him into giving the larger share of his money to a man better fitted than himself to get over the rough places of life without it.

“The worst that could have happened to the Lizards,” thought he, “would probably have been a few weeks of winter weather in a comfortable poor-house.” But how much worse things might happen to himself! And it was vexing to reflect that he had given the money, not simply because he was more generous than most people, but because he was more rash.

In this he did himself injustice, and there is danger lest we do him injustice too. Had he possessed merely rashness without generosity, his story would not be worth telling. We are trying to show him as

he was — a youth not altogether good, nor wholly bad, but having some fine qualities, and some weak ones, mixed.

There were plenty of dullards in the crowd around the dead horse who would never have been guilty of one of Roy's follies ; and for a moment he almost envied them their commonplace existence.

“ But, no ! ” he suddenly exclaimed, within himself, his depressed spirit rising again as he thought of their sneering faces and unfeeling hearts, “ I'd rather not live at all than be able to stand by and find nothing but amusement in any man's misfortune. Whatever happens to me, I'm glad I'm not so bad as that.”

He did not stop at the tavern, thinking now that he must husband his means, and that he was still too near home to risk needless delay.

It was seven miles farther to the railroad station, where he had planned to take a train, and have as much of a ride as a little money would buy. He would go to Worcester, he thought, and thence make his way to Boston, or possibly to New York, unless Fortune should meet him on the road. He had traveled about five of those seven miles, when his strength failed, and with it his resolution to walk the whole distance without stopping.

For two nights now he had not had his accustomed rest ; he had not had his usual breakfast, either, and he was not trained to long tramps. His limbs grew heavy, his head light ; he felt faint, almost to giddiness ; he could hardly drag one foot after the other.

"I shouldn't wonder if I am famished," he argued with himself. "Perhaps that's what's the matter. Yonder's a benevolent-looking farm-house, I'll try my luck there."

He knocked at a side door, and a feeble old lady appeared. She looked down kindly and curiously at the youthful stranger on the door-step.

"I am walking to the railroad," he said. "It's farther than I thought, and — will you be so good as to let me rest a little while by your fire?"

"Certainly," replied the old lady. "Walk in."

The door opened into a cozy sitting-room, where two young women were sewing.

Roy was given a seat by an air-tight stove. The old lady insisted on taking his hat, and put a fresh stick into the stove, in honor of his arrival. She also made some friendly remarks about the weather, and asked him if he had traveled far.

"From Jasmyn," he replied, naming the place where he had encountered the Canadian. "I'm not bound to tell her how much farther," he thought.

"Do you live in Jasmyn?"

"I have lived there a little while." And, he added to himself, "I should think about half an hour."

He looked at the clock, and appeared startled.

"Is that the correct time?" he asked, taking out his watch.

"Oh, dear, no," said the old lady. "That clock don't go. What is your time?"

"Half-past ten," Roy replied, sighing to think it

was still so far from the rural dinner-hour. "I'm afraid I shall miss the forenoon train."

This led to a discussion of the trains, and the old lady asked where he was going.

"To Worcester," said Roy, boldly.

It was decided that he had missed the train he ought to have taken, and that another did not get along until two o'clock.

"You look tired," said one of the younger women. "Won't you lie down on the lounge?"

Evidently these good people rather liked the looks of the young stranger.

"Nothing would suit me better," he answered, frankly.

He was given a cushion for a pillow, and one of the women spread a shawl over him. He thanked her, and closed his eyes. In two minutes he was fast asleep.

He slept about half an hour, when he was awakened by a young man coming into the house. The young man appeared a good deal more surprised than pleased at seeing a stranger in possession of the lounge. One of the women explained, and the young man growled and went out.

Roy felt much refreshed, and wished to do something to distract his anxious thoughts, pass away the time, and repay those good women for their kindness.

"Will you allow me to look at that clock?" he asked. "Perhaps I can make it go."

He had more than once taken to pieces the kitchen

clock at home when it had stopped, and put it in running order.

In a little while, another man came in. This time it was an old man. He looked in astonishment to see a stranger at a stand before a front window, tinkering the old clock. Again the woman explained; and he, too, growled and went out.

“You don’t know if he’ll be able ever to put them works together agin in this world!” Roy heard him mutter as the door slammed.

And it did seem as if the woman had been rather hasty in putting her clock into the hands of a mere boy, who did not profess to be a clockmaker, and who had no tools to work with but a pocket-knife and a pair of pincers.

It was too late, however, to prevent any mischief he might do. The empty case was on the floor, and his little table was already strewn with pins and cog-wheels.

Roy smiled, and asked himself if this was not another of his rash undertakings? Suppose he couldn’t get all the scattered pieces in place again?

“Those two men will do something besides growling,” thought he. “I shall just get kicked out of doors, that’s all.”

“Are you sure you ain’t attempting too much?” the old lady now asked, looking over his shoulder. “We should hate dreadfully to have you spile the clock.”

“No danger of that,” replied Roy, confidently. “It’s

perfectly simple. I think I've discovered the trouble. The stove-heat has gummed the oil on this pinion. The clock needs a thorough cleaning ; if you can give me a feather and a rag and some sweet-oil I'll see what I can do."

Though the clock was of a different make from the one he was used to, its machinery was not very complicated, and he felt sure he could master it, provided he was let alone. Meanwhile, greatly to his delight, he heard sounds of frying, and perceived savory odors that came from an adjoining kitchen ; and soon, on a large table behind him, which had been pulled out from the wall, fell heavy dinner plates with a clatter cheering to his soul.

Suddenly the woman who was setting the table paused, and gazed from the window.

"Do look at that wagon-load of goods and children, and that poor old horse !"

Roy raised his eyes, and beheld a sight which made him flush all over, and started the perspiration from every pore of his skin.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT ROY SAW FROM THE WINDOW.

MONSIEUR LASSARDE had met with some delays at Jasmyn Village.

After the new horse had been purchased, if so old an animal could in any sense be called new, it was discovered that he had no shoes. He slipped and fell as his new owner was leading him across an icy bit of sidewalk ; and poor Lassarde had hard work getting him on his feet again. If this happened before he was given a load to draw, what might be expected afterward? The late owner, who, I am sorry to say, was a Yankee, kept his hand in the pocket where Roy's five dollars had found a comfortable lodging, smiled, and warned the little man that he must be careful.

"You sell me de 'oss widout shoes!" said the Canadian, furiously.

"Exactly," replied the Yankee, coolly. "I sold the horse, pure and simple. I don't deal in shoes."

"But ev'y 'oss mus' be shod," said the Canadian.

"So I think," said the Yankee. "I advise you to shoe him."

And this was all the satisfaction Lassarde could get.

Now it chanced that he had a set of horse-shoes, only they were on the wrong horse. They were on the feet of the dead horse by the roadside. Hence another little difficulty.

One of the selectmen had met the Canadian, and told him sternly that he mustn't leave his dead horse there; he would be prosecuted if he didn't take the carcass away. To have his steed "ups and die" was not, it seemed, the end of his misfortunes. What was he to do with him now? He could not, certainly, be expected to load him up into his wagon, and convey him away, with his goods and children.

"I mus' not leaf him; an' I cannot take him; an' wot shall I do?" he asked, despairingly.

At last another Yankee had been found, who agreed to take the horse as a gift, and be responsible for him. He would use the hide for some purpose, and plant the rest in his field for the benefit of his crops.

So now, when Lassarde returned with a blacksmith, who set about pulling off the old horse's shoes for the new horse's feet, up stepped the last-named Yankee, and exclaimed, —

"Hands off!"

"Wot you mean?" said Lassarde.

"I mean it is my horse; let him alone."

"Yes, I gif you de 'oss; but I not gif you de shoes."

"Shoes go with the horse," said the Yankee.

"They're a part of my perquisites."

"But de udder man sell me 'oss widout shoes!" argued Lassarde.

“The more fool you,” was the answer.

Lassarde thought it a poor rule that wouldn't work both ways ; but it seemed that it wouldn't.

At last the matter was compromised by his paying the owner of the old horse the sum of thirty cents for permission to remove the shoes. It cost him I know not how much more to get them set and transferred to the hoofs of the living horse.

Finally, however, these obstacles overcome at an expense he could ill afford, the little Canadian got steed number two into the harness, and then into the shafts, took his family aboard, and set off cheerily on his journey, amid the merriment of an uncivil populace. Jasmyn was a dull place ; and it did not have an incident to entertain it every day in the year.

And laughter, tempered by some little human feeling for a poor family and a horse that stood sadly in need of protection from the Dumb Animals' Society, was certainly excusable in the circumstances.

A wagon always looks odd in the country, in winter, when sleighs are in vogue ; but Lassarde's wagon would have looked odd at any time, it was so high, so queer-fashioned, and it carried so grotesque a load.

Madame Lassarde and six children sat amid the antique household furniture, wrapped in bed-clothing, while Monsieur Lassarde and the oldest boy went afoot. Now and then, when the road was a little steep, Lassarde would leave the reins with the boy, and push behind. Fortunately, the snow in the middle of the track was well-worn and hard ; for, if the

wheels had sunk in, not all the man's pushing and all the boy's shouting to the horse, would have served to keep the vehicle in motion.

Such was the sight that sent the streaks of heat and moisture shooting over Roy's shoulders and down to his heels. He laughed, nevertheless, there was something so ludicrous in it all. Lassarde was pushing at the time, probably having taken a lesson from the fate of the other horse.

"They look as if they had just come out of the ark," said one of the women.

Roy did not mention the fact that his own money was invested in the horse: he wasn't proud of it. And yet the feeling that he had done what he could to help a poor man out of trouble was a secret comfort; and the anxious hope that Lassarde might finish his journey without another catastrophe made him forget, for awhile, his own misfortunes.

At length one of the women said, —

"I guess ye better set by, now, and take some dinner with us."

Roy did not require much urging. He was on his feet in a moment. His eyes beamed.

"Better let him wash 'fore *they* come in," said the old lady, in a low voice.

Roy was given a basin of water at the kitchen sink, a clean side of a roller-towel, and a place at the table. It seemed to be a point with the women of the house to get him securely seated before the two men appeared.

They came in together this time. Roy heard their heavy boots and gruff voices, and *felt* their black looks, as they paused, and gazed at him in even greater astonishment than before. His back was toward them, and he did not turn his head.

“Now, if I *don't* get that clock together all right,” thought he, “I shall catch it.”

The men used the basin and the towel, and then, with a clattering of chairs and a few muttered words, took their seats at the table. The old man growled out a blessing on the repast. In his petition, he did not except the food about to be eaten by the unwelcome stranger, as he should have done, Roy fancied, to be consistent.

“I believe women are always a great deal better than men,” was the young fellow's hasty conclusion.

The principal dish was tripe. Roy had never tasted tripe. The old man poised his knife over the platter, and asked, with an ungracious grimace, —

“Have some?”

Roy, who would have been glad of any thing, even salt pork, answered, with a polite smile,

“If you please.”

The old man helped him liberally, — with a sinister motive, Roy thought afterward, when he found how hard it was to worry the tripe down. Not even hunger gave it a relish. Poor, pampered, dainty Roy! how was he ever going to adapt himself to the diet of plain country people?

As the old man now and then looked savagely at

his guest's plate, Roy would pluck up courage, and make a great show of attacking the tripe with heartiness and vigor, only to fall back upon bread and potatoes the moment the jealous eyes were withdrawn. There were also boiled turnips on the table, which Roy, who hated boiled turnips, thanked heaven that he had had the moral courage to refuse. The tripe was misfortune enough for one day.

Well for him, the bread and potatoes were good, and with them — supplemented by a large piece of mince-pie for dessert — he managed to get a pretty good meal.

The women made a little talk, but the men not much. The old man, having got out of him the fact that he knew nothing of clockmaking, had answered with a dissatisfied grunt, and then gone on with his dinner in moody silence. The younger man all the while showed, even by the way he slashed and swallowed his tripe, a sullen discontent.

Roy was sorry he had brought such a cloud upon the family. He saw, however, by the tranquil demeanor of the women, that it was probably no new thing, and that they were not much disturbed by it.

He was more than ever anxious about the clock, and got back to it as soon as possible. He had now only to put the thing together. It did not help him at all to hear, over his shoulder, the younger man picking his teeth noisily with a quill, and to know what unfriendly eyes were watching his work.

Roy grew nervous. He stopped, trying to think

what he was to do with a certain pin, and, beginning to whistle, looked from the window.

He did not gain much by that, and he did not whistle long.

A sleigh was coming along the road, drawn by a tawny-colored horse. The driver — a stout, broad-faced man — was using his whip pretty freely. The horse's side and flank were mottled with dark, irregular stripes, as if nature had intended to finish him off in the zebra style, but had afterward changed her mind about it.

Roy knew those spots. He knew the horse. He knew the driver. It was Constable Drollers.

His heart gave an excited leap.

“He's on my track! He has a warrant for me in his pocket!”

Not a very cheering thought.

Drollers seemed bent on driving past, quite rapidly too; but suddenly he drew rein, and pulled up sharply before the big gate.

“He has seen my face through the window!” thought Roy.

Rising quickly, he gave his table a little knock, and away went the two great clock-weights, which he had just placed upright at the edge, thundering to the floor.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DISADVANTAGE OF BEING INTERRUPTED IN ONE'S WORK.

DROLLERS had not seen Roy's face at the window. What he had really seen was an old man under a shed at the end of the house. He stopped to make some inquiries of him — the sort of inquiries Roy guessed only too well.

The clock-weights had fallen with a noise which caused the man who stood picking his teeth to spring off with his toes, and stumble backwards over an empty chair. The old lady screamed with fright. Her first impression was that her son — for such the young man evidently was — had insulted Roy, that Roy had assaulted her son, and that clock-weights had passed between them.

At the same time, the young man's wife and sister — as Roy guessed the younger women to be — ran in from the kitchen to learn the cause of the fracas.

“No harm,” said Roy, picking up the weights with a very red face — probably the result of stooping. He turned squarely on the man, who was just getting upon his feet. “Can you — if you please — get me a — a tack-hammer?”

The fellow made no answer, but looked surlily for his tooth-pick, which he found crushed on the floor.

While the wife was getting the tack-hammer, Roy sprang to his overcoat, and appeared to be searching the pockets for something, while he was in reality watching from the window to see what Drollers would do, and preparing for flight. The good people did not notice that he fumbled the armholes instead of the pockets.

Wild thoughts rushed through the boy's brain in that moment of intense anxiety. That Drollers would learn of his presence in the house and start to come in, he had not a doubt. Then on would go the overcoat and away would go the wearer, with his hat and sachel, out of the back door, leaving his dinner unpaid for, and the clock in that condition to astonish and exasperate the ill-natured men-folks during the remainder of their lives. And what a return this would be for the kindness of the women! They would never, of course, hear the last of their foolish confidence in a stranger from those two brutes, who knew all the while by his looks what a slippery rouge he was.

Roy had scarcely twenty seconds to wait; yet, during that time, he thought of all this and of much besides. He cast a look of despair at the dissected clock, and bitterly cursed his folly in undertaking so delicate a task at such a time. What a reputation for ingratitude and rascality he was destined to leave behind him in consequence! It would naturally be believed, even by those kind women, that he had offered to repair

the clock merely as a pretence to stay and get invited to dinner ; and perhaps he might be suspected of willingly taking to his heels, and leaving the scattered works for them to gather up as best they could.

He could think of but one possible atonement for this seeming villainy. He remembered that he had three dollars and a half in his pocket. He would leave it all — throw even his pocket-book behind him — as he took to flight.

Only one thing could save him from this inglorious retreat. That was extremely unlikely to happen. Yet happen it did.

Drollers drove on.

The young woman brought the tack-hammer, which he did not want. He took it, however, thanked her, wiped his forehead with a handkerchief he had taken from his overcoat, and sat down again at the little table.

In walked the old man.

“What did that stranger want?” asked the daughter.

“Wanted to know if I’d seen a young feller go by here to-day — brown overcoat, small bag strapped to his left side, narrer-rimmed felt hat. I hain’t seen none sich ; has anybody?”

“Why, dear me, pa ! we haven’t seen any such go by, but — ”

And the daughter, and indeed the whole family, looked hard at Roy.

“Sartin !” ejaculated the old man. “Why in time

didn't I — How stupid I be! I never thought of him."

It must be remembered that he was an old man, that his wits were slow, and that he had not seen Roy in full traveling costume.

"Did he say what he wanted of me?" asked Roy, appearing very intent on his work.

"No; only it seemed he wanted to be sure whuther you'd passed this way or not."

Roy laughed excitedly.

"Let him think I've passed. I've left home without my friends' consent; and he would like to take me back again. If he does, I hope he'll give me time to put this clock together first."

His fingers trembled so that he almost despaired for awhile of ever managing the wheels and pins. But he rapidly regained control of his nerves, and soon worked all the faster for the little excitement which had roused him. In a quarter of an hour, the face was on, the weights attached, the pointers in their place.

He put the clock on the mantle-piece, and set the pendulum swinging.

It continued to swing.

The clock ticked.

He moved the pointers around, setting them by those of his watch, and the striking part put in a vigorous and healthy voice, as they passed the hours.

He smiled; the women smiled. Evidently he hadn't done the clock any harm. The young man looked incredulous. The old man muttered, —

“It’ll stop in about five minutes — it allers does.”

“I’ll wait five minutes and see,” said Roy, light-hearted as a lark. “Meanwhile,” — he took out his pocket-book — “how much for my dinner?”

The old man hesitated. The young man’s wife spoke up:—

“I think *we* ought to pay *you* something for fixing the clock.”

“I don’t charge any thing for that,” replied Roy, fingering his money. “I did that just for amusement, while I was waiting. Besides, it’s going to stop when the five minutes are up — so they say.”

“It don’t act like stopping,” said the old lady. “It hain’t ticked off smart like that this winter before.” And she added, aside, to the old man, “Don’t take any thing for his dinner.”

His overcoat on, his sachel-strap buckled, money in hand, Roy stood waiting for the old man to make up his mind. The young man looked as if he could have made up his mind sooner. It was the hardest thing in the world for either of those amiable persons to admit that they had for once been wrong in their calculations, and the women-folks right.

“Guess I won’t take your money,” said the old man at last. “It’s goin’ now ; but I think like as not it’ll stop soon as you’re out of the house.”

The young man’s wife made a sign for Roy to put his money into his pocket, and he obeyed. The five minutes were up. The clock was still going, chipper as could be. He was in a hurry to get off.

“I’ll call when I come this way again,” he said; “and, if you tell me then that the clock stopped as soon as I was out of sight,—well, I’ll pay you twice over for the next dinner I eat with you. Meanwhile, I sha’n’t forget your kindness.”

He shook hands with the three women, said good-day to the two men (who growled a surly “g’day,” and “good-arternoon,” in response), and hurried away, following Drollers up the road.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LITTLE GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK.

ROY did not follow Drollers very far. "He will go straight to the depot, and inquire for me. He will set somebody to watch for me there, and telegraph to stations up and down the road. I shall be in demand at Fitchburg. A policeman will be waiting to shake hands with me as I step off the train at Worcester. But I sha'n't step off at Worcester. I'm not going to Fitchburg. I shall keep clear of railroads. I depend on Shanks' horses. Now, Dumpy may be coming back on his track at any moment, and I must give him a wide berth."

Reasoning in this way, Roy kept a sharp watch for the zebra horse returning, and, at the same time, looked anxiously for a safe and convenient place to quit the public road.

The right place appeared at last. It was in a desolate hollow, out of sight of human habitations. Footprints through the snow converged to a path that led from the roadside, along a bushy slope, up into thick woods covering the hills. He followed the path, and was soon buried in the woods.

The sun was shining brightly through the trees. The path was well trodden. He walked swiftly on, and at length reached an old clearing, where the footprints became lost in sled-tracks winding among the stumps.

“Somebody has been drawing out wood here lately,” said he. “These square spots of bare ground are the places where the wood was corded.”

The winding tracks flowed into one main track as he went on. The sound of axes echoed in the woods, and he passed in sight of the choppers. He did not stop to make their acquaintance.

What interested him more, was a sled, loaded with wood, and drawn by two heavy farm-horses, coming out of another clearing farther on, and turning into the beaten track. There it halted, while the driver climbed up, and perched himself on his load, with his legs hanging over one side. As it moved on again, past a thick clump of pines, Roy sprang lightly after, seized a stake on the other side, found room for his foot on the edge of the sled, and rode standing.

The driver, as he turned into the track, had seen Roy; but he did not see him jump on behind. And now the huge pile of wood was between them, the top towering above Roy's head.

The sled wound through hollows and around hill-sides, and finally came out upon another highway.

“It is going to the railroad,” thought Roy. “This is wood for the locomotives. I'll wait for a good chance, and then jump off.”

In the meantime, Drollers, not hearing from Roy at the railroad station, had driven over to another station, and made some further inquiries for him there. Then, instead of returning the way he came, as Roy had thought he might do, he had taken the road up from the second station, which chanced to be the very road the sled-load of wood was now traveling.

He saw the load of wood approaching; and, at the same time, Roy, swinging himself out at arm's length from the stake, in order to look ahead, discovered the tawny-colored horse. Officer and fugitive were, in fact, on the point of meeting on this narrow country road.

To understand what followed, we must bear in mind that Roy and the driver were at opposite corners of the load, Roy behind, on what is called by teamsters the "off" side, — that is to say, the right-hand side, — and the driver up in front, with his legs hanging over on the "near" side.

Roy was desperately afraid Drollers had seen him clinging to his stake, and believed nothing was left for him but a race for life — or, at least, for liberty — across the fields and back into the woods he had traversed. He had a good deal of confidence in his own heels, on ordinary occasions; but his long walk that day had told upon him, and, since resuming his travels, he had been painfully aware of stiffened limbs.

On the other hand, he knew that Dumpy Drollers was a much better runner than he looked, or than his nickname implied. More than this, in his capacity of

village policeman, Drollers had taken revenge on juvenile offenders for the said nickname, by practically demonstrating the fact, that, though broad in the beam and deep in the hold, he was not so slow a craft as they imagined ; that his speed, like that of an elephant, was a good deal more than one would suppose from the appearance of the animal ; in a word, that his legs were longer and vastly better than their own.

Besides, the race is not always to the long-limbed. Muscle and lungs have much to do with it. Drollers had the muscle and lungs of an ox.

Roy reasoned, " If he has discovered me, he will turn out on this side ; if not, he will turn out on the other." And he held himself ready to dodge either way.

It was a moment of extreme anxiety. He did not dare show his head again, but tightened himself to the stake, and waited.

The sled kept the track, while the light cutter went crashing out into the crust-covered snow, not on Roy's side, but on that of the driver's legs hanging over the corner of the load.

Suddenly the crashing in the crust and the squeaking of sled-runners ceased. The cutter stopped on the roadside ; the load of wood stopped in the track.

Roy, peeping around his corner of the load, could see the head and shoulders of the horse with the imperfect zebra marks. Cold as the weather was, the animal was covered with sweat.

Drollers, who had stopped the wood-sled in order to put a question to the teamster, now put it.

“Have you seen anywhere on the road a young fellow traveling afoot?”

“Nowhere on the road; but I saw a fellow back here in the woods,” Roy heard the teamster respond.

“How was he dressed?”

“I didn’t notice nothin’ very pertickler ’bout his dress, only he was what you’d call well-dressed, — kind of a brownish overcoat, — good-looking young feller, ’peared to be.” (Roy, at any other time, might have been pleased to know that.)

“Carrying any thing?” cried Drollers.

“Not as I noticed.”

“You didn’t see a small carpet-bag strapped to his shoulders?”

“Might ’a’ been such a bag, but I didn’t notice it; he was comin’ towards me.”

“What sort of a hat?”

The teamster gave a pretty good description of Roy’s hat; and Drollers, feeling sure now that he was getting on the right track again, inquired particularly as to the place where Roy had been seen, and the way he was going.

“He seemed to be coming on after me,” said the teamster; “but I lost him behind some bushes.”

Roy remained breathless with suspense. He was not yet out of danger, even if Drollers should drive on without suspecting that only a load of wood had been between them. A glance backward from the cutter, after it should come into the track again, might discover the fugitive flattened against the side of the load.

And now the teamster seemed to think it time for him to gratify his curiosity by asking a question or two in return.

“Who is this young feller you’re after?”

“One of the young barn-burners who fired some buildings in Bayfield night ’fore last. We’ve got some of ’em. He’s the slipperiest of the lot.”

“Gracious mighty!” said the man. “I hope you’ll ketch him, and put ’em all through. Hanged if I want my barn burnt.”

While he was speaking, Roy, whose ear was waiting anxiously for the sound, heard the crust break again on the opposite side of the load. Drollers, whose conversation aimed at business and not pleasure, was starting off.

Instantly, Roy sprang forward, seized a pointed stick, which stuck out in front of the load, and swung himself upon the end of the sled, behind the off horse. There he crouched.

He was now where Drollers, if he should look back, could not see him; but he might easily have been seen by the teamster, if the latter had taken the trouble to lean forward, and look down over the end of his load.

The teamster had something else to do. The sled was once more getting in motion, straining and squeaking as the horses did their part.

The off horse had to be touched up to be made to draw an even whiffletree, and the driver’s lash, flying back, hit Roy in the face. If it had put his eye out, he would have kept still.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RIDE ON A LOCOMOTIVE.

AFTER riding a little while crouched in a most uncomfortable posture against the sharp ends of the sticks, Roy ventured to look back. Drollers was out of sight.

In a minute Roy was at his original stake again, still undiscovered by the driver. He could not help laughing as he thought of the constable amusing himself by exploring the woods, and making inquiries of the choppers, for a young fellow in a brown overcoat, with a small carpet-bag strapped to his shoulders.

He knew the teamster would be looking out for such a fellow now, and did not care to be seen by him. He found no convenient place for quitting the sled, however, without exposing himself, until the great sign, "Railroad Crossing — Look out for the Engine," appeared in view, supported by its tall posts, above the street.

Just before reaching the railroad, the teamster turned into an open field at the left, and, looking up the track, Roy saw, a few rods off, an immensely long double pile of wood, and beside it a gravel-train, with its smoking locomotive and tender taking on fuel.

Roy sprang from the sled at the end of the pile, passed inside of it, walked on between the wood and the freight-train, dodged the men loading the tender, and climbed up into the cab of the locomotive.

The engineer was stretched out on a seat at one side. He looked up, not ill-naturedly, at Roy.

“Allow a fellow to warm his shins at your kitchen fire?”

“’Gainst the rules of the road to let strangers in here.”

“Oh! is it? Well, I won’t stay long,” said Roy.

“We’re going to start in a minute.”

And the engineer looked back to see if the tender had about got its load.

“I sha’n’t object to that, particularly,” Roy replied.

“Seems to me you’ve got cheek,” remarked the engineer, sleepily.

“Guess you would have *cheek* if you’d had such a tramp as I’ve had, and then should get into so comfortable a place as this,” laughed Roy. “An acquaintance of mine had a place for me in his cutter — I could have ridden with him just as well as not — but we passed each other — it happened very curiously — and now I’m in a sort of scrape — not used to walking, you know.”

“How fur ye going?” asked the engineer, as he got up and thrust fresh wood under the boiler.

“Beyond the next station,” Roy answered.

“We don’t go to the next station ahead,” said the engineer. “We’re backing up.”

“ You go to the next station back, don't you ? ”

“ Yes ; we run down to Wilmot Hill, where we load.”

“ All right ; that's the way I want to go. I never rode on a locomotive in my life. Wonder how it seems.”

“ 'Gainst the rules,” repeated the engineer, clanging the furnace door, and pulling the cord that rang the locomotive bell.

“ There are exceptions to all rules,” replied Roy. “ Let me ring the bell for you.”

He got hold of the cord. At the same time he looked up the track, and saw the teamster, who had been unloading his wood, hasten to stand by his horses' heads as the train started.

“ If he sees me now, he'll take me for a fireman, or an assistant engineer,” thought Roy. “ Hopes I may get caught and put through, does he ? I haven't thanked him for my ride yet. I'll give him a salute.” And he pulled the cord furiously.

The train was on a side track. It ran forward to a switch, and then backed down on the main track, twice passing the teamster, who stood holding his frightened horses, and shouting :—

“ Hold on, there ! 'Tain't the cars they're afraid on, but your confounded bell.”

“ He can hold 'em ; let off your whistle just for fun,” said Roy.

The engineer smiled, but did not blow the whistle. Roy kept the bell ringing as they passed the station

where he knew Drollers had lately been making inquiries for him.

“ I’m going now where Dumpy can’t drive, and faster than Dumpy can drive,” thought he, as the long, rattling train went sliding down the track.

He was soon on good terms with the engineer, and was sorry when they arrived at Wilmot Hill. The cars were then switched off at another side track, and run up under a great gash in the gravelly hillside.

A detached locomotive was standing on the main track, heading down the road.

Roy thanked his new friends for the “ lift ” they had given him, and asked :—

“ Is that engine going off now ? ”

“ Shouldn’t wonder. I see they’ve got the chief contractor aboard.”

“ Think I can get a ride ? ”

“ Don’t know. It’s against the rule,” the engineer answered, with a smile.

“ Say a good word for me, can’t you ? ”

“ I rather think you’re capable of saying a good word for yourself on occasion.”

“ All right,” laughed Roy.

He ran up to the locomotive just as it was about starting, and was going to climb into the cab without ceremony, when the engineer cried, in a sharp tone :—

“ What you want here ? ”

Roy had heard the fireman call the other engineer Charley, and he thought that name might be a key to this man’s favor ; so he replied :—

“ My friend Charley brought me down so far, and he said — ”

“ I don't care what your friend Charley said,” cried the man, interrupting him. “ Down from there ! ”

And Roy got down. He stood trembling with wrath at the rude repulse and the laughter of the spectators, in which even his “ friend Charley ” joined ; while the engine, blowing side whiffs of hot water and steam from its gills, was getting under way.

He found relief to his feelings in a keen, if not very witty retort.

“ I've heard of civil engineers,” he cried, “ but I see you're not one, either in manners or profession ! ”

That turned the laugh in his favor, and his “ friend Charley ” said, —

“ If the chief contractor hadn't been aboard, you might have had better luck.”

“ It will be all the same a hundred years hence,” cried Roy, waving his hat. “ Good-by.”

He walked down the track to the first by-road crossing, where he turned off, leaving the railroad and a good many baffling circumstances, he fancied, between himself and the pursuing constable.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROY'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD INCREASES, WHILE HIS FUNDS DIMINISH.

ROY followed the by-road a couple of miles, when it took him into a more traveled thoroughfare. A few teams met and passed him, and once he noticed a man walking before him on the road.

This man had on an army overcoat — one of those blue flowers that blossomed so plentifully all over the country at the close of our great civil war. The wearer's pace was slow, and it grew slower and slower, until Roy overtook him; then it quickened a little.

“Beg pardon for troubling you,” said the man, keeping near Roy's side, but a little behind. “I ain't a beggar, but I find myself compelled to ask for a little assistance.”

“You have taken the wrong colt by the mane,” Roy replied. “I'm in a position to ask for help myself, instead of helping others.”

“You can't be so bad off as I am,” said the man, in a discouraged tone of voice. “I was all through the war — wounded in the left knee at Chancellorsville — carry the bullet yet, and expect to, long as I

live. Taken prisoner — six months in Libby prison. Jest a mere skeleton when I was exchanged. Laid up in hospital, and then served in hospital till the war closed. Unable to work ever since, till this winter. Got a job in Springfield. Machinist by trade. Doing well, till last Saturday the shop closed — hard times — workmen all discharged. Spent all my money getting to Springfield, and now I've spent all I'd saved there, getting so far on my way home."

"Where is your home?"

"In Newburyport. I've friends there who will help me, if I can only get to them."

"Don't you find kind people on the way?"

"They may all be kind enough; but there's so many impostors going that, when a genuine case comes along, nobody seems to know whether the man tells the truth, or lies like all the rest. I don't blame folks. I only wish they knew what it is for a man that has served his country, and tried hard to get an honest living, to be looked at as they sometimes look at me, and to have doors slammed in his face — that's all. Beg pardon for troubling *you*."

Roy, with his usual impulsiveness, thrust his hand into his pocket, saying to himself: —

"It's too bad — a fellow that has served through the war! He's a great deal worse off than I am. I saved half a dollar by tinkering that clock — I might give him that."

The man, expecting alms from the motion of Roy's hand, had stopped talking. This gave Roy a chance to think. He remembered Lassarde's horse

“I’ve only three dollars and a half left. I can’t afford to fool away any more money. I’ll be tight as the bark of a tree now.”

And he took his hand out of his pocket. The man noticed that no money came with it, and resumed:—

“I hain’t had a mouthful to eat since seven o’clock this morning. I thought starvation in an enemy’s prison was bad enough, but starvation for a poor, wounded soldier in his own country goes to his heart a good deal worse. Where I’m going to get supper and a night’s lodging is more than I know.”

Once more into the pocket went the ready hand, and this time the half-dollar came out.

“Here, take it before I change my mind again,” Roy said, in a hurried voice. “’Tisn’t much; but it will get you a supper, and may be a night’s lodging somewhere. Better luck to you!”

The man took the money, and was so profuse in his expressions of gratitude that Roy hastened on in order not to hear them.

He was weary enough to think early of his own supper and lodgings; and, as the brief winter day declined, he stopped at another farm-house.

Forgetting his experience of the morning, and remembering rather too vividly his noonday adventure, he avoided a man he saw feeding cattle in a yard, preferring to deal directly with the woman of the house.

A freckled girl opened the door to him, and, standing in the entry, screamed his errand to a woman he did not see in the room beyond.

"Tell him we don't keep stragglers," the woman he did not see screamed back.

Indignant and chagrined, Roy answered that he expected to pay for his entertainment.

"Tell him this ain't a tavern," came the shrill response from the woman, still unseen. "Come in, Angeliny, and shet that door!"

Roy began to laugh. I am sorry to say of him that he could be rather impudent when provoked.

"Give me a glass of water, Angeliny. Come, that's a good girl!" said he, with saucy familiarity.

The freckled girl, who looked all the time as if she would have been glad to treat him more kindly, went in, shutting the door after her. Roy heard sharp words within; then Angeliny returned, bringing water, not in a glass, but in a long-handled tin dipper.

Roy laughed again as he took it.

"I should think," said he, "that this house would become noted for its hospitality to strangers. Thank ye, Angeliny!" He raised the dipper to his lips, but did not drink. "Just the sight of water in so gorgeous a dish is refreshing!"

"'Tain't my fault; she's cross to-day," whispered Angeliny.

Roy threw out the untasted water, then found a two-cent piece in his pocket, and dropped it into the dipper, which he handed back to the girl.

"Please give that to her, with my compliments. Good-day, Angeliny!"

And away went Roy, feeling now as if he could

walk all night, without a thought of supper, rather than stop at another farm-house.

Entering a village, a mile farther on, he went straight to the only hotel in the place, called for a room, ordered supper, and sat down by the bar-room fire, resolved to end the first day of his journey comfortably, reckless of consequences.

With the evening came reflection ; and, with reflection, misery.

His supper was well enough, and yet it had not the relish of those well-remembered suppers at home. His room was cold, and had a musty smell. His bed was cold and hard, and he had headache and shivers on getting into it.

There he lay, thinking of the home he had left, of his life-long friends, — Mabel, the good, indulgent doctor, his dear kind aunt, — wondering about him, blaming him, lamenting him perhaps even then ; of all the advantages he had forfeited, the benefits he had so foolishly flung away ; of the uncertain, gloomy future.

Was it a very fine thing to get into a scrape, run away, and have adventures ?

He recalled the young savages tattooed with the yolk of boiled eggs, who assisted at his breakfast ; the morose men and the terrible tripe at dinner ; the rebuff he got from the uncivil engineer ; the harsh-voiced, unseen woman of the last farm-house ; the dipper of water, and his own sarcastic impudence, which shamed him now, as he thought of it ; and he

asked himself, "If these things happen to me while I have money, what am I to expect when my money is gone?"

A talk he had overheard in the bar-room, all about hard times, men out of work, and the difficulty of getting work that winter, did not serve greatly to enliven his future prospects.

Thus, in spite of his good resolutions, the first day of his journey did not end quite so comfortably as might have been wished.

A less stout-hearted lad would have been tempted to give over his adventure, steal home again, and throw himself on the mercy of his friends; but Roy was made of different stuff. He was young and full of health, and sleep soon came to him in spite of his trouble. In the morning he awoke, a little languid, a trifle stiff in the limbs and sore on the soles of his feet, but with heart and brain refreshed, ready for another day's hardships.

His courage was slightly shaken when he paid his bill — two dollars for bed and supper and breakfast; but he disbursed the amount with heroic cheerfulness of look, as he might have undergone a surgical operation.

He had now but one dollar in his pocket.

As people grow light of purse they do not usually grow light of heart; but, had you met Roy that morning, walking out of the village, with his sachel on his side, and a bright face under his jaunty hat-rim, you would have thought him some gay fellow going forth to sure good fortune.

He now began to inquire for work, and soon discovered that this was a good thing to do, even where no work was to be found, since it gave him an excuse for calling at farm-houses and shops, and getting a little rest, and perhaps a seat by the fire when he was cold and tired.

At noon, a farmer, whom he asked for work, invited him to dinner, treated him with great kindness, and refused to take any of his money when he went away. This made him grateful, and filled him with remorse for his hasty judgment of farm-houses and farming people the day before.

But it also made him feel like a beggar.

"If I keep on in this way," he said to himself, "I shall soon become an accomplished tramp."

Farmers had no work except getting out their year's supply of wood, and taking care of their stock, and this they had ample leisure to do themselves. Village shops were overrun with idlers and men out of employment.

Everywhere Roy was told, that, to get work at all, he must seek some manufacturing place, where something might possibly be found.

Toward a manufacturing town, therefore, Roy made his way, and entered it at dusk that evening, with seventy-five cents in his pocket.

Avoiding the hotels, he found a cheap boarding house, where he was taken up three flights, and shown a bed in a large, square room, with three other beds, where, he was told, there were already five lodgers.

His heart sickened. He was for rushing out at once, and resuming his tramp. But, being told that he could have his bed all to himself, together with a whole wash-stand, bowl, and pitcher, he concluded to stay. There was only one looking-glass in the room, but he could take his chance at that with the other lodgers. Board, a dollar and a quarter a day, or five dollars a week.

“My seventy-five cents will last me about half a day,” Roy thought, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROY SEEKS EMPLOYMENT, AND FALLS IN WITH A PARTY OF PLEASURE.

AFTER breakfast the next morning, Roy went out in search of employment.

He visited a shovel-factory, a basket-factory, a spice-mill, and two cotton-mills, and received everywhere the discouraging answer, "Nothing whatever for a green hand to do." Even had he been acquainted with any of the kinds of business he canvassed, he would have found it hard to get work, the times were so dull.

Other places he tried, and spent the forenoon in going about on his disheartening errand.

At twelve o'clock he was back at his boarding-house, tired and faint enough, yet with a poor appetite for his landlady's dinner.

He had for his fellow-boarders some of the workmen in the factories where he had sought employment; and he — the dainty and delicate Roy — found himself now in a situation to envy these men their good fortune. What would Mabel have said?

It was Saturday, and Roy thought: —

“To-morrow is Sunday ; if I don't find some way of paying my board, and getting away this afternoon, I shall be kept here till next week, running up a bill which I never shall be able to pay.”

He had one resource. He could sell his watch. But it was a plain silver watch, and he could not hope that it would bring much. Moreover, it was a gift from his uncle, for which reason he did not like to part with it.

On going out after dinner, he found that it was a sort of holiday, several of the factories which were running on reduced time being closed that afternoon.

A feeling of consternation came over Roy. Sunday with him had practically begun. How could he look for work when the mills were closed ?

Not knowing what else to do, he walked into a jeweler's shop, and pulled out his watch.

“How much can I get for that?” he asked, showing it to a stout man, with an immense bald forehead, standing behind the counter.

The man examined it, and passed it back to him.

“Old watches are not of much account to us. I couldn't give you what it is worth.”

“I know ; but you will give something.”

The jeweler looked at the watch again, listened with critical ear to the movement, and said, laughingly : —

“A dollar. I wouldn't venture any more than that.”

Roy thanked him, smiled, returned the poor old watch to his fob, and walked out of the shop.

He noticed a good many people going up a certain street—men and women and boys and girls, some with skates, some with sleds, and some with neither skates nor sleds. Many were on foot, a few were in sleighs, and some, he noticed, patronized a long open conveyance on two sets of runners, bearing a placard, “To the Reservoir, 5 cents.”

The driver held up his thumb to Roy. Roy nodded. He was reckless. If it had been the last ride of his life, and had cost his last five cents, he would have taken it.

“Where is all this crowd going?” he asked a young lady, at whose side he found himself seated.

“To the Reservoir,” she replied.

“I know,” said Roy. “But what’s at the Reservoir?”

“Skating, of course.” The young lady smiled. “You’re a stranger here, I guess?”

“You guess right,” replied Roy.

Having scrutinized him, and found him not ill-looking, nor impolite in speech or manner, she seemed willing to continue the conversation.

“Can you skate?” she asked.

“A little,” he replied.

“There’s going to be a chance for some tall skating this afternoon,” she continued. “It’s club-day.”

“What’s club-day?”

“Don’t you know?—the skating-club. They’ve offered some magnificent prizes—four or five prizes, I believe.”

“To members of the club, I suppose.”

“To anybody ; ladies included. There’s two prizes for ladies, — one for fast skating and one for fancy skating. One of the judges is an intimate friend of mine.”

“There’ll be a chance for you to win a prize,” said Roy, glancing at the young lady’s skates ; for she took pains to show an elegant pair as she spoke.

“I don’t know,” she answered. “There’s many better skaters than me. But I’m going to do my pertiest this afternoon.”

Roy noticed that the young lady’s language was not wholly correct in its syntax, not quite free from the innocent slang which falls so limpid from a young girl’s lips. But he was not inclined to be critical.

“What are the prizes?” he asked.

“For the ladies, the first prize is a pair of very nice skates. The second prize is a flower-vase — one of the pertiest little things you ever set eyes on. I’m going in for the second prize. I don’t expect I could grab the first, if I tried ; and I’d rather have the vase than the skates, any way.”

“You seem to be well provided with skates, already,” said Roy. “What are the other prizes?”

“For the fellers? What are the prizes for the fellers, Obed?” said the young lady, turning to a youth sitting at her other side.

“What you want to know about the fellers’ prizes for?” was the gruff response.

Obed was glum. Obed was evidently fond of the young lady, and seemed to think she had been neglecting him for a stranger.

“Now, Obadiah, you’re real mean! If you don’t give me a more civil answer than that, I never’ll speak to you agin” (she actually said *agin*) “as long as I live.”

“If you don’t like it you may lump it,” said Obed. “I don’t see what you want to know about the fellers’ prizes for; you ain’t a feller.”

To show that he wasn’t ill natured, nor any thing of the kind, Obed uttered these last words with a sort of snort, intended for a laugh.

The young lady sat erect, red and resentful, and looking straight before her, as if wholly unconscious of Obed’s existence forevermore. Another young man, sitting opposite, now volunteered the information Obed had so surlily refused.

“There’s three prizes for men and boys, Miss Hogan. First prize, open to all competitors, a pair of skates worth seven dollars, for the quickest time in a three-mile race. Second prize, a silver cup worth ten dollars, for the best fancy skating. Third prize, for boys, age not over seventeen, or weight not over one hundred and fifteen pounds, a pair of skates worth five dollars, for the quickest time in a two-mile race. That’s all, I believe, Miss Hogan.”

“I’m ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Derby!” replied Miss Hogan. “It is so refreshing to find politeness hain’t quite gone out of fashion with the

gentlemen. I'm *very*, VERY much obliged to you indeed!"

And, graciously unbending, she seemed anxious to lavish at once upon Mr. Derby all the smiles which Obadiah had forfeited for the remainder of his blighted existence.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT PROMISES TO BE AN "AWFUL SCRAPE."

THEY had now arrived at the skating-ground. The passengers appearing in no haste to leave their seats, the driver cried: —

"Pile out now! I've got to hurry back and bring two more loads 'fore the show begins."

They "piled out" accordingly.

Miss Hogan seemed inclined to avoid Obed, who was still glum, and to keep near Roy, who was gracious; and they stepped down upon the ice together. Every little while she cast a sly glance back at the surly lover, when, if he happened to be looking toward her, she would put on airs of wonderful freshness and vivacity, designed to let him know that, if he chose to be churlish, he was quite welcome — she had finer strings for her bow.

She grew very familiar with Roy upon a short acquaintance; and, sitting down upon a sled, she allowed him to buckle her skate-straps for her. Of course she didn't see or care in the least how Obed glowered at the sight of her foot in Roy's hand.

"There, that's so nice! Oh, how I do wish you

had a pair of skates now! For I'm sure you can skate," she insisted; "I see it in your eye."

"I'd show you how much you are mistaken, if I could borrow a pair," said Roy, growing excited.

"You can hire a pair, I guess, right here at the club-house."

The poverty-stricken Roy began to think that he didn't care to skate. But she urged him, and they went to the club-house.

To the relief of his mind, divided between desire and prudence, and to the disappointment of the young lady, the last pair of skates was out.

"Oh, I know!" she cried. "Obed shall lend you his. He can't skate. I'll ask him."

Roy begged her not to; and, indeed, he hardly believed she would, after what had happened.

But Miss Hogan put on a sweet smile, and, walking up to Obed, who stood gloomily watching the crowd, showed that she could be either very forgiving or very politic when she had a point to gain.

Roy did not hear her request; but Obed's coarse and scoffing answer came distinctly to his ears.

"Lend *him* my skates! Ho! ho! that's too rich! Come now!"

Miss Hogan came sailing back, so serene that Roy concluded that she had, after all, merely shown her willingness to annoy her jealous adorer still more.

"I didn't expect he would," she said; "but, when a feller's right down mean, I like to have him show it. Oh! there's my brother! Here, Tod, a minute!"

“What ye want o’ me?” said Tod, a red-cheeked, chubby lad of fifteen, sliding up to her on a pretty good pair of “rockers.”

“You ain’t going to try for the prizes, and I want you to lend this gentleman your skates — that’s a good feller, Tod!”

“Oh, you git out! I want my skates myself;” and away went Tod, while his sister screamed after him: —

“You don’t git no more favors out of me, see now if you do, Tod Hogan!”

Just then a boy, not more than twelve years old, poorly clad, with red hair and freckled features, said to Roy: —

“I’ll let you take my skates, if you can use them; I’m getting a little tired.”

“Oh, the gentleman can’t do any thing with *your* skates!” said Miss Hogan, contemptuously.

The lad drew back, abashed, but without any show of resentment, merely saying: —

“I know they ain’t a very good pair, but they’re the best I have, and I thought ’twouldn’t do any hurt to offer ’em.”

“Here, bub!” Roy called after him. “Let me look at your skates, and thank you, anyway. Good heel-screws?”

“Perty good,” said the boy.

“Shouldn’t wonder if I could make ’em do,” said Roy. “Got a gimlet?”

“I hain’t got no gimlet, but I can borrow one for ye.”

In five minutes Roy had holes in the heels of his boots, and the skates strapped to his feet.

"I wish you had a better pair," said Miss Hogan, for the twentieth time, as he got up on his feet.

"They're better than no skates at all," said Roy, giving a little whirl on one foot, and turning round in a short curve backwards. "But how am I ever to return the favor, bub?"

"Oh, never mind about that;" said the boy, grinning with real pleasure at the thought of doing a stranger a kindness. "Somebody may as well be having a little fun with 'em while I'm resting."

"I see you can skate; I told you so!" said Miss Hogan, as Roy went curveting around, trying his irons. "You *must* go in for the prizes. Oh! here's my friend — one of the judges. If I knew your name I'd introduce you."

"Walker," said Roy, who, I regret to relate, had been sailing under false colors lately. "A. T. Walker" was the name he had registered at the hotel where he stopped the first night ("I am a Walker, anyway," he had said to his conscience then — "*A Tremendous Walker!*"); and he had kept it ever since, though I have not learned that he ever wrote out the middle name in full.

The introduction took place; and Mr. Bilder — that was the name of Miss Hogan's friend — asked if Mr. Walker intended to enter for the prizes.

"I may try my hand, or rather foot," replied Roy, carelessly.

“Have you paid your fee, and had your name entered?” said Mr. Bilder.

“No,” said Roy. “Is that necessary?”

“Oh, certainly.”

“How much is the fee?”

“That is moderate; there must be a fund to pay for the prizes, you understand, — only a dollar.”

“I don’t believe I have a dollar with me;” and Roy took out his pocket-book with the air of a man accustomed to handling so much money that he couldn’t always tell within half a million or so how much cash he had on hand. “No, I’ve only seventy cents; and it won’t be worth while for me to go back to my hotel for more.” As if he could have got any quantity had he seen fit to take that slight trouble.

“If you enter for only the boys’ prize, that’s half a dollar,” Mr. Bilder explained. “A dollar opens all the prizes to you.”

“Oh, I want Mr. Walker to enter for the main prizes,” Miss Hogan insisted, as if she had taken Roy under her especial patronage. “I’ve got thirty cents right here in my pocket. Here, Mr. Bilder, you take it with his seventy cents, and go and have his name entered. You’ll oblige me very much, Mr. Bilder.”

And, almost before Roy knew it, and against his better judgment, Bilder had gone with the money.

Roy was appalled at the thought of his rashness the moment it was too late to recall his hasty consent.

“My very last cent — thirty cents in debt to a stranger, and a young lady — I must be insane!”

thought he. Then, with a smile, he said to his fair protectress, "I ought to take your address, Miss Hogan, so that I can call and hand you the money you have been so very kind as to lend me."

"I ain't at all partic'lar about the money," said Miss Hogan. "But I should be pleased to have you call. My address is No. 37 Harrison Street. It's a boarding-house, but I ain't one of the boarders. My mother keeps it."

Roy did not quite lose his self-possession. Yet his smile grew comically confused and uncertain as he repeated: —

"Harrison Street — thirty-seven? Thank you. It will give me great pleas — I'll be sure to call!"

He was excited enough to laugh inwardly at the ludicrousness of the situation, and yet there was a serious side to it which made him anxious.

To hide his emotions, he whirled away on his skates, saying to himself: —

"I'm one of her mother's boarders! And I've talked of my hotel! and I've borrowed her thirty cents under false pretenses! If I *don't* win one of the prizes now, I'm in an awful scrape!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A RACE ON SKATES.

THE afternoon sport was to begin with the grand three-mile race for the first prize.

Fifteen candidates for this prize answered the call, and ranged themselves in a row along the shore, beside the club-house. At a signal called a "gun," from a huge, churn-shaped horn, blown by a stroke of the dasher, they were to start, go straight up the pond to a flag-stake in a distant cove, round it, pass down a wooded shore at the right to a second flag-stake, turn that, then cross the pond to a third flag-stake near some ice-houses, on the opposite shore, skate from there to the first stake again, repeat the circuit, and, having passed the first stake for the third time, return to the original line. He who should first cross that line, would be entitled to the prize.

Roy was at one end of the row. Glancing across to see what sort of a looking set his competitors were, he smiled to see Obed at the other end.

"All ready?" shouted a loud voice from the door of the club-house. "There will be three guns at intervals of about a second. At the third gun, start!"

The shore and the ice along the shore, the door and windows of the club-house, and the float before it — for it was really a boat-club house, and there was a great raft of planks frozen in the ice — were crowded with spectators. Each competitor — with one or two exceptions — seemed to have a circle of friends, all waiting eagerly to witness his success in the race. Roy was one of the exceptions. He was a stranger to everybody. Two persons there were, however, who showed an interest even in him. One was his fair patroness, Miss Florinda Hogan (he had learned her first name by this time); the other was the boy who had loaned him the skates, and who had now taken charge of his overcoat. The churn-shaped horn was placed on the float. A stout pair of hands grasped the cross-piece of the dasher.

“Toot!” went the first “gun.” Every skater stood with braced feet and strained nerves.

“Toot!” number two. Some of the more nervous made a false start, and had to return to position.

“Toot!” third and last; and the sudden darting out of legs, leaning forward of bodies, and general shooting ahead of the whole line, was something wonderful to witness.

The river rang with cheers, and shouts of laughter followed. Three or four of the skaters, notwithstanding the liberal spaces between them at the start, had run into each other, and two were left sprawling on the ice. Three others fell out before the first stake was turned.

Only ten were now left. These were no longer in line; but three led the rest, while one — a resolute, steady-going, stout man — was well behind.

Of the three foremost, one fell back. It was Obed. Jealousy and rage had nerved him at the start; but he had quickly given out, and, furious, baffled, blown, he could only struggle and gasp and stare as others now shot by him, and the foremost two met him on their return, having rounded the first stake.

One of these two was Roy. It would have been hard to say which was ahead. But, at the second stake, the question was more easily determined. Roy distanced his competitor by a horse's length.

A few cheers greeted him as he passed before the crowd of spectators, crossing over to the third stake, now fairly leading the race.

“Who is that chap, anyway?”

“Stranger in town — name's Walker.”

“Friend of Miss Hogan.”

“Had to borrow an old pair of skates. But, by jingo! he makes 'em hum, don't he!”

Such were some of the comments he might have heard if he had had leisure to listen as he sped by.

Before the third stake was passed, four others had fallen out. There were only six competitors now; Roy first, steady-going stout man last. When any skaters lost ground so far as to be overtaken by the steady-goer, they seemed to consider any further efforts on their part ridiculous, and drew off with the best grace they could.

There was one exception — Obed. Him the stout man passed; but Obed stolidly plodded on, till at length he heard another skater coming up.

Who could it be? For Obed had supposed himself hindmost now. Nearer, nearer came the skipping and ringing irons, and presently a light, graceful form went skimming by.

It was Roy, making his second circuit before Obed had completed his first. Then Obed, in sullen despair, turned off toward the wooded shore.

As Roy crossed the pond on his last round, he was greeted with enthusiastic cheers. He had now but four competitors — stout man still in the rear. But one thing was noticeable — Roy was no longer gaining on the stout man. They were a dozen rods apart, and appeared to keep about that distance between them as they went from the third up to the first stake again.

The other three were gradually losing ground; and they were all passed by the stout man before he had rounded the first stake for the last time. They did not, however, fall out of the race as the others had done: it was beginning to be thought respectable to keep in, even if the steady-goer had gone ahead.

There was a tremendous outcry from the shore as the two leaders passed the upper stake. But it was the stout man, this time, who got the cheers. Roy was no longer gaining on him; he was gaining on Roy.

Roy had, in fact, been losing speed a little since his first round. Steady-goer, on the contrary, was the same steady goer he had appeared at the outset. He

had even increased his velocity a little. He was now increasing it a good deal.

Roy saw his danger, Unfortunately, he had already put forth all his strength, while the stout man had force still in reserve.

The cheering became confused and frantic; and skaters, who went up the course to meet them, greeted both competitors as they flew by on wings of wind.

“Go it, Goliath!”

“Walk in, Walker!”

“Now’s your chance, little one!”

“Swallow him, Sweepstakes!”

The home-line was not more than five or six rods off. Roy was still ahead — losing, but not losing so fast as he had been. He had rallied all his forces of body and spirit for the final struggle; for the spirit enters wondrously into such things. He did not see Miss Hogan’s handkerchief fluttering to cheer him on. The crowd looked misty before him; the ice began to turn black. Just then a stick from the wooded shore came sliding along the ice.

Roy did not see the stick; he could not see any thing then. He struck it with his skate, whirled, almost fell, recovered himself, and skated away again, striking out wildly — in the wrong direction.

Roy heard a final peal of applause, which told him that somebody had won. It was several seconds before he knew that it was not he, but the stout man.

On the very verge of winning, he had gone off parallel with the line, instead of crossing it, after the stick



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struck his skate. He did not cross the line at all. Even the skaters in his rear got home before him.

There was a great outburst of indignation ; but it was some time before Roy knew what it was all about.

“A stick hit your skate, and threw you out!” said a sympathizing voice.

He knew it was the voice of Miss Hogan, though he could see only something black pass before him.

“Did there? I thought so! Who flung it?”

“I wish I knew! You’d have won, sure as guns, if it hadn’t been for that; and I say it’s too bad!” exclaimed the fair Florinda.

Mr. Bilder, coming up, warmly congratulated Roy on his splendid run, and denounced the author of the mischief which had prevented his complete success.

“I should like to know something more about that stick!” said Roy. “It might have caused me to break my neck.”

He went over toward the wooded shore, and sailed in amid the shifting crowd. Mr. Bilder accompanied him, and demanded who had thrown the stick or seen it thrown.

Nobody knew. Some had seen it slide by them on the ice ; but all had been too intent watching the race to look round and notice any thing more.

“It seems that either I have an enemy on the pond,” said Roy, “or that one of the other candidates has a too zealous friend. Don’t trouble yourself any further, Mr. Bilder.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SECOND TRIAL.

ROY now went for his overcoat to the red-headed boy who had it in charge.

“You’d like your skates now, wouldn’t you, bub?”

“No,” said the boy, “not if you want to use ’em. It’s more fun for me to see you than to skate myself.”

“Well, thank you, bub. I’ll try ’em again, or else take ’em off after I’ve rested a little.”

And Roy, having put on his coat, threw himself down on the ice, recklessly, boylike.

“Oh, dear, Mr. Walker!” the fair Florinda remonstrated. “You’ll ketch your death-cold! Do come into the boat-house, Mr. Walker!”

As he declined to take this care of himself, she ran for her friend, Mr. Bilder, who presently returned with her, bringing a heavy sleigh-robe for Roy.

“This is luxury!” said Roy, rolling himself up in it, and then lying at full length, supported on his elbow. “Miss Hogan, you and your friend are very kind to a stranger!”

“Don’t say *stranger*; I feel as if I had known you half my life,” smiled the fair Florinda.

“There’s a good deal of talk about the race,” said Mr. Bilder.

“Yes, I hear a little of it,” laughed Roy. “Some think I might have won if it hadn’t been for the stick, and some that I couldn’t have won anyway.”

“The prize hasn’t been awarded yet,” replied Mr. Bilder. “Mr. Purley is very fair about it. He says he is by no means sure he would have won, if there’d been no accident; and, if you wish, or the judges require it, he’s perfectly willing to skate with you again for the prize.”

“He’s very obliging,” said Roy; “but I can’t accept his offer. The prize is fairly his own. He would beat me, I know, in a second race; and he would have beaten me in that, without any doubt, if we had had to go over the course again.”

“You are very generous, Mr. Walker; and, if that is your decision, it will simplify the matter a good deal in the minds of the judges.”

“It is my decision,” said Roy.

And Mr. Bilder withdrew.

“What are those fellows saying, bub?” Roy asked.

Bub, who had been listening to a loud-talking group, did not like to tell what they said. Roy urged him.

“Well, you mustn’t mind — it’s all nonsense,” he replied. “One said that the stick never hit your skate at all; that you only pretended it did, after you found you was beat. Some of the others said they saw and heard it; then he said you went out of your

way to stumble over it, and told how you swung round out of the course."

"What did the others say to that?"

"He's got some friends, they joined in; the rest laughed at him."

"Who is he? — what's his name?"

"It's Miss Hogan's feller, Obadiah Hocum."

"Hocum?" repeated Roy, not well pleased to be thus reminded of his old friend, Miles, the selectman. "Nobody of that name ever did me a good turn."

"I can tell you something I think you ought to know," said the boy, confidentially, "about that stick."

"Ah! you know who flung it?"

"I don't know, but I think. When Obed gave up the race, he turned off down that shore; and I see him pick up jest such a stick as that, and go sliding along with it. I didn't think any more of it till after the stick was thown. Then I see Obed skating on behind the crowd toward the club-house; and he didn't have any stick in his hand."

"Ah?" breathed Roy again. "I expected as much."

Miss Hogan did not hear this talk, having gone to answer a call for ladies intending to enter the lists.

For ladies and girls, there was to be but one trial of skill; and the prizes were to be awarded, not for speed, but for artistic excellence and grace. This trial was to come off now, in order to give breathing time to such male competitors in the previous race as might wish to enter the lists for either of the other prizes.

Roy was rested and on his feet in time to witness the evolutions of the lady skaters. Miss Hogan had been so kind to him that he felt a lively interest in her success. But it was evident, at the outset, that there were several better skaters on the ice than she; while there was one who surpassed, by many degrees, both in swiftness, and grace and skill in difficult feats, all the rest.

“Miss Dilworthy — Judge Dilworthy’s daughter!” Roy heard whispered; and then the applause at her performance burst forth.

Roy clapped his hands longer and louder than anybody else. Miss Hogan gave him a reproachful look. She knew he was not clapping for her.

Miss Dilworthy came off in triumph. She was young (not more than sixteen), lithe as a leopardess, red as a rose, charmingly attired in a short skating-skirt of blue thibet, and she was laughing gayly as she flew to her waiting friends. One of these — a middle-aged gentleman, in a great fur collar, — caught her in his arms, gave her a kiss, and threw a mantle of furs over her pretty shoulders.

“That’s Judge Dilworthy — that’s her father,” Roy’s friend informed him. “That boy is her brother. I wish I had a pair of skates like his to lend you. Then nobody could beat you, I bet.”

“I wish you had such a pair for yourself,” said Roy.

He had almost forgotten Miss Hogan, when, seeing her pass, he skated up to her, and said what he could — indeed I am afraid, a little too much — in praise of her performance.

“ I know I didn’t do at all well,” said Florinda. “ Lucy Dilworthy took the shine off all of us. Th’ ain’t one can come within gun-shot of her. I saw you cheering her. You didn’t cheer me a bit.”

And Miss Hogan pouted.

Next in order came the two-mile race. Roy had resolved to take part in it, foolishly, perhaps, since he intended to compete afterward for the cup, to win which might require all his reserved force.

Platform scales were placed on the float ; and Roy went with other candidates to be weighed. He knew that his weight was only one hundred and twelve pounds a few days before he left home. He did not think he could have gained much flesh since.

He found that he had, in fact, lost two pounds, — less than he expected. He knew that he was not to have the steady-going, stout man against him in this race, and, he had not much fear of anybody else.

“ Keep your eye on Obadiah, bub,” he said, as he once more left his coat in charge of his young friend.

Roy did not lay out so much strength at the start in this race ; and, at the end of the first round, he found himself number four, with a shoal of young fellows scattered over the course behind him.

“ Walker’s played out — used up in the first race,” he heard somebody say, as he passed a knot of spectators. The speaker was Obed.

Roy laughed in his sleeve. He was in the steady-going line himself this time. He knew just what he could do ; he had gauged his rivals.

Only two were before him when he turned the last stake and started on the home-stretch. Suddenly his feet seemed to take wings. First, one leader was passed, then the next, within three rods of the line. Approaching that, Roy sprang into the air as if it had been a low fence, made a clear forward leap of at least fifteen feet, and brought up on his heels by the shore, amid such a tumult of applause as had not been heard before that day.

Those who had sympathized with him on account of the accident which lost him the first prize, rejoiced all the more at this well-deserved success.

The ice had not turned black to him this time ; and, looking around, he was thrilled from head to foot to see pretty Miss Dilworthy smiling and fluttering her handkerchief. Florinda was fluttering her handkerchief, too, but somehow the ungrateful wretch did not care so much for that.

“Your prize is awarded and waiting for you,” said Mr. Bilder, coming to congratulate him.

“I’m glad of that,” replied Roy ; “for I want a different style of irons for the work that comes next.”

It was a fine pair of club-skates, unincumbered with straps, but clasped to the boot, each by means of a spring-latch, which could be worked almost instantly after they had been fitted to the sole.

“Beauties !” cried Roy, delighted, as he sat down on the steps of the boat-house. “Now, bub, we have a pair of skates apiece.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT OUR HERO DID WITH THE PRIZE SKATES.

ROY'S young friend seemed even more rejoiced at his success than Roy himself. He put on his old skates again, and then watched his friend adjusting the claws of the new pair with a key, the use of which Roy understood, for he had seen that pattern of skates before. When at length the new pair were on, and Roy felt them under his feet on the smooth ice, he said nothing, but smiled.

He could not help glancing around for his stout rival in the first race.

“*Now*, if Mr. Purley should offer to skate with me again for the prize he won, he might stand a chance to lose it,” thought he. “Ah! he is going in for the big prize.”

In the fancy skating which was to follow, but few special feats were required of the performers, who were left free to introduce new and surprising feats of their own.

There were only seven competitors for the silver cup. The order in which they were first to appear was decided by lot; each having the privilege of re-

appearing and bettering his performance, or imitating any tricks he had seen the others attempt.

Stout Mr. Purley drew the lowest number from the hat. He accordingly led off.

Those who did not reflect that weight of body, up to a certain point, is an advantage to the skater, giving him power of movement and steadiness of poise, were astonished by this man's easy evolutions. His style, however, was rather large and plain — "just respectable," thought Roy.

Others followed, superior to him in some respects, — one doing this thing better; and another, that, — but none surpassing him, perhaps, on the whole.

Roy was fifth on the list. He confined himself at first to the few prescribed movements, which he did with a certain forceful ease, but perhaps with not more skill than was shown by those who had practiced them in advance for this occasion. He then went through with the most difficult voluntary tricks he had caught from the rest, and withdrew from the ring, giving place to his successor.

Neither of the candidates added much to his reputation, on a second appearance, until Roy's turn came again. Hitherto, he had simply done what was required, or copied others. Now, he struck out boldly into a style of his own. Such swiftness, such agility, such freedom and grace, had never been known on that ice before.

He took up some of the previous familiar tricks, disguised them in brilliant oramentation, which re-

mindful beholders of well-known tunes played "with variations" by a skilled musician. On one foot or both feet, outside or inside edge, forward or backward, he was equally at home. Sometimes he would go through with a long performance on one foot, whirling with great velocity, then darting off in scrolls and 3's and 8's, using, all the time, his other foot as a sort of crank to turn and propel himself, by making sweeps and circles in the air.

One of the set figures had been this — to describe a circle with the face toward the center, the toes pointing outward, and from that to strike off into a single straight line, the toes still pointing in opposite directions, and the heel of one skate following the heel of the other. Roy now repeated this, and, forcing his toes still more about, ended with an opposite circle, having his *back* toward the center, — an infinitely more difficult achievement.

In the midst of the applause which followed, Roy skated up to Mr. Bilder, and said, —

"Will you please introduce me to the young lady who won the first prize?"

He was presented to Miss Dilworthy.

"I noticed that you could take the waltzing-step on skates. Will you do me the favor to waltz with me?"

The young lady smiled, and looked inquiringly at her father. The judge nodded pleasantly, "If you like, my dear;" and Roy took out his partner.

The last feat had been difficult, but not pleasing. What followed was by no means so hard to do, but it

was the most charming thing of all — a waltz on the ice by two young and accomplished skaters. It was loudly applauded. Then, as Roy returned his partner to her friends, he said to her: —

“May I ask your first name and middle initial, if you have one, Miss Dilworthy? You will see what I want of them.”

“Lucy A.,” was the reply.

At Roy’s request, a fine coat of powdered snow had been sifted over an oblong space on the ice. He now struck into this, and, beginning with a bold flourish, wrote, in bold characters, with his skates, —

Lucy A.
Queen of the Ice

connecting the two lines with a scroll, and finishing with another graceful scroll, leaving the inscription to be read from the side where the three judges and Miss Dilworthy and her friends were standing.

So pretty a compliment, so neatly executed, excited great admiration.

“I am through, gentlemen,” cried Roy. “There’s your copy.”

A copy, we may add, which nobody had the courage to imitate.

“Oh, dear!” said Miss Hogan, pouting again, as Roy went to speak with her, “why didn’t you write my name on the ice, for all to read?”

“I thought of it,” replied Roy; “but I felt I wasn’t up to Florinda — it’s too long a name.”

“I wish you could,” murmured Miss Hogan. “It would have been glory enough for one while; and wouldn’t it have paid Obed, though!”

Roy thought Obed looked as if he were paid already.

“Here, bub, are your skates,” said Roy, unclasping the lately won pair from his boots.

“My skates! What do you mean?” said the boy.

“It was your old pair that won the new ones; they belong to you.”

“Oh! but I can’t take ’em!”

“Oh, but you must!” and Roy, laughing, thrust the shining new skates into the boy’s hands.

“Now, Tod Hogan,” said Florinda to her chubby-cheeked brother, “don’t you wish you had lent Mr. Walker your pair? See what you get by being mean, and refusing me a favor.”

“How did I know he would win a prize for a feller?” retorted the youngster.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ADVENTURES OF A SILVER CUP, AND THE INCONVENIENCE OF BEARING TWO NAMES.

AS Roy was showing the happy possessor of the new skates how to adjust the clasps, Mr. Bilder came, bringing the silver cup. It was a very pretty thing, richly embossed, and gold-lined, with a plain space left on the bowl for an inscription.

“We propose to have it engraved at our expense,” said Mr. Bilder. “You can leave it at the jeweler’s with the order, or I will attend to it.”

“I didn’t know I had won the prize,” said Roy, modestly.

“You must know very well that nobody on the ice to-day could take it from you. Here is my idea of the inscription,” — Mr. Bilder showed a piece of paper — “commemorating the event in a few words. I have left a blank for your name, Mr. Walker; you may wish to have it engraved in full.”

“I will consider that; thank you. I think — *I* will take it to the jeweler’s,” said Roy, stammering slightly and blushing a good deal.

The cup was handed around among the bystanders,

and highly praised. Roy then buttoned it under the lapel of his coat, left the ice as quietly as he could, and walked back to town.

Once more he entered the jeweler's shop. This time there was only a small boy behind the counter.

"Where's the boss?" Roy inquired.

"Skating up on the Reservoir."

"I'll call again." Just as Roy was passing out, he met a stout gentleman coming in. It was he who had carried off the first prize.

"Glad to see you again, Mr. Walker!"

So saying, the steady-goer took off his cap, and showed an immense bald forehead — the most noticeable feature of his face.

The forehead Roy recognized. It was that of the jeweler himself, whose sign, Roy now remembered, bore the name of his steady-going rival.

Though somewhat disconcerted by the discovery, he rallied quickly, and said: —

"That was a very handsome offer you made, Mr. Purley, to skate with me again, for the first prize. Allow me to thank you, sir."

"No occasion for that. I should have been sorry, Mr. Walker, to take the prize under such circumstances, if you had wished another trial."

"I did not recognize you up there," said Roy.

"Nor I you until you put your overcoat on," Mr. Purley replied. "Then it occurred to me that you were the young man who gave me a call here before the skating match. But, when you gave the skates away, I rather thought I was mistaken."

Roy laughed. "How so?"

"Because that was an act of — I may say munificence — which didn't seem to correspond very well with what I understood to be your errand to me."

"Well," said Roy, "I am that very fellow. I will be frank with you. I am in a peculiar position."

"A good many would like to be in just your position at the present time, Mr. Walker. Everybody is talking of you up on the ice. You did a very handsome thing — a very handsome thing, Mr. Walker. Ah, yes!" as Roy took the prize from under his coat, "Bilder said you would bring me the cup."

"And so I have done, but not for the purpose he imagined."

"To have it engraved?"

"No; but to raise money on it."

The jeweler smiled. "I understand. You've been" — he hesitated — "seeing the elephant."

"Precisely. I've seen a little too much of that extensive animal, and he has stepped on my pocket-book."

"Flattened it out?"

"Remarkably flat." Roy handed Mr. Purley the cup. "Advance me some money on that; and say as little about it as you please. I don't care to publish the fact that the fellow who won the silver cup had to pawn it the same day. You know what it's worth."

"I ought to. I bought it for the club. It is called a ten-dollar cup, but its actual cost was — well, considerably less."

“Can you give me eight dollars for it?” said Roy, anxiously. Mr. Purley shook his head.

“No; but I’ll tell you what I will do. Leave the cup with me — on exhibition. I’ll advance you the actual cost — five dollars and eighty cents. I’ll give you ten days to redeem it; then, if you fail, I’ll sell it to the club again.”

This arrangement pleased Roy. He did not expect to be able to redeem the cup in that time; but he was glad not to have it put up for sale until he should have had time to get well out of the way and be forgotten.

He showed Mr. Bilder’s proposed inscription to the jeweler, who turned the paper over and wrote on the other side: —

“PRIZE CUP,
WON BY MR. A. T. WALKER,
AT THE GREAT SKATING-MATCH.”

Thus described, the cup was set in the jeweler’s window to be gazed at by an admiring public. It was not destined, however, to be re-sold to the club and skated for again, as we shall see.

Roy could not help laughing when he left the store, and saw the cup with its label in the window as he turned down the street.

“It makes so fine a show, I almost envy Mr. Walker!” thought he. “But I sha’n’t envy him when people find out what a mercenary wretch he is — pawning his prize for money! What will *she*

think?" He was sauntering on, revolving in his mind what he would do next, when his reveries were suddenly put to flight by the sound of his own name shouted in the street.

"Rockwood! Roy Rockwood!"

It is a hard thing, for one not practiced in disguises and deception, not to start and look up when unexpectedly called by a name he has been known by all his life. Instead, therefore, of walking straight on, without turning his head, — as he ought to have done, if the name on the prize cup in the jeweler's window had been rightfully his own, — Roy did what you or I would have been apt to do in his circumstances; he gave a start of surprise, and looked quickly around.

The great Reservoir sleigh was passing, with a load of passengers returning from the afternoon's sport. A dozen faces were turned to gaze at him, some of which were familiar; but he saw nobody who could possibly be supposed to know his real name.

It was a rather startling mystery; and he was for a moment so confused by it that he quite forgot to lift his hat in acknowledgment of Miss Hogan's expressive bow and smile.

"I say, Roy Rockwood!" called the voice again.

This time he recognized the peculiar accents; and, turning again, as the sleigh swept on, he saw the speaker coming over to him from across the street.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROY RIDES AFTER AN EXTRAORDINARY HORSE.

“HALLO, Lizard!” cried Roy; “how came you here?”

The little Canadian came bustling up to him, radiant with joy at meeting him again.

“De brickyards, ware I live, only tree, fo’ mile from ’ere. I come over see ’bout some work, and git some groc’ies for my fam’ly. I didn’ expec’ see you, Roy.”

Roy looked anxiously around. “Don’t speak so loud, Lizard. I’m not Roy Rockwood here — I’m Mr. Walker. You knew I had left home?”

“I t’ink so. After I lef’ you, — wen I was come along wid my new ’oss, — Mist’ Drollers, of your town, he overtake me, and want to know all ’bout you, how I seen you, you know; he wouldn’t say wat was matter; an’ he drive on.”

“I’ll tell you about it when I have a good chance,” replied Roy. “But, remember now, I am Mr. Walker; you know me by no other name.”

“Yes, Roy, I remember dat.”

“But, Lizard, you mustn’t say Roy; say *Mr.*

Walker. And now tell me about yourself. How did you get along with the new horse?"

"I git along p'itty good; dat was ver' good 'oss. I have to boost some, but he was ver' good 'oss. He fall down sometime; an' I t'ink once he would ups an' die too; but dat was not his plan; he was ver' good 'oss. I have him 'ere to town now, in my wagon, gittin' some groc'ies for my fam'ly. You shall ride after him, if you like; an' you will say you'self he is ver' good 'oss."

"Thank you, Lizard, I don't think I care to ride. Glad he didn't *ups an' die*; I was afraid he would. But how about work, Lizard?"

"I expec' job cutt'n' ice, nex' Monday mornin'."

"Where?"

"Up on Reservoir 'ere. You know, Roy."

"Not *Roy*; remember, Lizard. *Walker* — *Mr. Walker*."

"*Walker!* yes. I git dat bimeby, Roy — I mean *Mist' Walker*. I goin' see de fo'man now, see 'bout our men comin' over Monday mornin'. I s'pose, good-day, he want all men he can git."

"Wonder if there'd be a chance for me, Lizard?"

"You, Roy, — *Walker* — *Mist' Walker*, — you work cutt'n' ice?"

"Why not? I have to work for my living now, and I can't find any thing else to do."

"Well, Roy, — *Mist' Walker*, — you jes' come 'long me; I guess I git you job. My 'oss an' wagon right 'ere; we ride over see fo'man; fix it all right."

So it seemed that Roy was to ride after the wonderful horse, after all. The animal was found fastened by a halter of rope to a post in front of a grocery, and looking quite as sharply ribbed and grotesquely gaunt as when Roy saw him first.

“You be gitt’n’ in w’ile I untie,” said the little Canadian. “He take us over de groun’ p’itty quick; he ver’ good ’oss, to be sure.”

Lassarde climbed up into the antique wagon after Roy, pulled an old horse-blanket over their knees, and gave the signal to start.

“Git up now, Billy.”

No response from Billy. Lassarde reached over, and struck him with the ends of the reins, which were also of rope, like the halter. Billy gave a groan.

“Git up now, I say!” And, with another groan, which seemed to come from the cavernous depths within his hollow, creaking machinery, Billy “got up” at last. “You see, he ver’ good ’oss, ver’ good ’oss, no mistake,” said the satisfied Lassarde.

Just as they were starting, a handsome sleigh, drawn by a prancing span of black horses, went by, to the sound of laughing voices and jingling bells. It contained half a dozen persons, all of whom seemed to be looking with extraordinary interest at Lassarde’s turn-out, and particularly at Roy.

Poor Roy! he could have wished — if he had not been too much confused to frame a wish — that the ancient wagon-bottom might open and let him through. It was Judge Dilworthy’s sleigh; and there was the

“Queen of the Ice” herself, no doubt astonished at seeing the champion skater of the day, the winner of two prizes, taking a ride in such a wagon, and after such a horse!

“Do, for heaven’s sake, drive along!” said Roy, groaning in concert with the poor beast. “Where is your foreman?”

“Up on Reservoir — somewhere about ice-houses. We be dare pretty quick; you see — he ver’ mighty good ’oss!”

Roy remembered the ice-houses at the Reservoir. He also remembered the throng of people there, who had witnessed his performance; and he did not care to meet any more of them, in his present position. He was for jumping out of the wagon at once, but was consoled to learn that they were going up a different street from that which led to the club-house; for, to say the truth, he felt very little like taking more walks that day.

Lassarde beat the beast with the ends of the rope reins, shouted at him both in broken English and Canadian French, and at last actually urged him into a trot.

“You see,” said he, bragging incessantly, “he ver’, ver’ good ’oss, jes’ I told you — ver’ good ’oss, to be sure.”

“A splendid horse for the money, I should say,” replied Roy. “But, I beg of you, don’t beat him any more. Let him walk; keep him splendid.”

Arrived at the ice-houses, they found the foreman

and three or four more laying out work for the following week, running a line by means of a long, narrow board, called a "straight-edge," and a toothed instrument, which they shoved along beside it, called a "hand-groove," — a line which was to serve as a guide for starting the larger ice-cutters, drawn by horses.

Lassarde was told to be on hand with his friends early Monday morning, if the weather should continue favorable. Then Lassarde said: —

"Dis young man, he like git job cuttin' ice; you give him a chance."

The foreman took occasion, while the men were shoving the "straight-edge" along in the direction of the line, to look critically at Roy.

"Seems to me you're the crack skater that beat the crowd here this afternoon?"

"I hope that is nothing against me," said Roy.

"No; but you don't look used to hard work."

"Very likely. But I can get used to it."

"Smart feller!" put in Lassarde. "One of smartest fellers you ever see."

"Smart enough, I've no doubt. I've seen something of his smartness," said the foreman. "But can he stand it to cut ice?"

"I should like to try," replied Roy.

The foreman got down on his knees and elbows to take aim along his "straight-edge" toward a stake set in the ice, adjusted the board to his eye, then got up again, all without answering Roy's last remark. Then, while the men were shoving the "hand-groove" along, he said to Roy: —

“Think you can do a man’s work?”

“You will be the best judge of that.”

“We pay a dollar and seventy-five cents a day for men. You can come and try it at a dollar and a half, with the understanding that you may get more, or perhaps less, according to what you earn.”

“That is fair,” said Roy, his heart lightened by the prospect of earning his own living at last.

“Report to me here Monday morning,” said the foreman. “Work begins at seven.”

“Now, Mist’ Fo’eman,” said the Canadian, “I want to see ’bout gittin’ job for my ’oss. Mist’ Rock — Mist’ Wa — Walker — he’ll tell you he ver’ good ’oss.”

“We sha’n’t want any horses unless there comes a snow,” replied the foreman. “Then we shall have to scrape; and, if you have a good horse, you may bring him on.”

“T’ank ye, Mist’ Fo’man. How much you pay day for ’osses?”

“Same as for men — dollar seventy-five cents a day; for good work-horses, you understand.”

“I un’stan’. Mine ver’ good ’oss, I tell ye. I bring him if snows.” And, as they went off the ice, Lassarde said to Roy:—

“I git job for my ’oss now, like’s not. I hope it snow like great guns ’fore Monday mornin’. I make him earn money, pay you back what you lend; he pay for hissself tree, fo’ days. An’ I say, he do dat, he ver’ mighty good ’oss, to be sure!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

OBED WRITES A LETTER, TO WHICH HE ADDS A POSTSCRIPT.

ROY rode back to town with the little Canadian, where they parted company; Lassarde tying his horse once more to the hitching-post before the grocery, while Roy returned to his boarding-house.

“Now how 'bout op'nin' dat account?” said Lassarde, entering the store. “I pay some to-night an' I pay ev'yt'ing nex' Saddy night; an' I do all my trade 'ere, you gi'me some credit, you know.” He addressed his remarks to an elderly man, with whom he seemed to have had some talk on the subject before. But now a young fellow came forward, and questioned him.

“Where do you live?”

“Over on brickyards. I work on brickyards two summers, an' now I bring my fam'ly.”

“Who's the young chap that just left you?”

“He? Friend of mine — young man I know.”

“What's *his* name?”

“Rock — I mean, you see — I mos' forgit — Walker; I b'lieve his name Mist' Walker.”

“You called him something else when you spoke to

him in the street; and you were just going to call him so again."

"I don' know — I can't speak English ver' well — I make some mistakes."

"Where have you known him — this Mr. Walker?"

"I know him — good many places — fus' rate feller — he help me buy my 'oss; ver' good 'oss."

"Where did he come from?"

"My 'oss?"

"No; this Mr. Walker."

"Oh, yes; Mist' Walker." But the Canadian, now fully on his guard, fearing to compromise Roy, could not remember any thing more about him.

"We don't see such skating every day," said the young man; "and I'd like to know where he learned so much. You pay your debts, Lassarde?"

"Yes, I pay. You might ask anybody in Bayfield, where I was 'fore I come 'ere."

"Bayfield?" said the young man, interested. "You've lived in Bayfield?"

"Yes; I was lived in Bayfield good w'ile. Mebby you know some people in Bayfield?"

"I have relations there."

"What her names?"

"Hocum. Miles Hocum is my uncle."

"Miles Hocum!" exclaimed Lassarde. "I know him like books. I trade in his store good deal. You ask him; he will say if I pay my debt."

The elderly man now joined in the conversation; and it was decided to let Lassarde have the credit he

wished. After the customer was gone, the elderly man said : —

“ He’ll pay for what he buys to-day in order to get fresh credit next time. Meanwhile, I guess you better write, and ask your Uncle Miles about him ; for we want his custom, if it’s good for any thing.”

Obed did not seem to be in a very happy frame of mind ; and perhaps he thought that writing the letter would serve to divert his melancholy. He accordingly perched himself on a high stool at the desk, took a pen, dipped it in ink several times, chewed the handle, and at length began to write.

When Roy reached his boarding-house, having no latch-key, he was obliged to ring.

The door was opened by the chubby-cheeked Tod, who at sight of him began to grin and chuckle. Roy looked down sternly on the merry youngster, and asked, —

“ Does Miss Hogan live here ? ”

“ Course she does,” said Tod ; “ don’t you ? ”

“ Please hand this to Miss Hogan, with Mr. Walker’s grateful acknowledgments.”

Thereupon Tod began to shriek : —

“ Here ! Sis ! sis ! Florinde ! Here’s Mr. Walker with your thirty cents ; I bet I’ve won my bet ! ”

Roy was going on up the stairs when he saw Florinda coming down. They met on the first landing.

“ Ah ! Mr. Walker,” said Miss Hogan, in a flutter of embarrassment, “ so glad to see you ! But — didn’t — why didn’t you show Mr. Walker into the parlor, Tod ? ”

“I am on my way to my room,” said Roy, serenely.

“Indeed! It is really true, then,” began Miss Hogan, when Tod’s voice, in an ecstasy of chuckle, drowned all other words.

“Didn’t I tell ye so? I won the bet, Mr. Walker. Florinde, she bet a new breastpin with me that you wasn’t one of ma’s boarders; but I seen ye go out o’ the house this mornin’, and agin at noon; and, when I seen you with her up on the Reservoir, I thought she knew ye. Now, Florindy Hogan, jest fork over that breastpin; and next time I tell ye I know a thing, don’t call me a pukin-head. Here’s thirty cents he jest handed me for you; guess I’ll hold onto it.”

“Oh, you needn’t have minded about that small sum, Mr. Walker,” said Florinda, still confused.

“I think I owe you still more,” replied Roy, “since I have been the cause of your losing a bet.”

“That was all nonsense — a little foolery between me and Tod. You hadn’t told me your name, and you spoke of your hotel.”

“Did I say *hotel*?” laughed Roy. “Well, *this* is my hotel. I think it deserves the name, if any boarding-house does.”

“But — I gave you my address — why didn’t you tell me then —”

“That I was one of your mother’s boarders? The truth is,” said Roy, with engaging candor, “I can’t explain all the foolish acts of my life. That is one of them, Miss Hogan.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Walker!” exclaimed Florinda, “don’t

say that; it was a pretty good joke — I call it. I've talked with ma, and, since you *are* the new boarder, I'm afraid you haven't got a very good room."

"The room is well enough, only rather too thickly populated. As I expect to remain in town a few days, I should prefer a little more privacy; but your mother did the best she could for me, I believe."

As Roy spoke, he looked so fine and manly, in the eyes of the partial Florinda, that she good-naturedly forgave him the little imposture he had practiced, and — what was worse — his neglect of her, and his admiration of another, on the ice. She answered with a decisive word and sweet smile, —

"I'll see that you have a better room, Mr. Walker."

Roy thanked her, and proceeded on his way up the stairs. He had not gone far when he heard a violent squabble below, and Florinda's voice saying, —

"Give it here, Tod Hogan!"

To which Tod retorted: —

"I won't! I'm goin' to keep it toward that breast-pin you oweme. Oh! ow! Leggo my hair, Florinde Hogan! I'll yell!"

Roy understood that the altercation was concerning the thirty cents, which Tod seemed determined to retain as security for the payment of his sister's bet — a matter in which he did not feel called upon to interfere.

He had not been long in his room, when Mrs. Hogan gave him a call, having found, she said, that she was able to do much better by him than she had at first supposed.

“You can have a small room, down one flight, all to yourself, if you prefer.”

Roy did “prefer,” of course, and took possession at once of his new quarters, for which he thanked the mother in words, and the daughter in his heart.

The apartment was not sumptuous; but to Roy, disgusted with the sight of old hairbrushes, bowls of soapy water, boxes of tooth-paste and pomatum, too many tumbled beds in the morning, and too many old clothes hanging round on hooks at all times, the new room “all to himself,” small as it was and shabby as it was, seemed a haven of refuge, for which he was duly grateful.

He went to bed early that night, and kept his chamber nearly all the next day, glad enough, for once, to have Sunday come, after a week of weariness and trouble.

Toward evening, feeling refreshed after his long rest, he took a walk up to the Reservoir, and saw some men, — Sunday though it was, — with axes and pikes and ice-hooks, opening a channel in the ice in front of the great houses, which were to be filled with their crystal harvest during the following week. The novelty of the business pleased Roy, and already he wished that Monday morning had arrived.

He had not sought Florinda’s society during the day; but, after tea, he could not well decline an invitation, with which she smilingly met him in the entry, to the private family parlor, to which only privileged boarders were admitted.

Roy had not been there long when a caller entered. It was Obed.

That jealous swain had already punished himself sufficiently, by nursing his ill nature alone and sulkily walking off the other way after the morning services at church, instead of going home with Florinda, as his habit was. He had therefore concluded to forgive the past, and had come, with a magnanimous smile and a bright blue neck-tie, to visit her in the evening.

But, at sight of the odious "Walker" in the bosom of the family, chatting pleasantly, basking in the sunshine of Florinda's favor, the heart of the envious youth almost burst with impatience.

Florinda received him with marked coldness; and Roy's airy and ironical civility did not soothe his ruffled spirit. He sat for some time silent and glowering, his legs crossed, and his hat on his knee, then got up.

"Good-evening!" he muttered, almost savagely, as he stalked out.

"Good-evening, Mr. Hocum!" replied Florinda, in tones of excessive suavity, intended to set off, by cheerful contrast, the boorishness of his blunt leave-taking. "Don't forget your cane, Mr. Hocum."

He had set his cane in the corner on entering, and was perhaps willing to have that excuse for coming back. The discovery that she did not care to leave him that excuse, could not have been very flattering to his outraged vanity.

"Come again, Mr. Hocum!" Florinda called after

him, in sweet accents, which ended in a light laugh, as with neck-tie and cane, and hat set fiercely on one side, he disappeared down the stairs.

Young Tod, who saw the fun and liked it, followed Obed to the door, and grinningly imparted to him the consoling information that Walker was a "reg'lar boarder, and a tip-top feller."

Home went the miserable Obed, with a heart full of boiling rage and hatred, and lay awake half the night plotting vengeance against the faithless Florinda and the favorite new boarder.

The next morning, he went early to the store, found the unfinished letter to his Uncle Miles, and, with fingers trembling from outward cold and inward fury, penned the following postscript: —

"There's a scamp here name Walker been in town a day or two, Lassarde knows him, and called him some other name like Rock, or Brock, or Brockwood, seems to be some mystery, in pretty good clothes, but with a downright roagues face, if there ever was one, he give away a pair of skates he won as a prise and helped Lassarde buy an old crowbait of a horse so Lassarde says, and yet this ristocrat this prince in disguise is goin' to work on the ice for Westbury & Co this week, do you know any thing about him, because he may impose on a worthy family I know, about 16 or 17 years old."

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR HERO GOES TO WORK, AND IS INTERRUPTED.

WHILE Obed was finishing his letter, Roy was on his way to the Reservoir, happy in the prospect of having honest work to do, and of enjoying a manly independence.

He found a special gang of men already at work. The engine was fired up, the machinery clanked, and ice-cutters were humming merrily over the frozen pond.

At a distance the ice-cutter bore a striking resemblance to a plow. It was furnished with handles, held by the man who followed it, and was drawn by a horse, which another man led. But the slender iron beam ran very low ; and, in place of the plow-share, it had a series of gigantic steel teeth, each projecting a little lower and cutting the ice a little deeper than the one that preceded it.

The cutters themselves formed a regular series like the teeth of each. The first cut a groove only about two inches in depth. Beginning with the line which Roy had seen cut with the "hand-groove" on Saturday, it deepened that, and, returning, cut a parallel groove,

with just the width of the future cake of ice between them. A "guide" attached to this pioneer cutter — a sort of blade formed to run always in the last groove: — set the teeth off a at proper distance for the next groove.

This instrument had already gone over a section of the pond one way, making the ice look like a vast sheet of ruled paper. It was now crossing the first lines at right angles, cutting the parallels into squares, outlining, so to speak, several acres of checker-board.

A second cutter followed the first, and a third and fourth followed that, each still further deepening the groove until they had a depth of eight or nine inches in ice fourteen inches thick.

From one side of the field thus prepared, immense oblong, checkered rafts of ice were taken off, floated along the canal, which had been opened the day before, and brought into a sort of dock at the foot of the elevator near one end of the row of ice-houses.

The elevating apparatus had an endless chain, revolving over two iron wheels, one situated just above the water at the lower end of a steeply inclined plane, the other at the upper end, near the top of the ice-house. The ice-raft, as it reached the dock, was split into smaller rafts by means of long handled, chisel-shaped instruments struck into the grooves; these fragments were shoved on, and again divided by men standing on wooden platforms at each side of a narrow channel, and finally fed, cake by cake, into the mouth of the elevator.

Roy, reporting to the foreman, was turned over to a man who had charge of the ice at this point. The man looked at him, saw he had a quick eye and a resolute face, and said: —

“I guess your place be will here. Ketch hold of that ice-hook behind you, and do as I do.”

The ice-hook was a short-handled pike, with a strong, wedge-shaped point and sharp hook, used in handling the cakes. As they were pushed along the channel between the platforms, some were to be kept back, while others were floated into the jaws of the machinery. Each jaw was an iron grapple of the chain, which, seizing a cake, forced it up the smooth rails of the inclined plane to the lowest of a series of stagings arranged to carry the ice to various heights, along the entire row of buildings.

It was Roy's business to help feed the blocks into the elevator; and this became lively work after the full force of men was put on for the day.

The overseer in charge had not judged him ill. The boy's athletic sports had given him a good training for exercise of this sort. There were no quicker or more skillful hands than his on the platform; and, as soon as he became accustomed to managing the ice, none could turn, or trim, or set back, or move on a block and leave it at just the proper time, more handily than he.

“Guess you ain't much used to work,” said the overseer to him, with a queer smile.

“What makes you think that?”

“ ’Cause you put in so. Old stagers don't work like that. They know they can't stand it. They take it easier, as you will, by'n 'by.”

Roy had in fact been so much interested in his work that he had thrown himself into a violent sweat during the first half-hour. He now found that it was not a matter of life and death that each grapple should have its cake ; and that, if one grapple had two cakes, the one behind forcing up the one before, no catastrophe need be dreaded. So, instead of springing with all his might to regulate the procession of blocks, when they came too fast or too slow or got wedged in the channel, he accepted the overseer's hint, and “ took it easier.”

It was well he did ; for, though he worked much more moderately after that, he was a tired boy when night came. He had had an hour at noon for his dinner, which he ate in the engine-room (having taken it with him in the morning), and had then worked until near five o'clock, when it grew dark at that season of the year. It seemed as if he could hardly lift his stiff and heavy limbs as he walked back to his boarding-place.

A good night's rest restored him, however ; and he was promptly in his place again the next morning.

“ Well, how are you to-day ? ” said the friendly overseer.

“ A little rusty in the hinges ; but I shall be all right in a little while,” replied Roy.

The overseer suggested a change in his work, to

which Roy agreeing, his short-handled pike was exchanged for a long one, and he was set to rafting ice. This pleased him better, for awhile at least. There was a novelty about it, without the excitement which had tempted him to go beyond his strength.

Each raft required, for its easy navigation, two men; and, as Lassarde was at this work, Roy easily got him for a comrade.

Shouldering their poles, they marched to a distant part of the ice-field, where the great checkered masses were split off, and, getting possession of one, started with it for the ice-houses.

There was a broad space of open water, from which the ice had been taken the day before; along the edge of this they floated their slow and sluggish raft, now pushing, now pulling it, now walking on the main ice and now on the floating fragment, thence into the canal, and so on, to the dock, when it was delivered over to those who jumped upon it with their long-handled chisels, and commenced splitting it up.

Roy and Lassarde did not overwork themselves that day; and they had plenty of leisure, going and coming, to talk over old times in Bayfield.

In the afternoon, it began to snow and again the little Canadian had hopes of bringing his horse into service.

It snowed all night, though not heavily; and in the morning there were fifteen or twenty horses on the ice, with wooden scrapers, clearing it and piling up the snow in banks along the shore.

Roy looked for Lassarde, and before long saw him coming with his pike-pole on his shoulder, as on the previous day.

“Hallo, Lizard!” cried Roy, “where’s your horse?”

“I dono’ wot sort of fo’eman dey got ’ere,” muttered the Canadian, looking hugely dissatisfied about something. “I bring my ’oss, as he say, an’ you know you’self he ver’ good ’oss. But dat fo’eman, he look at him, an’ he say, ‘You dumb Cunnuck, you call dat a ’oss?’ I say, ‘Cou’se I call him a ’oss, an’ a p’itty good ’oss, to be sure.’ But dat fo’man he laugh, an’ he say, ‘Crows got a moggidge on dat ’oss.’ I say, ‘I dono’ wot ye mean by moggidge; he is ver’ good ’oss, an’ I should like set him to work.’ But dat fo’man he say, ‘You don’t set no such rattlebone to work on ice w’ile I’m ’bout; I should be ’f’aid Cruelty Animals S’c’ety would go for me;’ an’ dat fo’man he laugh, an’ go ’way. I dono’ wot he mean; for I call Billy now p’itty mighty good ’oss, don’t you?”

“A wonderful horse, in his way, Lizard!” replied Roy.

“In his way — what you mean by dat?” said the jealous little Canadian. “Ain’t he good sort of ’oss?”

“A very good sort of horse for a person who fancies a horse of that sort,” replied Roy.

Lassarde detected sarcasm in these answers. He also had to bear a good deal of banter from his brother Canadians, which Roy, though he understood not a dozen words of their language, judged rightly to

be on the subject of poor Billy. Lassarde became gloomy. He ceased to brag of his "ver' good 'oss." But now and then he broke out with, "I dono' wot I do dat 'oss;" or, "'F'aid I ha'f to sell dat 'oss;" or, "Too bad now I fin' noth'n' dat' oss do — he eat mos' much hay's a man;" or some such expression of trouble and discontent.

Roy was getting along very well with the work now; but the snow and water were fast ruining his boots, and he went home every night with wet feet.

His fair friend, Florinda, noticed this, and one evening brought him a pair of overshoes, which the house had inherited from some defaulting boarder. Roy accepted them gratefully, and from that time kept his feet dry.

But, while the daughter looked after his comfort, the mother had an eye to business. As he was leaving the breakfast-table one morning she accosted him with rather too many smiles:—

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Walker; I have some bills to pay to-day; my usual terms is, paid in advance from strangers, but don't wish to exact it from a gentleman like you — only, if you could lend me three or four dollars till next week, it would be a great accommodation."

Roy, beginning to learn wisdom from experience, had carefully hoarded his "cup money," as he called it, against all temptations to give or spend. The time for its legitimate use had now come; and, taking the landlady's gentle hint, he put five dollars into her hand — payment in full for a week's board.

He still had half a dollar left; but that evening a little bill for washing came in, which being paid, only five cents remained.

“Never mind,” thought he, “to-morrow is Friday and the next day is Saturday, and Saturday night I shall be paid off, and have ten dollars and a half in hard-earned cash;” for Roy flattered himself that he was to receive man’s wages.

Saturday came, and was drawing to a close, and Roy, thinking how rich he would be in about an hour, was taking down his raft of ice with Lassarde, when Lassarde, who was on the raft, said to Roy, who was on the main ice, soberly pushing, with the end of the pole against his shoulder:—

“Walker!” for the Canadian had learned to call him by his right name, or rather wrong name, by this time, “who dat comin’? Ain’t dat somebody you know? You look quick!”

Roy did look quick, and none too quick either; for the comer, a powerfully built person, walking with tremendous strides, already had a hand outstretched to touch his shoulder.

It was Constable Drollers.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DUMPY DROLLERS'S TACTICS.

THIS was Miles Hocum's practical answer to Obadiah's postscript.

Miles did not get the letter until Friday, being absent from home when it came. Then, instead of trusting his reply to the mails, he dispatched, the next morning, our friend Drollers, who carried a note of introduction to Obed, together with a paper which more immediately concerned our hero.

Drollers, on his arrival in town, sought out Obed, and then both hastened to the ice-field, Obed consenting with gleeful alacrity to act as the officer's guide and deputy.

Among the gang of men at work on the ice and occasional visitors coming and going, the approach of these two did not attract attention. Drollers was, therefore, able to form a deliberate plan of attack, and then to choose his own time for carrying it into execution.

The company had begun to cut ice on the opposite side of the pond; and a space some twenty rods in length and four or five rods wide had been opened

over against the wooded shore. Roy and Lassarde had taken their raft from the farther end of this space, and were moving it toward a new canal, which branched off at right angles in the direction of the ice-houses. Imagine the form of a gigantic carpenter's square cut out of the ice, — the long arm very much prolonged, and the short arm very much widened, — and you have an idea of the situation. On the corner of the main ice thus formed, Drollers had thought it an easy thing to catch Roy.

The constable and his deputy, having separated, waited till the raft neared the corner, and then advanced — Drollers from amid the throng of ice-cutters on one side, and Obed along the path of the going and returning raftsmen, by the edge of the canal, on the other side. Thus, had Roy taken the alarm in season and set out to run from the constable, he must have gone safely and comfortably into the arms of the deputy. But he did not give Obed that happiness.

At sight of the genial face of his old friend (for the countenance of Drollers wore a pleased and confident smile), and the hand outstretched to grasp his collar, Roy slipped his shoulder from the pike-pole, the end of which, by some accident, struck the advancing officer full in the chest. Drollers caught it as it was falling; for he had had his eye on that very useful instrument, which he thought might come in play in case his intended captive should attempt to escape in the only direction left open to him, and it should become necessary to hook him out of the water.

Roy was by this time on the raft, having made a leap of three feet, which the ponderous Drollers was in no hurry to take after him, having possessed himself of the pike-pole; and feeling himself master of the situation. At the same time, Obed came up.

“Push off! push off, Lizard!” cried Roy, running to help the Canadian, and setting him a lively example.

A foot or two farther from the shore, and the ice-raft would be where Drollers, with his two hundred and odd pounds of portliness, would hardly venture to take the leap at all.

“Lizard,” said the constable, “stop that! You’re resisting an officer of the law!”

“I ain’t ’zistin’ no officer—I jes’ gittin’ my ice ’long fas’ I can!” and the little Canadian pushed with all his might.

But it was not easy to change the course of the sluggish mass; and now Drollers had a pike-pole too. He stuck the hook into the raft; and, while Roy and Lassarde pushed, he and Obed pulled.

One end of the raft moved off from the main ice; but, at the same time, the other end moved on. Drollers laughed; Obed’s eyes stuck out with excitement.

“Sorry for you, Roy,” said the constable; “but there’s no help for’t. You must come with us.”

Roy glanced quickly around, while he and Lassarde exerted all their force. Their end of the raft still swung away; the other end touched the main ice.

“Now’s our time, Hocum!” and the constable stepped, with his deputy, upon the raft.

Roy could expect no help from Lassarde. He got possession of Lassarde's pole, and retreated.

Drollers held the other pole ready for any emergency, and advanced with Obed, driving Roy to the corner of the raft.

"I guess you better give up, Roy," said Lassarde; "I guess no use."

But Roy pointed his pike at Drollers's breast.

"Think you're going to take me with you, Dumpy Drollers?" he cried, his eyes gleaming defiance.

"Yes, my boy, that's just what I'm going to do," said Drollers. "Jump into the water, and you'll have a cold bath for nothing and get hooked out with this fifteen-foot pole."

Again Roy glanced around. Behind him, was the open water, with here and there a floating fragment of waste ice; confronting him, were the confident officer and his wildly grinning deputy.

"Keep off!" he shouted, as Drollers advanced.

"Put down that pole, Roy! You'll be sorry if you make me use mine!" said the officer, threateningly.

Another glance behind. Roy was watching his chances.

"Well, I'm ready now!" And, hurling the pole backward, he wheeled half about, and followed it, taking a desperate leap from the raft.

Drollers looked to see him go into the water, and sprang forward to fish him out with his long-handled ice-hook.

But he did not go into the water.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCERNING SOME HAY ROY DID NOT WISH TO PURCHASE, AND
A LAD WHO DID NOT HAVE IT TO SELL.

ROY had dexterously dropped one end of his pole on the raft, and flung the other across a fragment of drifting ice. This was the chance he had been waiting for, as the raft swung off. Then two quick steps, or skipping leaps along the pole; a third on the fragment of ice, which swayed and dipped; and a fourth to a much larger mass, where he regained his balance just as he was falling, gathered fresh impetus, and, at one sheer jump of seven or eight feet, landed, head foremost — one leg slipping backward into the water — on the firm shore-ice beyond.

It had been truly a desperate venture; and in cooler moments he could not perhaps have performed the daring feat once in a dozen times. Drollers was as much confounded as if he had seen a bird already in his hand slip through his fingers, and fly away.

Roy was beyond reach of his hook, before he could use it; and the portly constable found himself helplessly adrift on the raft, with at least twenty feet of open water between him and the fugitive scrambling up on an embankment of snow piled along the shore.



A PERILOUS LEAP. — Page 194.

“ You can go too ; I hold de pole for you walk off dare,” said Lassarde, with gay humor. “ You try ? ”

The proposal was not favorably received ; such flying leaps as he had just seen taken by the light-heeled Roy not being in Dumpy’s line.

His wit was of the heavy order, like his frame. He had to turn about two or three times before he finally decided what to do. He first thought of hauling the raft over by hooking on to the fragments of floating ice ; but soon found that, instead of drawing the raft to them, he drew them to the raft. Then he would have gone back to the main ice ; but, after one or two attempts to hook into it, he reflected that he would gain no advantage by returning to it — that he would then be in the very trap he had laid for Roy, with two arms of open water shutting him off from the way he wished to go.

“ Now see wot you do ! ” said the Canadian ; “ gitt’n’ my ice ware I not manage him at all ! ” Then to Obed : “ I take my ice-hook, you please ! ” the zealous deputy having seized Lassarde’s pole.

The raft was drifting toward the head of the canal. Drollers saw his opportunity, and began to paddle clumsily in that direction.

Roy meanwhile had climbed over the snow heaped by the scrapers along the shore, run swiftly up the wooded bank, and disappeared. He struck a path made by laborers who had come that way to their work on the pond. The path took him to an open road, which in one direction led farther into the

country, and in the other back to town. He felt that the greater safety lay in the direction of the country. But he had learned what it was to travel without means; and there was the money due to him that night from the ice-company, to say nothing of the sachel of clothes he had left at his boarding-house.

He had not decided which course to take, when a sleigh came along. It was going toward town.

“Ride?” cried Roy, standing by the track.

“Get on,” said the driver, slackening speed.

Roy sprang upon the side of the sleigh; but the man made him get under the robe and take a seat by his side. That man was Judge Dilworthy, driving his handsome span. Roy, who knew him, hoped he would not himself be recognized; but the judge looked at him pleasantly, and said, —

“How’s the skating on the pond now?”

“Not very good since the snow fell,” replied Roy.

“I see your cup is still in the jeweler’s window,” remarked the judge, and let out the reins of his spirited span.

By getting this ride, Roy felt that he had gained two advantages over his pursuers — he was rapidly putting distance between him and them, and he was leaving no foot prints on the road by which he might be traced.

He quitted the sleigh when near his boarding-house, entered by a back way, ran up unobserved to his room, put on a clean shirt and dry socks (in spite of

overshoes he had wet one foot in making his escape from the raft), left his soiled clothes in a bundle marked, "For the washerwoman," packed one shirt flat in his sachel, and strapped it under his coat, ran down the stairs again, and left the house by the back way, as he had come in.

"If I don't return for the rest of my clothes," thought he, "they will fit Tod in a year or two, and pay his mother for the one day's board I owe her."

He was sorry to leave without a word of explanation and an exchange of good-bys with Florinda, but he dared not risk delay. Hurrying through the suburbs of the town, he entered a small grocery, laid his last five cents on the counter, and received in exchange half a pound of crackers, which he stuffed into his pockets as he once more hastened on. Still the money due to him from Westbury and Company preyed upon his mind; and the thought of running away from it was bitter. And whither was he running? One place appeared to him as good as another, provided Drollers was not there. He was in the country again, on a level road, and it was growing dark, when, passing a large, old-fashioned barn fronting the street, he noticed a door unfastened. He was acquainted with barns, and thought that, if he could slip in there unseen, he could find in some nook or corner hay or straw, and a good place to pass the night. He entered like a thief, and was not at all delighted to meet a boy, who at that moment jumped down from the loft. Both were about equally startled at the encounter in that gloomy solitude.

“Hallo!” said the boy, sharply.

“Hallo!” Roy answered, with business-like composure. “Do you know where I can buy a few tons of fine hay? Timothy and red-top mixed is about the article.”

“We hain’t got no hay to dispose of,” replied the boy, reaching the door and throwing it open.

By the light of the sunset sky, which came in, and lighted up his freckles and red hair, he looked up at Roy. Roy looked down at him.

“Hallo!” said the boy again, this time with a smile.

“Hallo!” Roy once more replied, laughing in his turn. “Do you live here?”

“Yes; Widder Graves owns the place, and I take care of her horse and cows.”

“Any men-folks around?”

“Nary one, without you count me for men-folks.”

“Good! Does the widow ever come round?”

“Not after this time of day.”

“Good again! Now, my boy, do me a favor. Will you hide me here?”

“Why, what do you want to hide for?” said the boy, wonderingly.

“I’ll explain by-and-by. Quick! Will you do it?”

“Th’ ain’t nothin’ I wouldn’t do for you, Mr. Walker,” the boy answered. “I’ve got them prize skates yit that you gave me, and they’re the splendidest pair!”

CHAPTER XXX.

DROLLERS BORROWS A LANTERN, AND GETS A BOY TO HOLD IT.

“NEVER mind the skates,” said Roy. “Come, now, bub, what’s your name?”

“Timothy Tingley,” replied the boy.

“Timothy and red-top combined,” laughed Roy, touching the lad’s ear-locks. “You are the very article I want.”

“Don’t you re’ly want any hay?”

“Yes; perhaps enough to bunk on over night.” Roy looked at his watch. “Now, Timothy, I want you to do an errand.”

“What?”

“Go up to the ice-house, and get some money for me. You must be there before the men are all paid off, or it will be too late.”

“But I’ve got to milk the cows now.”

“I’ll milk the cows for you. Come, while you’re getting the pails, I’ll write an order for the money.”

The pails were brought; and Roy, having penciled the order on paper produced from the pocket of his sachel, using the bottom of a peck measure for a desk, sent the boy off, with full directions how to act.

He milked the cows in the gloomy stalls, and did some other little chores which Timothy had left, and then waited anxiously for the boy's return.

An hour passed, — it was now quite dark, — when, to increase his perplexity and alarm, the widow stood in the door of her house, and called, —

“*Timothee! Timothee!*” her “native wood-notes wild” running up and dwelling, high and shrill, on the final syllable.

Not daring to trust his voice, Roy banged the door by way of response.

“Why didn't you answer?” screamed the widow; “and why don't you bring in the milk? Have I got to go for it?”

Roy resolved on a bold stroke. Timothy had told him where the milk was to go, — to a sink-shelf just inside the kitchen door, — and, seeing no light there, he thought he might slip in with the pail and slip out again, unseen by the widow.

He tried it, and had got the pail in the sink, when the widow, with a light, came suddenly out upon him from a pantry beyond, scolding the supposed Timothy.

Finding he had not time to escape, Roy politely took off his hat to her. The widow stopped scolding, and stood amazed.

“Timothy couldn't come just yet; I have brought the milk,” he explained. “Saturday night — he has some extra chores to do.”

The widow, quite confounded at seeing a good

looking and well-dressed stranger in place of the boy whose ears she had been near boxing, stammered an apology and let him retreat unquestioned.

Going back to the barn, he found Timothy just returned, and wondering what had become of him.

“Did you get the money?” was Roy’s first question.

“No; they wouldn’t let me have it. They said your order was signed *A. T. Walker*, and they didn’t know any *A. T. Walker*.”

“Drollers has a hand in that!” said Roy, hiding as well as he could his disappointment and vexation. “I’ve carried in the milk, and made acquaintance with the widow, and received a good scolding in your place. So you must tell her that the fellow who gave you the skates stopped to speak with you, as he was going by.”

“But you hain’t had no supper,” said Timothy.

“Yes, I have. While you were gone I ate some crackers I had in my pocket, and took toll out of the milk-pail. I’ve found a hiding-place too. You mustn’t know where. Then, if you are questioned, you won’t have to lie. Now I’ll go to the house with you, and bid you good-by in the widow’s hearing. But leave a door open so that I can get back into the barn, if I wish to.”

All this was done; and Timothy and the widow afterward sat down to their supper; in the midst of which two visitors arrived, one of whom remained outside.

The one who went in was Obed. He was acquainted with the widow, and made known his errand at once. He had come with a constable; and they were in search of a young barn-burner, whose whereabouts, they had reason to suppose, was known to Timothy.

Timothy turned pale. The widow questioned him with eyes and tongue.

“I don’t know any barn-burner, not as I know on,” said the boy. “You don’t mean Mr. Walker, do you?”

“I do mean Mr. Walker,” said Obed; “only that ain’t the scoundrel’s name.”

“The feller who gave me the skates? He’s been here; she saw him.”

“I saw a young man,” said the widow. “He didn’t look like a barn-burner, though! What made ye think Timothy knew about him?”

Then Timothy’s mission to the ice-houses came out. He did not attempt to deny it, but said that he couldn’t refuse to do an errand for one who had given him a pair of skates, and who offered to milk the cows for him while he was gone.

“And do you know any thing about where he is now?” demanded the widow.

“How can I know?” said Timothy. “You yourself heard him say good-by at the door, and I hain’t been out of the house since.”

“Did he tell you where he was going?” asked Drollers, who had now come into the kitchen.

“No, he didn’t tell me any thing about where he was going.”

“ Didn’t get his money for him, did ye ? ” chuckled Obed. “ No, nor nobody won’t ; we’ve fixed that ! And when he goes for it — ”

Drollers interrupted his indiscreet deputy to ask the widow for a lantern and permission to search the barn. He was well enough convinced that Roy was not in the house ; but strongly suspected that he was somewhere about the premises.

The widow readily granted the request, and sent Timothy to carry the lantern.

The barn had two large doors, which were found barred on the inside. A smaller door leading in through the stables was padlocked without. Timothy brought the key, let the officers in, and held the lantern while they searched.

As Timothy had left one of the large doors unbarred, he had excellent reason to think Roy was within ; and he trembled for his friend.

Drollers stood guard on the barn floor, while Obed went all over the half-filled mow with a pitchfork, stabbing the hay with as much good will as if he expected at every stroke to hear his hated rival squeal. Then he explored in the same way the loft over the horse-stable and cow-stalls, making poor Timothy follow with the lantern wherever he led. He even climbed up by pins in the beam to the edge of the top loft, over the purlins, where he himself held up the lantern with one hand, clinging fast with the other, and looked fearfully over, as if he expected to be knocked on the head, and hurled backward to certain destruc-

tion by the desperate villian crouched above. Plenty of dirt and cobwebs he found and carried away with him, but no captive.

The granary was searched — likewise the stalls and mangers, even the chicken-loft. But all to no purpose; and Tim was beginning to think, in spite of the evidence of the big door barred within, that Roy was, after all, nowhere in the barn.

Drollers himself went over much of the ground after his deputy; but met with no better success. The widow also came, in shawl and hood, and pointed out possible places where a man might hide, and implored Timothy to think of some more; “for,” quoth she, “if the wretch is a barn-burner, I shall be frightened of my life to think of him bein’ shet up here. Have ye looked in the old fannin’-mill?”

Drollers had never heard of a man being in a fanning-mill. He sprang to the corner where the machine stood, and turned the crank and set the screens a-shaking as if he meant to winnow and blow Roy out, like a bushel of barley. But no Roy appeared, either as chaff or grain.

Then a bright idea occurred to Drollers.

“Since this boy couldn’t get his money, I shouldn’t wonder if the fellow went for it himself! One thing’s perty certain, he ain’t nowheres in this barn.”

“I’ll take my oath of that,” said Obed, brushing the cobwebs from his hat.

The widow thereupon dismissed her dreadful apprehensions of the young ruffian firing all her build-

ings before morning ; and, charging Timothy to shut up the barn with more care than usual, went back into the house.

The red-topped lad re-entered the barn the next morning with a good deal of interest. He set down his milk-pails, looked all around, recalling the scenes of the previous evening, and finally gave a low whistle. A whistle responded ; and, looking up, he saw a head peer out over the edge of the floor of the loft above the stalls.

“ You there ! ” exclaimed the astonished red-top.

“ Yes,” laughed Roy ; “ and I was here all the time when they were hunting for me high and low last night. When Drollers said I must have gone myself for the money, I was within six feet of his sagacious nose. When Obed took his oath that I wasn’t in the barn, I almost burst with laughter.”

“ Where was you ? Show me ! ” And the eager Timothy clambered up by the ladder which stood against the loft.

Only Roy’s head had been visible, and that suddenly disappeared ; but Timothy discovered a big round hole in the side of the steep bank of hay that half filled the loft, and saw that the mouth of it was being quickly stopped by wisps stuffed into it from within. Then, at a stroke, the hay thus placed was hauled back into the hole, and out popped Roy’s head again.

“ How did you ever happen to think of that ? ” Timothy asked.

“I invented it while I was waiting for you — dug the hole, and disposed of the hay I pulled out by carrying it up over the top of the heap. Then, after I left you and came back into the barn, I climbed up on the ladder, got into my nest feet foremost, pushed the ladder aside, and had hay ready, which I stuffed out as soon as I heard somebody coming to the barn. The only inconvenience was, I nearly smothered. As soon as my friends were gone, I opened my den again pretty quick, I tell you, and slept very well afterward, with my nose to the air.”

Timothy laughed in high glee, and told over all that had occurred the evening before, even to the turning of the fanning-mill to blow Roy out.

After that, arose the question of breakfast. Timothy said he could smuggle a piece of dried beef, doughnuts, and apples into the barn, and give his guest all the milk he could drink; he also engaged that one of the hens, familiarly styled “Old Speck,” should lay in the course of the forenoon, and that he would show Roy how to suck an egg, if he didn’t know already. All which was thankfully accepted by the penniless, and now crackerless, fugitive.

So Roy passed the day in the barn, not knowing what else to do, or where to go. In presence of Timothy, who visited him occasionally, he kept up a fine show of spirits; but do not think he had no deeply thoughtful hours — sad hours of memory, apprehension, and regret — during that long and lonesome Sunday in the barn.

In his solitary hiding, he could hear the church-bells ring in Bayfield Village forty miles away ; he saw Mabel, dressed for church, beautiful, pensive, her soul at peace within those deep, dark eyes ; the good doctor and his wife jogging on behind her, talking cheerfully, in low tones, and following her with glances of love and pride, as of old — all as if the wretched runaway and his faults were forgotten long ago.

He penciled a few words of explanation to Florinda, which he intrusted to Timothy, to be delivered after he was gone. And that was to be soon ; for one day of this Robinson Crusoe business in a barn was enough for a lad like Roy.

In the afternoon, the old lady went to church, leaving Timothy to take care of the premises. Roy fared well in her absence ; so well, indeed, that, on her return, she marveled how Timothy could do his duty at table so faithfully, and yet make way with so many doughnuts between meals.

Roy told Timothy not to be surprised if, at any time, coming to the barn, he should find the door unbarred and the den empty. He meant this for a good-by ; and, waking long before dawn the next morning, he stole out of his hiding-place, and took the lonely, starlit road to the brickyards.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ADVENTURE WITH A FAMOUS STEED.

IT was not yet day when he reached the place which he had heard Lassarde describe. He knew it by the rows of low wooden houses, in some of which he saw lights. At two of these, he stopped, and inquired for a man of the name of Lizard.

Nobody knew "a man of the name of Lizard." The man was well enough known, indeed; but the people were Canadian-French, and they did not recognize their countryman under that reptilian title.

Fortunately, at the third house, "Lizard" himself came to the door. He was in his shirt sleeves, chewing a piece of mutton. He appeared greatly surprised, if not much delighted, at seeing Roy, and asked him into the house.

The young man found himself in a room dimly lighted by a lamp on a table, at which his friend had evidently been eating an early breakfast. There was a small cooking-stove with red-hot covers; a tumbled bed, on the same antique bedstead which Roy had once seen on its travels; another bed, on the floor, where several little Lizards were still sleeping, or

peeping out with small, black eyes to see the stranger Madame Lassarde, an immense woman for so small a husband, was also present, in fearful dishabille, particularly as to hair and petticoat. There was also in the room a mingled atmosphere of kitchen and sleeping apartment, which Roy did not find specially inviting.

He told his story briefly, and came at once to business. He could not get his money from the ice-company without going himself for it, which he durst not do; he had not a cent in the world; he was therefore compelled to ask Lassarde for the five dollars which he had loaned him to buy his horse.

“I hain’t got a dollar’n a world, no more’n you,” replied the Canadian.

“Weren’t you paid off Saturday night?”

“Yes, I was git my pay; but, when I go buy some groce’ies for my family, I expec’ git some credit; but I git no credit, an’ I haf to pay up old account, jes’ for dat Obed Hocum; he mad to me as he can live, ’cause I was your friend on ice. I manage keep back tree dollar; but I mus’ buy some meat, an’ wen I git home I haf to pay some rent for my house, an’ it take all, ev’y dollar I got in a world.”

Roy’s countenance betrayed his disappointment.

“I hoped I should never have to call on you for that money, Lizard; but, you see — well!” choking back his too full heart, “if you can do nothing for me, I suppose there is nothing more to be said.”

“I dunno’, you seddown, you wan’ some breakfas’.

I will haf fry some more piece meat ;” and Lassarde added a few words to his wife in their own language.

Roy said he could not eat ; but, Lassarde insisting, he consented, not from appetite, but prudence.

The little man was full of his regrets.

“ Too bad now I got not’n fo’ you ! I dunno’ wot I do. I might sell dat ’oss. He was ver’ good ’oss ; but, how I shall keep him till spring, I bet I dunno’. I got ’bout out o’ hay. I might sell dat ’oss.”

“ Why don’t you sell him ? ”

“ Man down by Red Mills wan’ to buy him ; he offer seven dollar ; I t’ink now I sell him.”

“ How far is it to Red Mills ? and who is the man ? ”

“ ’Bout mile ’n’ half ; one of our people, name Zhoseph Perrot. He say Billy ver’ good ’oss.”

“ Go right down with me now,” said Roy ; “ take the horse, and get your money.”

“ I’ve no time go dare now ; I mus’ be on ice seven o’clock ; I mus’ start. But I say wot you do. You take dat ’oss, go sell him to Perrot, keep your five dollar ; my boy will go show you, and bring back bridle an’ two dollar for me.”

Roy did not much like this arrangement ; neither did the boy, whom a sharp volley of the father’s Canadian-French brought up, rubbing his eyes, and whimpering, from the bed in the corner. But it seemed the only thing to do ; and, leaving the lad to follow with Billy, Roy hastened to get out of the unsavory atmosphere of the house, and set off on the road to Red Mills, nibbling alternately, by the way, one of

Timothy's doughnuts and a piece of madame's fried mutton, which he carried in his fingers.

Starlight was fading into daylight when a fair-haired youth on foot, and a black-haired boy on horseback, arrived at Perrot's house, and knocked at the door.

Perrot — who was not yet up — opened a window, and put out a night-capped head. Between him and young Lizard, a vehement conversation ensued in their native tongue, Roy listening with intense interest, though he understood not a word. He mistook the man's emphasis and shrugs and nods of his night-capped head for expressions of anger, and anxiously asked the boy what was said.

“He says he would have bought the horse last week, for then he knew where he could buy a cart; but now another man has bought the cart, and he don't want a horse.”

Perrot understood what was spoken in English, and added, in his own language, young Lizard again translating: —

“It is a Yankee who bought the cart. His name is Willis. He lives about three-quarters of a mile down the new road. He wants a cheap horse, and he will buy Billy.”

After that, the night-capped head disappeared, and the window closed.

“Then,” said Roy, recovering from his momentary chagrin, “we must go and find Willis.”

The black-haired boy, who had been provokingly cheerful over the failure of the negotiation with Perrot, put on a grimace of dissatisfaction.

“Why not?” cried Roy.

“Because you will sell the horse.”

“But that’s what we want to do, isn’t it?”

“’Tain’t what I want to do,” replied the little Lizard, frankly. “I want to keep him. I git rides every day on his back.”

Roy looked at the little rascal, sitting proudly erect on a bit of old blanket, tied on by one of Lassarde’s rope reins to modify the sharpness of the poor beast’s backbone, and laughed in spite of his anxiety and irritation.

“But you have your father’s orders to help me sell him.”

“He didn’t tell me to go anywhere but to Perrot’s. If you sold him here, I should have fur enough to walk back. If you sell him to Willis, it will be further. Wouldn’t I be a fool to go?”

“The horse is going anyway,” exclaimed Roy, laying hold of the rope-bridle. “Go with him or not, as you please. But I advise you to go, and carry back the blanket, bridle, and money, what we get over five dollars, if you don’t want your father to give you the worst licking you ever had!”

“He won’t lick me!” said the boy. “My mother will take my part. She can lick my father with one hand, while she’s cooking supper with the other, and have two fingers left for another feller jest like him.”

“Go, then, to accommodate me,” said Roy. “You know you never would have had the horse at all, if I hadn’t given the money to buy him.”

But the ungrateful wretch seemed to think that all Roy had done for the family was canceled by his present ruthless attempt to deprive them of the object of their affections.

The argument next advanced — that the family could not afford to keep so expensive a pet — the boy refuted by saying, with reason, —

“ We can keep him now as well as we ever could ; he’s got use to living without eating.”

Then, as Roy persisted in leading the animal away, the supple rider slipped off into the snow, and scampered home with all his might. This, to Roy, was an unexpected move; and he stood a moment, dismayed at the bare possibility of being left with that dreadful anatomy of a horse on his hands.

“ Here ! come back ! take your old nag ! ” he shouted.

But in vain. The Lizard ran all the faster, either not understanding the liberal terms offered, or thinking them a snare to catch him, and fearing Roy might lay the family under still further obligations by giving him the trouncing he did not dread from his father.

Vexed, yet amused, at this odd turn of affairs, Roy laughed ironically, as he pulled poor Billy by his bridle of rope to lead him on. Billy was not a very satisfactory beast to lead. He had a way, when pulled uncommonly hard, of stopping short, throwing up his head, and uttering a groan. At the same time, he opened his grinning jaws, as if, like Balaam’s beast of old, he had been going to speak, and unburden his mind of something mighty disagreeable. All

which, at that hour in the morning, and in that solitary situation, had a ghastly effect.

After one such groan, inexpressibly long-drawn and dismal, having no breath left for the distressing remark he had seemed about to make, the miserable brute settled back, as if minded then and there to lie down in the snow and give up his weary ghost.

But he did not lie down. He acted as if he couldn't lie down — as if he were stiffening already on his four props, and hadn't force enough left to unbrace and let himself sink decently to the ground.

“Good heavens!” thought Roy, “he is going to die standing!”

Appalled by the thought of so hideous and unheard-of a catastrophe, he was wondering whether it might not be his duty to help the creature a little, at least so far as to push him over comfortably into a bed of snow by the roadside, — when Billy suddenly recovered himself, and looked about him with an expression of countenance remarkably cheerful, considering the circumstances.

“Billy,” said Roy, excitedly, “none of your tricks with me! Will you come along?”

Billy would come slowly; but, when Roy pulled to make him come faster, he threw up his head with another of those dreary, disheartening groans.

Then Roy reflected: —

“He is better to ride than to lead. Little Lizard actually got some trot out of him. I've had a tiresome tramp this morning; I've a long day before me, and suppose now —”

He looked all around. It was broad day; but no living creature was in sight save the horse. It was a temptation. Roy yielded. Placing himself beside Billy, with one hand on his mane and the other on the rope-bound blanket, he sprang, kicked, scrambled, and came up astride that ridge-pole of the equine structure commonly called the backbone.

“Get up, Billy!”

But Billy was none of your frisky, frolicsome, hair-trigger colts that go off at a touch, and scare timid riders out of their wits. When told to “get up,” he always thought twice about it. Deliberation was his strong point.

Roy arranged the blanket, in order, if possible, to make his seat a little less excruciating.

“Come now, Billy! If I can stand it, I guess you can!” applying rope’s-end and heel in good Cannuck fashion. “Heave ho! anchor up! helm apart! Hurrah!” Kick, kick! slap, slap! “Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!”

Thus impelled, that foundered craft, Billy, settled over to larboard, gave a sudden lurch to starboard, threatening for a moment to go down with all on board, then, with groaning timbers, heaved slowly into motion, answered the helm, came round beautifully on the other tack, and Roy was launched on his new and brilliant career.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK.

ROY reached Willis's house without accident, went dashing up to the door at a pace which would have been considered spirited for a snail, shouted "Whoa! whoa!" two or three times, like one restraining a mettlesome steed, and was cheered by the sight of an old one-horse cart, pitched over on its nose under a dilapidated shed.

He was also pleased to see come out of the house a slouching fellow, who looked like the sort of man a cheap horse would suit.

"Is this Mr. Willis? Whoa!" said Roy, giving the reins a jerk. "I heard you wanted to buy a — whoa, Billy! can't you be still a minute? — a horse, a not very high-priced horse, Mr. Willis. Whoa, I say!"

"Wal, I have talked on't. That animal for sale?"

"Yes, Mr. Willis — whoa, Billy! He's a much better horse than he looks; but probably you know about horses, and can see that yourself. There's stuff — whoa, Billy!" — Roy kept jerking the reins to make him start, while he appeared to be holding him in, and subduing his ambition — "there's spirit in him

yet. He only needs a little hay now, and a few oats — whoa, I tell you! — to bring him up.”

“Wal, what ye ’xpect to git for the critter?” said Willis, slouching around, and turning his quid at Billy’s points.

If the man had not looked quite so cool and sarcastic, Roy would have said “Ten dollars.” As it was, he put a check upon his avarice, and answered, modestly, “Seven dollars, Mr. Willis, — a very low figure — and I assure you — hold still, you brute! — such another bargain won’t come to your door every day in the week.”

“I should ruther think not!” said Mr. Willis. “Don’t hold him in; let him go once. I want to see how he moves off.”

“All right!” cried Roy. “Get up, Billy!” Billy thought once. “Get up, I say!” Kick, kick! Billy thought twice. “Go ’long, you brute!” Kick, kick! Slap, slap!

Billy thought three times, groaned, lurched, settled over, heaved ahead, and finally unstiffened into a walk.

“He is very kind, you see,” said Roy, bringing him around. “Some horses, held in so long, would rear and pitch. He don’t rear and pitch.”

The man bulged his cheek on one side, smiled ever so slightly on the other, and answered: —

“No, he don’t rear and pitch — not much! It’ll take a pile o’ hay to keep him till spring!”

“That depends on how you keep him. He can eat

a little or a good deal ; he's a perfectly well-disciplined horse."

"Wal," said the man, slouching around again, and looking for spavins and ringbones, which were plenty, "I d'n' know —"

"Well-shod, you see," put in Roy. "Shoes go with the horse."

"I can't give seven dollars," said Willis, after seeing Billy walk off again. "I'll give you five — that's all I will give."

This was so much better than Roy was beginning to expect, that he could hardly conceal his exultation. He put on a look of doubt and dissatisfaction, however, and said —

"Oh, now, Mr. Willis, I am surprised at your making such an offer as that!" (which was indeed the truth). "Say six dollars, and it's a bargain. Perrot would have given seven, but you got the cart, and so he don't want a horse. Come, say six. Five and a half then," Roy insisted. "You won't? Well, then, five it is, Mr. Willis."

But, as Roy was on the point of dismounting, Willis remarked that he wasn't prepared to pay cash that morning ; he was "thunderin' short," and Roy would have to wait a few days for his money.

That did not suit Roy's case at all ; and, vexed at having lost so much time and so many words, and jerked and whoaed poor Billy to no purpose, he kicked and slapped him into motion again, and rode off down the road.

Willis followed with regretful eyes, the sight of which encouraged Roy.

“Billy is really in demand,” thought he. “Perrot would have bought him if he had had a cart; and Willis would have rushed into the same extravagance if he had had five dollars. I shall find some man waiting to be made happy by owning such a treasure!”

He next offered him for sale to an Irish laborer he met on the road.

“What will I be buyin’ a horse for?” said Patrick.

“To make him work for you. Put him in a cart.”

“Ah!” said Patrick, the brightness of the idea and a red ray of the sunrise lighting up his countenance at the same moment. “It is what he is good for! Put him in a cart, and get a better horse to draw him!”

“Look here, Pat,” cried Roy, “will you take him as a gift?”

Pat looked Billy and his rider soberly all over, and then answered, with a hurt expression, —

“What have I done to yez that ye’sè thinkin’ to make me a gift o’ that same?”

Roy did not find these answers very flattering to his pride as Billy’s rider, or to his hopes of making a very large fortune out of him that morning.

“Well, Pat,” he answered, good humoredly, “I see you are a man of sense, and, as a friend, I advise you not to buy a horse; it would only make you vain, you know. But, honestly, Pat, do you think of anybody I might possibly sell him to?”

“I do that! Sure it’s the nager, Woolly Thomp-

son, down by the brick schoolhouse, that'll buy him. He had a very illegant hoss, did Woolly Thompson ; only a leg of him was the slightest bit too much the shape of a churn by the bottom. The foot and thereabouts was the size of a good fair choppin'-block — I'm sphakin' of the horse's leg, an' not the nager's. It was ivery bit as fine an animal as yer own, barrin' the leg of him. But Woolly took him to town ; and, by ill luck, one of thim bad-mannered, prayjidised chaps, callin' thimsilves agents or somethin' of the previn-tion of cruelty to animals, gobbles up the baste, an' claps a fine on poor Thompson for drivin' a leg like that same. An' now he'll be mighty tickled, I promise ye, to have another hoss as good."

"Thank ye, Pat," said Roy.

"Ye'se welcome intirely, Mr Johnson."

"Who told you my name was Johnson?"

"Ah!" grinned the other, "an' who tould ye my name was Pat?"

This set Roy to thinking about the name he should assume in his new character, and he said to himself, as he rode on, —

"I have been Mr. Walker about long enough ; now I think I am entitled to call myself Mr. Ryder."

He sought out the "nager," whom he found chopping brushwood at his door, and proposed to him to buy Billy. Thompson shook his head.

"I can't afford to buy up no more horses for the dumb-animals folks to rob me of, and fine me for driving!"

“ You don’t think they would seize this horse ! ” exclaimed Roy.

“ They would, sure as the world, if I should be seen working him, ” said Thompson. “ Besides, I’ve sold my cart now, and I’ve no use for a horse. ”

“ Who bought your cart ? ”

“ A man name of Willis ; he hain’t paid me for it yet, and I don’t know as he ever will. ”

“ If you had only sold it to Perrot ! ” exclaimed Roy.

“ Perrot would have bought it, and paid cash for it, ” said Thompson ; “ but he couldn’t get a horse. ”

Things seemed sadly out of joint — the cart before the horse, generally — to young Mr. Ryder. He heartily wished now that Lassarde had Billy back again ; but he dared not return with him, fearing that Drollers might be on his track.

He spurred on, figuratively speaking, and, entering a small village, offered to sell Billy to the blacksmith. When asked the price, he reflected that he had perhaps put too low an estimate upon the horse before, and replied, —

“ Will you give twenty-five dollars ? ”

“ I don’t think I will, ” said the smith.

“ Will you give me twenty-five cents ? ”

“ I don’t think I will. ”

“ Will you buy his shoes ? ”

“ I don’t think I will. ”

“ Then, it appears, ” said Roy, “ that you and I can’t trade. Good-morning. ”

Riding on, he and poor Billy had to run the gantlet of the hootings and, what was worse, the snowballs of a set of wild schoolboys, who pursued them out of the village. Billy's natural color was a faded, a sadly faded, and sickly bay; but he was covered, hip and thigh, head and flank, with white spots, before ever the bell rang that called off the yelling and pelting crew.

Roy received his share of the snowballs, one of which knocked off his hat. He asked a small boy to pick it up. Small boy declined, and began to harden a snowball.

"Pick up that hat," cried Roy, "or I'll wheel this horse about, and ride right over you."

"You can't. I'll run into the schoolhouse."

"I'll ride him into the schoolhouse, and over the teacher's desk,—he's the most reckless horse you ever saw,—and not leave a bone in your skin big enough to shake in a rattle-box."

Roy said this with so resolute an air and in so fierce a tone, that the boy, frightened out of his judgment, picked up the hat, and handed it to him, in the midst of a storm of whizzing snowballs which now concentrated on him.

"Why don't you ride over *them*?" shrieked the small boy.

"I will when I come back this way," said Roy, kicking and slapping to move Billy out of range. "I haven't time this morning."

Pursuing his journey, he offered the horse every

where, and several times came within an *if* or two of selling him. Meanwhile, rider and beast needed rest and refreshment.

Looking anxiously for some relief to the pinch they were in, Roy asked a man on the road who lived in the next house; for, like a first-class tramp, he had learned the advantage of knowing the names of people he called upon.

“Caleb Lusk,” was the reply. “He may buy your horse; he has plenty of hay. But, come to think, he went to town this forenoon.”

Roy rode into the open farm-yard, and, leaving his horse under a shed, went briskly to the door, and knocked.

“Does Mr. Caleb Lusk live here?” he asked, with the air of a person having important business to transact.

Being told what he knew before, — that Mr. Lusk lived there but was not at home, — he feigned disappointment, saying: —

“I wish to see him for something very particular,” upon which he was asked to come in and wait. “Thank you, — perhaps — if I — can I put my horse in the barn?”

Permission being granted, Billy was stabled, with a good rack-full of hay before his nose; Roy looked out for that, the little stratagem he had used being much more for Billy’s sake than his own.

“Now,” thought he, “friend Lusk may stay away a week, if he likes; Billy and I won’t complain.”

The women-folks were attentive and affable toward the stranger, though they must have thought him very dull at taking a hint to tell his business. He made acquaintance with the children, and amused them for an hour by whittling playthings for them, and teaching them little games in the chimney corner. Then, dinner-time having arrived, — the obliging Mr. Lusk being still absent, — Roy was invited to “sit by.”

He wished to excuse himself; for he was really ashamed of imposing so far upon the hospitality of these good-natured people. He trembled, moreover, with dread of seeing Mr. Lusk return to surprise him in the midst of a meal obtained under — well, yes — false pretences. The women urged him, however; his own hunger seconded their solicitation; and, with appetite impaired somewhat by apprehensions, which he mistook for qualms of conscience, he paid his respects to the baked potatoes and fried bacon.

Seeing him nervous and uneasy after dinner, the women thought to pacify him by the assurance that Mr. Lusk could not remain much longer away — that they were looking for him every minute.

“So am I,” thought Roy. And, he added, aloud, “Perhaps I had better call again.”

He was now in so great a hurry to get off, that he dreaded the delay of taking Billy out of the barn. He reflected, moreover, that, if the family had not noticed the horse particularly when he rode him in, they would be sure to do so when he rode him out. So he proposed to leave him until his return, which might be, he said, in the course of about an hour and a half.

“If I return!” he exclaimed aloud to himself, as he hurried down the road; for a perfidious thought had tempted him to pay for his entertainment, and, at the same time, rid himself of what had become to him rather a nightmare than a horse, by never returning at all.

He had gone about half a mile, and was chuckling nervously — and, I am happy to add, somewhat remorsefully — over the astonishment of Caleb at finding Billy permanently quartered in his barn, when a fast-driven sleigh came at his heels.

Having satisfied himself that the driver was not Drollers, he stepped aside to let it pass, when it pulled up suddenly, and a mild-featured man said, —

“You have some business with me, I believe.”

“Oh!” said Roy, with a sickly sort of smile, “this is — Mr. Lusk?”

It *was* Mr. Lusk, who, reaching home soon after the stranger left, had been thoughtful enough to drive after him, and learn his particular business.

“I have a horse to sell you, Mr. Lusk,” said Roy, putting on a bold front. “A man back here said he thought you would buy him.”

Mr. Lusk seemed rather surprised at that.

“Whoever the man was,” he said, “I am afraid he has put you to some useless trouble.”

“Oh, I don’t mind that,” said Roy; “though, after waiting for you two hours or more, I *shall* be a little disappointed if we can’t make a trade.”

There was nothing else for him to do but to get

into the sleigh, and ride back with Mr. Lusk to the barn. At sight of Billy, Mr. Lusk looked puzzled and amused.

“The man was crazy,” he said, “to think I would buy a horse like that.”

“Won’t you give something for him?”

“Not a cent! I wouldn’t have him on my premises. I should dread he’d give my horse the glanders.”

“I’m afraid you’re prejudiced against the horse,” said Roy. “A few weeks at your well-filled mangers would make a very different-looking beast of him.”

But his arguments availed nothing with Mr. Lusk, who, however, took the whole thing so much more good-naturedly than might have been expected, that Roy was glad to get off as he did.

Billy did not like to leave the stall and hay-rack; and Roy had a rather hard time getting him out of the yard. He kicked and slapped and scolded till he was fiery red in the face; and it was not soothing to his pride to feel Mr. Lusk smiling at him from the barn door, and the faces of all the friendly women-folks staring at him from the windows.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW ROY EXCHANGED HIS HORSE FOR A LOCOMOTIVE COW-CATCHER.

THE weather, which had been fine in the morning, became lowering in the afternoon; and night closed in early, with a violent snow-storm.

Finding that he could neither sell Billy nor give him away, Roy had made several attempts to abandon him in some quiet manner that did not seem too inhuman. Once, he left him in the lee of a straw stack, and was making off, when the owner of the stack came shouting at his heels, and ordered him to take "that gol-dumbed critter away!" Next, he put him under a tavern shed; and, having sat awhile in the bar-room, was walking off, with an absent-minded air, when the landlord called rather sharply to remind him that he had forgotten something — that something being the horse.

Whenever he stopped at any place, he did not take the trouble to hitch Billy, hoping — alas, in vain! — that he would take it into his head to run away. Any other horse would have been sure to do that; but he always found Billy patiently awaiting his return.

Thus, night and the snow-storm overtook him, while he was still traveling in company with this terrible, not-to-be-got-rid-of fate, or phantom, in the form of a horse. The storm was in his face; and he was bending to it, blinded and deafened by its force, when a hand clutched his leg.

He had lapsed into a sort of dreamy state; and, for a moment, he imagined that some farmer, at whose barn door Billy had been abandoned, had followed, in a fury, to tell him to take the beast away. But the reality was revealed to him at a glance. He was mounted on Billy's back; and the man who had clutched him was Drollers.

The constable had waited all the forenoon for his victim to show himself in the vicinity of the ice-company's office, when, hearing from a Canadian that Roy had been seen early in the morning at the brickyards, inquiring for a "man of the name of Lizard," he drove over to Lizard's house, and so got on the fugitive's track.

"Drollers," said Roy, "how are you?"

"Considerably better for seeing you," replied Drollers, holding him with a firm grip. "I'll trouble you to get off this horse, and come with me in my cutter."

"Drollers," said Roy, "you are inconsiderate! Do you think I can bear to quit a beast I've become so attached to?"

"Get off, or I'll pull you off! You are my prisoner." And Roy heard something rattle in the officer's other hand. It was a pair of handcuffs.

“Don’t put those things on me!” said Roy, sobered at the prospect. “I promise to go with you, without any resistance, if you won’t. Come, Drollers, you know I’m a fellow of my word, whatever else I am.”

“All I know is you’ve played me tricks enough, and I’m going to make sure of you this time,” replied the constable.

To avoid being dragged from the horse, Roy dismounted. The officer’s horse, which had been driven without bells, stood near by, dim in the driving storm.

Drollers held one of the captive’s arms, and was about adjusting the handcuffs to the wrist, when, with a swift blow of the other arm, Roy sent them whirling into the air. They must have struck the horse; for he was off at a bound, with the cutter at his heels.

Drollers might have caught him, if he had not been embarrassed by his prisoner. Roy did not accommodate himself to the constable’s motions; and, almost in an instant, the frightened animal shot out of sight and hearing.

“You’d better have taken my promise,” said Roy, quietly. “Now, where are your handcuffs?”

Drollers searched the drifts, fumbling about and stamping with his great feet; but no handcuffs were discovered, for the reason, which afterward appeared, that, glancing from the horse’s hips, they had fallen over the dasher, and been carried off in the sleigh.

But Drollers was not to be baffled by a single accident. He had a strong cord in his pocket, with which

he bound Roy's hands behind him, drawing the knots till he made him cry out. He had already taken away his knife.

"Now," said Roy, "you had better shoulder me; for, with that cord cutting my wrists, I won't walk."

"You shall ride then," said Drollers. "Take your choice, — sit on the horse or be tied on."

Roy preferred to sit, and remounted Billy, with the constable's assistance. Drollers then made a noose in the bridle-rope, slipped it over his prisoner's foot, tightened it on the ankle, and held it firmly, while he walked by Billy's head, — not in the direction he wished to go, but in that which his own runaway horse had taken.

Roy's situation seemed hopeless; and, indeed, he was so weary of vagabond life that he would not have objected very strongly to riding back with Drollers, in a respectable way, and taking his chances in jail or out. But the treatment he was receiving from this dull-witted, coarse-handed officer angered him, and the cord hurt his wrists. Besides, his hands were cold, his mittens having been removed; and it was perhaps this fact which first prompted him to work his fingers under the skirt of his coat.

Succeeding in this, he passed his wrists up over the flattened sachel, which he still carried there, out of sight, until he found the buckle of the strap which bound it to his back. On the sharp teeth of that buckle, he began to saw the cord, wearing it away fiber by fiber, thread by thread. It was a slow process;

and often he cut his wrists instead of the cord. Now, the strain and exertion made his arms ache so that he had to stop and rest ; but it was only to begin again with fresh energy and resolution. In the course of time, he could sever the cord, he was sure ; and he rejoiced whenever Billy lurched or heaved to, as he frequently did, until Drollers had learned not to pull him too hard by the bit.

“ Ah, Billy ! ” he inwardly exclaimed, “ you are the horse for my money ! Be slow — be blessedly slow ! Take your time ; deliberate ; think about it ; — that’s a lovely Billy ! ” The cord was severed.

Roy’s hands were now free ; but Drollers still held him by the noose tightened about his boot. To slip his foot out of the noose, with Drollers drawing so hard upon it, was impossible ; and any noticeable attempt to free himself must meet with failure, as the hand that held the rope would catch his leg. Ah, had Drollers only left him his knife ! Without that, stratagem was necessary.

Having disentangled the cord from his wrists, he reached down, — while appearing to bend his head against the driving storm, — and made one end fast to the doubled rope, just beyond the noose at the ankle. Then, putting the other end under the rope girt that bound on Billy’s blanket, he pulled it gently through, close to his foot, drew it tight, and twisted it into a knot. While doing this, he had pressed his foot well back. Now, gradually lifting it forward, he was gratified to perceive that Drollers, instead of

drawing directly on his leg, drew upon the knotted cord and rope girt.

All this time, Drollers was bending his own head against the fury of the snow-laden gale ; and storm and darkness united to conceal all suspicious movements on the part of his prisoner. Still, Roy could not pull his boot out of the noose. He soon made the discovery, however, that he could pull his foot out of the boot. This was done with extreme deliberation and care. It was then easy to slip the boot down out of the noose.

The next thing was to pull the boot on again ready for a race through the drifts. This, too, was accomplished without exciting the attention of Drollers, who was busy breasting the storm, urging Billy forward, and holding fast the rope which he believed still held the leg of the prisoner.

Drollers looked around occasionally to see the dim outline of Roy on the horse. But once — just as he was entering a small village, where he hoped to get news of his own horse and cutter — he looked around, and saw no outline there. He made a clutch at the leg ; the leg was gone, and only an empty noose dangled in its place. Every sound which might have betrayed the prisoner's escape was so lost in the whistling storm, or muffled in the new-fallen snow, that Roy had slipped away unperceived, and fled, leaving only the horse, which he had been so anxious to get rid of, in the officer's hands.

By climbing a fence and traversing the edge of a

field, Roy managed to get ahead of Drollers; and he laughed at the thought of the heavy constable plodding after him, holding fast by the deceptive rope, and laboriously leading poor Billy. He wished he could remain near enough to witness the worthy man's amazement and disgust on discovering how he had been fooled, and to see how he would contrive to get rid of that dreadful horse.

As he hurried by in the field, he could hear, half drowned in the bluster of the tempest, Dumpy's sharp "Come along, you brute!" and the pleasant thought occurred to him, "If I could only set an agent of the dumb-animals' society on his track, and get him arrested for cruelty, as Woolly Thompson was!" But he had no leisure for carrying out so excellent a practical joke.

Entering, amid storm and darkness, the deserted village streets, he saw, in front of a tavern, three men with a lantern, looking over a horse and cutter, and heard one of them say, "He wa'n't going very fast when Ike stopped him."

Another took up out of the sleigh an object, which all examined with curiosity. Roy passed near enough to see what it was — a pair of handcuffs.

He was tempted to step boldly up to the men, claim the horse, thank them for stopping him step into the cutter, and drive out of the village on one side, while Drollers was entering it from the other.

"He has got my horse; why shouldn't I take his? Exchange is no robbery!" And, for giving a happy

turn to the adventure, he regarded this as the next thing to getting Dumpy arrested for cruel treatment of an unserviceable beast.

He did not like the looks of the handcuffs, however. The men appeared to be puzzling over the mystery; and he feared it might lead to his being unpleasantly questioned, and delayed.

He might have passed unnoticed; but the men were alert to find some explanation of the mystery, and one of them called after him. He pretended not to hear, as, with head down, he went plunging on in the storm. As soon as he thought himself out of sight, he began to run.

The excitement or control of the body has often a corresponding effect on the mind; and the very act of running let loose alarming fancies on his heels. Drollers would hurry into the village, find his own horse at the tavern, explain the meaning of the handcuffs, learn that the person on whose wrists they belonged had just passed, and enlist the three men in his immediate pursuit. All this the fugitive vividly imagined; and his fears were not far wrong.

Suddenly, a man started out before him, with a swinging lantern and a waving flag. It was at a railroad crossing. Then, before Roy could pass, a long passenger train came rushing in, with clanging bell, the great glare of the headlight illuming, for a moment, the storm-enveloped track; and stopped, with broadside to the street.

Passengers were getting off on the other side, when

Roy, too impatient to wait for the train to take itself out of the way, and unwilling to expose himself to view by climbing over the platform and between the cars, set out to run down the track, and cross in front of the engine.

He saw the engineer, with his back toward him, looking out for the conductor's signal, and the fireman shoveling coal into the grate, the open mouth of which shed a comfortable glow in the little room.

"If I could only get a ride on the locomotive, as I did once!" thought he. But, remembering that all engineers were not friendly, he did not venture the attempt. "I might step on the train as it starts." But he had no money, and did not like the idea of being ignominiously collared, and put off.

There was one last and desperate resort. The wild wish to fly suddenly and mysteriously beyond Drollers's reach, inspired the rash act; the preoccupation of the engineer and the fireman seemed to favor it; the blinding storm concealed it: he sprang upon the cow-catcher.

Under the headlight, which flung its sheet of radiance before him into the speckled air and tempestuous gloom, — his back hidden by the boiler, his feet projecting over the slant side of the huge iron plow, one arm holding fast to an iron brace, — there he crouched and clung.

He had hardly ensconced himself when the conductor's signal-lantern waved. The bell repeated its terrible din; the whistle uttered a fearful shriek; the

steam from the engine escaped with spasmodic gasp and wheeze ; and the great driving-wheels revolved, now with lightning-like swiftness, as they slipped on the coated rails, and now with slow, laborious motion, as the snow melted under them, and the locomotive's enormous weight held them to the track.

Slow at first, then fast and faster, away went the train, like a long, thundering, howling dragon, with Roy on its iron snout, plunging into the night, which it lighted with the glare of its one fierce, terrible eye as it went rushing on. It met the storm ; and, to Roy, it was like the meeting of two hurricanes, himself in the midst of the shock.

The wedged-shaped iron frame rocked and bounded beneath him ; and he had to cling fast to the brace to keep from being shaken and blown away. The telegraph-poles went flitting by, like live things pursued by the storm, chaos itself at their heels. The flying flakes struck his face and breast, like volleys of sharp sand. The hands of the tempest tore at his hair and hat ; the breath of the tempest sucked his own. He was buffeted, stifled, stung.

All the while, the engine uttered, from time to time, terrific yells, which went swooping on into the night and storm ; and the thunder of its speed mingled wildly with the roar of the gale.

Riding in a warmed and lighted car at such a time, you know nothing of the commotion of the elements around you, nothing of the fearful force and velocity with which you are hurried on. Looking from the

locomotive window, you begin to realize something of what they are ; but, to know them in all their terrors, you must ride the cow-catcher, as Roy did.

Pelted, blinded, smothered, as he was, his head down, his hat pulled over his eyes and held on with one hand while he hugged the brace with the other, he could not help peering out through his half-closed lids for glimpses of the abyss they were dashing into ; for it seemed to him that, at any moment, this thunderbolt, with him on its horn, might strike a loosened fragment of the world, pick up some poor pedestrian all too suddenly, or toss a sleigh and span of horses caught at a crossing, and make it bad business for him and them.

Although the cow-catcher did not have the luck to encounter any of these things, which he had small reason to apprehend, it did take on board something else, which he should have been wise enough to foresee.

Snow was beginning to lie on the track, in sheltered places ; and once, as Roy peered forth, he saw a cloud fly up before him, rush past and over him, and vanish. They had cut through a drift. It was but a little one. Larger were to come ; and, at last, the train drove between high banks, where it was all drift. As the locomotive plowed through, the snow rose before it like a mighty fountain or inverted cascade of solid foam, which, fan-shaped, illumined by the headlight, deluged, overwhelmed poor Roy, and forced him finally to loose his hold, and go headlong from his seat.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FELLOW TRAVELER, A PUBLIC HOUSE, AND A PRIVATE HOUSE.

THE engine had slackened speed on account of the heavy obstruction ; and Roy had the adroitness to throw himself free from the cow-catcher into a drift. There, half-stunned and breathless, he lay buried until the train passed on. Then, slowly he recovered himself, and crawled out.

The first thing was to assure himself that he was not seriously hurt ; the next, to shake the snow out of his neck, hair, and clothing, and laugh at his wild adventure ; lastly, to find his way out of the storm and drifts, and seek some shelter for the night.

“ I don't know where I am, more than if I had been dropped from the moon ! ” thought he.

Finding that the train had cleared a pretty good track for him, he followed it, and soon entered the open square of a village. As he was passing under a street-lamp, wondering how and where he was to get supper and a night's lodging, a man in an army overcoat followed and accosted him.

“ I beg pardon for troubling you ; I am not a beg-

gar, but I find myself obliged to ask for a little assistance."

Roy thought he recognized the voice, and turned and looked at the man in the hazy lamp-light.

"I'm a machinist by trade. I've been at work in Springfield. But I injured my hand; and now I want to get back to my friends in Newburyport. I've no money; and, if you could give me a trifle — I'm a returned soldier — wounded at Gettysburg — carry the bullet in my leg to this day —"

Roy interrupted him. "Seems to me I've heard that story before, or something like it. It takes you a good while to get to your friends! I gave you half a dollar, when I needed it quite as much as you did, I'm thinking."

"Don't be too hard on a poor man," replied the tramp. "Whatever I may have told you, it wasn't so bad as the truth. I've had no supper; and I haven't a cent in the world."

"I'm precisely in your situation," said Roy. "I don't expect any supper myself; and, what is worse, I've not the least idea where I am going to sleep."

The man's whole manner changed. "Look here!" said he. "You did me a good turn once; I remember you now. You gave me kind words; and that was more to me than your money. I'm glad I'm in a way to return your favor."

"What! have you got money?" said Roy.

"No; that part of my story is always true enough. But, if you are really hard up for a night's lodging, I

can help you to it, — supper besides, I guess. Come with me.”

Surprise and curiosity impelled Roy to follow the tramp, who took him into the spacious entry of a public building on one side of the square.

“We must wait here,” said the fellow, “till the town-clerk comes back from his supper. He will give us an order for supper and lodgings at the poor-house.”

Roy drew back with disgust.

“You’ve been here before, then!”

“Yes; half a dozen times. It’s one of the best stopping places on my beat. Some towns only give us straw to sleep on, a miserable little lock-up, and crackers and salt fish to eat. But this place is hunky; and that’s the reason why we always come this way when we can, and are glad to get back here. The clerk can’t remember us all; he keeps a record of us, but it’s easy to change our names any time. I was getting about played out here last winter; but, lucky for me, and a good many of us, they changed the town-clerk at the March meeting. We were all new men again, this winter, to the new clerk.”

“Isn’t it a terrible life to live?” Roy exclaimed.

“I don’t suppose it is the life any of us would choose,” replied his valuable new acquaintance. “I was really forced into it at first — health broke down — nothing I could do; and now it comes easier than any thing else. If every poorhouse was like this!”

“Beds clean?” Roy asked.

“Beautiful! You wouldn’t get better at a hotel. Here comes our man now.”

The town-clerk unlocked his office door; and they followed him in — Roy reluctantly, and in a rage with himself at the thought of his having finally come to this.

The clerk seemed to know the tramp’s business before any words were spoken; but he looked with some surprise at seeing a youth like Roy in such company.

“You’ve never been here before, I think,” he said.

“No,” replied Roy; “and I hope I never shall have occasion to come here again.”

“This other man,” continued the clerk, “has been here two or three times to my knowledge.”

The tramp protested that he had never been there before, and was registered under a new name — James Pike, going from Lowell to Providence. Roy also gave a fictitious account of himself; and learned by experience how natural it is for a vagabond, among his many wanderings, to wander from the truth.

“I’ve sent four other of your sort of fellows ahead of you this evening,” pleasantly remarked the town-clerk, as he dismissed them; “and it don’t seem to be a very good night for tramps, either.”

Roy followed his companion, who knew the way perfectly well, and found the almshouse all it had been recommended. There were but two of the town’s poor under its roof; the entire establishment, which was large and expensive, being maintained

chiefly (so at least Roy inferred) for the benefit of that numerous class of the traveling community to which he was now unfortunate enough to belong.

On learning the name of this hospitable town, — which we shall not give for fear of sending more tramps that way, — Roy remembered that his friend Moke had an uncle there, whom Luke Meredith — an older brother of Moke's — had once visited, and described as a “jolly old fellow.”

One night, even in the best regulated almshouse, and the choicest company of vagrants, was enough for our hero; and he determined to seek out this Uncle Sam the next morning, introduce himself as a friend of the nephew, and obtain of him, or through him if possible, something to do.

Sam Paxley (everybody called him Sam) was a well-known farmer and fattener of poultry, in another part of the town, where, at about nine o'clock, the storm having subsided, Roy found him with a man-of-all-work, digging out drifts in his yard, in the midst of a grand concert of geese, ducks, turkeys, hens, roosters, — cackling, quacking, gobbling, crowing, in barns and sheds, or flitting about in the snow. Uncle Sam regarded him with curious interest; and, barely waiting to hear the name of his nephew, struck his shovel into the drift, greeted him with a shake of the hand, and asked how and when he came to town.

“I came — on the train — last evening,” Roy replied, not thinking it necessary to enter into particulars.

“Last evening,” said Uncle Sam. “Where did you stop?”

“At a — public house,” Roy answered, still chary of his details.

“What did you do that for? Why didn’t you come right here? The idea of your stopping at a public house! Walk right in. Tell the folks who you are — or, wait! I’ll go with you.”

Roy had good reason to be astonished at this sort of welcome from a stranger, on whom he had so slight, so very slight, a claim.

“But, Mr. Paxley, —” he began.

“Don’t *mister* me,” cried the jolly old fellow (Roy thought Luke had characterized him correctly).

“Why, what shall I call you?”

“Call me? Call me Uncle Sam, as Luke does.”

“Certainly, thank you, if you wish it,” said Roy, more and more astonished. “But I didn’t know I had the right, seeing I am not related to you, as Luke is.”

“Not related? Well, well! of course. But call me Uncle Sam, all the same.”

“Well, Uncle Sam,” laughed Roy, “excuse me a moment. I was going to say I had not come to intrude myself upon you —”

“Intrude! Who says intrude? Why, I’ve been expecting you for three days.”

“Eh? Expecting me?”

“You see,” Uncle Sam explained, good-naturedly laughing, “I’ve had a letter from Luke. He has

written me all about it. So, it seems you got into a foolish kind of scrape, did you? Well, well! Young blood! I was young myself once. I sowed my wild-oats, and reaped 'em too. Luke's a pretty steady fellow, ain't he?"

Roy made some sort of stammering response. He was still too much amazed and mystified to know just what to say. He was not on intimate terms with Luke; and he couldn't conceive why Luke should have taken the trouble to write about him.

"It must be," thought he, "that Moke put him up to it; but what ever made Moke think I might come here?" And, really, it did not seem like Moke to be so thoughtful of anybody but himself.

Uncle Sam took Roy into the house, and went to announce his arrival to the women-folks.

"Ironing-day, and they're pesky busy," he said, coming back to the family-room, where he had left Roy wondering. "But they'll slick up, and see ye in a minute."

"That will be giving them too much trouble. I can see them by-and-by," Roy replied. "Let me go now and help you shovel snow."

Uncle Sam agreed; and Roy, glad to be able to do something in return for this unlooked-for hospitality, worked with right good will about the poultry-yard until dinner-time.

"Here's the young man, mother!" cried Uncle Sam, taking him once more into the house, where he was greeted with a kind "How d'e do?" from Mrs.

Paxley, and a bashful smile from the blushing daughter.

A good farmer's dinner was served ; but, just as the family, seated at table, were warming into a conversation with their guest, the pleasure of the occasion was a good deal marred for him by the entrance of a tall man in a gray overcoat.

"Any particular business with me, Mr. Freelan?" said Uncle Sam, greeting him in neighborly fashion.

"No hurry, no hurry, Mr. Paxley ; I can wait," replied the visitor, taking a seat by the door.

"Sit up and have some dinner with us, won't you?" said Uncle Sam.

Mr. Freelan declined this cordial invitation, and, leaning back in his chair to be more at his ease, threw open the lapels of his gray overcoat.

There was another coat buttoned beneath, on the breast of which Roy noticed, with a thrill that was any thing but pleasant, a policeman's badge. At the same time, Mr. Freelan's gray eye rested on him with a peculiarly steady regard.

Uncle Sam now remembered that rural civility, which differs in some respects from the politeness of the town, required that he should introduce his visitors.

"Mr. Freelan, let me make you acquainted with my nephew, Moses Meredith, son of my brother-in-law, Minister Meredith, of Bayfield."

"Ah!" said Mr. Freelan, nodding and smiling ; "Mr. Meredith, happy to see you."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WRONG MOSES AND THE RIGHT MOSES.

ROY was astounded. This, then, was the secret of his hospitable reception in the family; he had been mistaken for the nephew!

Embarrassed already by the presence of the policeman, whom he secretly dreaded as an emissary of Drollers, he was thrown into such confusion when introduced in this blundering manner, that any words he might have spoken died on his lips. He changed color, smiled mechanically, and looked at his plate in a way which must have caused the family to set him down as a very diffident young man.

His first impulse had been to correct Mr. Paxley's unaccountable mistake; but there was the policeman. It would have been awkward to make such a correction in the presence of a stranger, any way; and might there not be an advantage just now in passing for another person?

Conversation about the weather followed, and gave Roy time to recover himself. He remembered now a dozen circumstances which might have led him to suspect the good man of falling into some such error.

Once or twice Paxley had called him *Moses*, and then again he had called him *Luke*, through inadvertance, of course, Roy thought. Then, there was his eagerness to welcome him the moment he heard his nephew's name, and without hearing Roy's explanations—a very natural thing for a warm-hearted uncle to do, who had been expecting his relative for several days.

On the other hand, Roy remembered their plain talk about there being no relationship between them. It was this which had thrown him off his guard; and it puzzled him now.

“After this Freelan is gone,” thought he, “we'll have an explanation.” And he anticipated a good laugh at the joke. The time for the laughing did not, however, come about quite as he expected.

Mr. Freelan waited politely till dinner was over, then, rising, and laying his hand on Roy's shoulder, said, with a smile, —

“Mr. Paxley, beg your pardon, but I am obliged to take this young man into custody.”

This quiet little proceeding filled uncle, aunt, and cousin of the supposed nephew with surprise and consternation.

Roy alone appeared calm. He returned the officer's smile, and said, cheerfully, —

“It must be that you take me for somebody else.”

“Who else would I be likely to take you for?” replied the officer.

“You are acting for Drollers; and you probably

take me for a young fellow he has been tracking for the past ten days.”

Guilty persons are very apt to make foolish speeches; and this was an exceptionally foolish one on the part of Roy.

“What is that young fellow’s name?” inquired the policeman.

“I — believe — Roydon Rockwood.”

“And you are not Roydon Rockwood.”

Roy smiled again, indicated Mr. Paxley with a polite gesture, and replied, —

“Ask Uncle Sam what he thinks about it.”

“All right!” said the officer. “I’m not acting for Droller — what’s his name? — and I don’t take you for anybody but yourself. If you are Mr. Paxley’s nephew, — Moses Meredith, of Bayfield, — you are the chap I want. Your uncle here don’t know it; but, fact is, I’ve been expecting you as long as he has. I don’t know much about your difficulty; — hope you’ll get out of it all right; — but I’ve had instructions, through a magistrate, from a selectman of your town, — Miles Hocum, perhaps you know him, — to catch you when you come, and keep you till called for. Sorry to trouble you; but that’s the way of it, Moses.”

It is always easy, when too late, to see how hasty we may have been in our conclusions, and how unwise in our words and acts. The false impression which had taken possession of Roy’s mind, that Freelan had been set upon his track by Drollers, and

his eagerness to deny his own identity, had betrayed him into a dilemma. He must now consent to pass for Moses, and continue under arrest, or declare himself a sort of impostor, in which case he would probably remain under arrest all the same; for how could he expect to be believed?

His wits whirled unpleasantly for a moment; then, at the end of Freelan's speech, he smiled again, though with a somewhat sickly effect, and replied, —

“You are very considerate; but I am not Moses Meredith.”

“Not Mr. Paxley's nephew?”

“Not a bit of it,” said Roy, firmly.

“That's too thin!” exclaimed the officer. “When you think I take you for somebody else, you are Moses; when I take you for Moses, you are somebody else. Mr. Paxley, is this your nephew or not?”

“Not exactly my nephew,” stammered the astonished Paxley. “His father's first wife was my sister, and his brother Luke's mother. But he's a son of a second wife; so, strictly speaking —”

“But he is Moses Meredith?” interrupted the officer.

“No doubt — at least, I suppose — I haven't seen him since he was a child; our families don't visit each other late years, only Luke was here two years ago —”

“But this young man came here, and passed himself off as your nephew — that is, as Moses?”

“Mr. Paxley,” cried Roy, “you will remember I

was beginning to explain that your nephew, Moses Meredith, was a friend of mine, when you broke in, grasped my hand, and gave me a welcome that took me by surprise. I called you Mr. Meredith; and, when you asked me to call you Uncle Sam, I said I was no relative of yours."

"Yes; I agreed to it, since you are only Luke's half-brother, and not my own sister's son."

"I understand that now, Mr. Paxley; but I didn't understand it then. I never intended to pass for Moses, nor dreamed that I did, until you introduced me to this gentleman. Then, I was so confused I hardly knew what I said or did; but I thought I would wait until he was gone before I made an explanation. When he arrested me, I thought it was, I'll freely confess, on my own account; so I thought I would continue to pass for Moses, if I could. This is just the truth about it. Mrs. Paxley will remember that I didn't call her aunt; and I didn't kiss Maria, as I should have been ready enough to do if I had been claiming a cousin's rights. Besides," added Roy, "in my sachel, hanging on the hook there, you will find my own initials on my linen — 'R. R.' and not 'M. M.'"

The family, though greatly astonished by this explanation, seemed inclined to believe it. Freelan, however, was skeptical.

"Initials on linen," he said, "don't amount to any thing. And you are wanted by justice, I see, according to your own showing, even if you ain't Moses.

When an officer from your town comes for you, — and I shall telegraph for one immediately, — he will know whether you are the right bird or not, and act accordingly.”

It was small consolation to Roy to think that that officer would probably be Drollers, and that it would not help his case much to be recognized by him, not as the Moses Meredith who was wanted, but as the Roy Rockwood who was wanted still more.

“Take your bag if you like,” said Freelan. He helped Roy on with his overcoat, and then gave him his sachel. “Now shall we go?”

Good-natured Mr. Paxley remonstrated, Roy argued, Mrs. Paxley pleaded, and Maria shed tears; but Freelan remained unmoved.

“Well, if I must, I must,” said Roy, making brief adieus. “But, if you would only give me a chance, I know I can bring proof.”

Freelan opened the door with one hand, leading Roy by the other. Roy looked out, and uttered a sudden cry, —

“There’s proof now!”

It was living proof, in the form of the true Moses Meredith, walking briskly up to his uncle’s door.

The moment he had spoken, Roy reflected, that, in his haste to get out of the pitfall, he was on the point of dragging his friend in. He was not a fellow to do that, even where his own safety seemed to require it. It occurred to him at once to address Moses by a false name, and give him a hint of his danger, thus sacrificing his own advantage for his friend.

“Here, Tom,” he said, “you know me, and you know —”

But Moses, not quite so unselfish, interrupted him with a look of distrust and malice.

“I do know you; and I know you are no more what you pretend to be than I am what you call me. Don’t *Tom* me, you cheat! Where’s my uncle?”

“Is *this* Moses?” cried Sam Paxley, meeting his nephew, and taking him into the house. “Ah, I see the look I didn’t see in *his* face.”

“Yes, this is Moses,” said the nephew, triumphantly. “I walked down with a man, — your hired man, — and he told me your nephew from Bayfield came this morning. I couldn’t believe any scamp was trying to play *my* part here, until *he* met me at the door, and called me Tom. I couldn’t stand that. He’s really been imposing upon you, has he?”

“Yes, Moses,” said Roy; “and I should have been glad to impose upon somebody a little longer, at least, till I could have given you time to get out of the way. This man wants Moses Meredith, — the real Moses, — and I think he is satisfied now that he caught the wrong one when he caught me.”

“Perfectly,” said Freelan. Then, addressing himself to Moses: “Since you are the true Moses Meredith, you have come just in the nick of time. Greet your aunt, kiss your cousin, then you must come with me. Too bad, I know; but I am ordered to arrest you, which I do.”

And the hand which had been laid upon Roy’s

shoulder was now transferred to Moses, to the latter's consternation and dismay. He turned appealing looks from Roy to his uncle, protesting his innocence, begged, and actually shed tears.

"It will go hard with us, Roy," he exclaimed. "I never thought they would touch me; but Tommy Twombly and Iry Bradish have testified that you and I set the fire, while you know I had nothing to do with it. They think they are going to get off by laying the blame all on to us. My father can't protect me, and so I came away; and now —"

But here the minister's son became choked with rage and tears.

Freelan, at the aunt's request, consented to wait until Moses had eaten his dinner; and Moses, not so much from appetite as from a desire to gain time, sat down dejectedly before a fresh plate placed by Maria on the uncleared table.

"Well, Moses, I'm as sorry as you are; but I can't help it," said Roy. "Good-by. I'd offer you my hand," he said to Mr. Paxley, "if I thought you would take it."

"Take it? Of course I will," cried the farmer, and gave him a cordial shake.

"Thank you, *Uncle Sam!* And you?" He suddenly offered his hand to mother and daughter, and both received it. They could not believe him a very great knave; and Maria liked his looks so much better than she did her cousin's, that she was glad to have him get off, even at her cousin's expense.

“Perhaps you will know some time,” he added, “that I am not a very great rogue and impostor, after all. I take it, Mr. Freelan, that you have no further claim on me.”

“Yes, he has, too!” cried Moses, wishing for company in his misery. “He is Roy Rockwood; they’ve been trying to arrest him for a long time, and they’ll give a good deal more for him now than they will for me.”

If the misfortunes of Moses had enlisted the sympathies of his friends before, he certainly lost them to some extent by this speech. Freelan alone replied to it, addressing his words to Roy.

“I’ve no doubt,” said he, “but that you ought to be detained. Yet I’ve no authority for keeping you; and I advise you to get out of the way before such authority is put into my hands.”

Even Freelan rather liked Roy.

“Thank you,” said Roy; “I shall take your advice.” Then, to the farmer, “I trust I shoveled snow enough to pay for my dinner.” And, with final thanks and good-bys, he was off, while Moses sat lamenting.

Roy did not let the spring violets blossom under his feet, but got as far as he could from the scene of his last adventure, and went to a supperless bed that night in a farmer’s haystack.

Crawling out from his lair the next morning, he found that there had been another snow-storm. As he was making fresh tracks toward the street, he was

hailed by the farmer, who demanded to know what he wanted.

“A job shoveling snow,” replied Roy, remembering his experiences of the forenoon before.

“I don’t want to hire nobody to shovel snow,” exclaimed the farmer; but added, as he saw Roy walking off, “What pay do you want?”

“My breakfast,” Roy answered; thereupon he was called back, and set to work.

Having earned his breakfast, it occurred to him that he might earn some thing more in the same way; and, entering a village, he got three or four jobs at shoveling out the snowed-up inhabitants, by which he earned enough to pay for a dinner.

But, instead of dining as he might have done, Roy, rapidly learning prudence, contented himself with a few crackers and a bit of cheese bought at a grocer’s, and saved his money for another scheme, which he had been contemplating all the morning. This was something which had been suggested to him by his adventure with the clock in the farm-house where he got his first dinner after leaving home. How long it seemed since then!

Entering a jeweler’s shop, he represented himself as a young man out of business, who knew something about clocks, and who proposed to provide himself with a few simple tools, and make a little tour of the surrounding villages as an itinerant clock-tinker.

After a conversation with the shop-keeper, whom he interested in his scheme, it was decided that he

must have a pair of plain-nosed pliers, a pair of cutting-pliers, a flat file, a small bottle of alcohol, a vial of watchmaker's oil, a piece of chamois-skin, a small screw-driver, a knife, a brush, and some peg-wood.

Roy was in despair at finding that so many things were necessary, and remarked that he had cleaned clocks with nothing but a pen-knife, a rag, a feather, and a screw-driver.

“No doubt,” replied the shop-keeper; “but, if you are going to do much of a business, you'll find all these things useful.”

Roy had hoped to buy some old tools of him; but finally concluded to borrow what he wanted, the man agreeing to lend them, provided he would leave his watch as security for their return, go out of town before commencing business, and give him ten per cent of what he earned above his expenses.

To this, Roy agreed, and packing the borrowed tools into his sachel, set off hopefully on his new adventure.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A BARGAIN IN HORSE-FLESH AND ITS PLEASANT SEQUEL.

HE found no time-pieces to clean that day ; but, stopping at a farm-house over night, he had the good fortune to please his host, who remembered, the next morning, that the old clock “hadn’t been iled for an age,” and gave it into Roy’s hands.

By this means Roy paid for his supper, breakfast, and lodging, and felt much encouraged. Using the name of his host, who was known as a careful and influential man, he got two other clocks to clean in the same neighborhood, and found himself at night with a little well-earned money in his pocket. Then, for the two following days, he did not earn enough to pay his expenses. On the third day, however, he was in luck again ; and so his fortunes varied.

All this time, his singular adventure at Uncle Sam Paxley’s, and especially Moke’s part in it, kept constantly recurring to his mind ; and, the more he thought of it, the more it troubled him.

“Served him right!” had been the first sharp sentence of his resentment, which Moke’s base conduct had roused. But a nobler feeling now came upper-

most; and the thought of Moke in misfortune, left to bear the brunt of a false accusation, filled him with a kind of remorse.

Before, a sense of honor, however mistaken, had prevented him from testifying against his associates who set the fire. But, since the chief culprits, to clear themselves, had borne false witness against him and Moses, was it not clearly his duty to appear, and, at whatever risk to himself, openly acknowledge the truth?

He found it impossible to make up his mind what course he ought to pursue. But, having visited again the jeweler of whom he obtained his outfit, redeemed his watch, which he found indispensable in his business, and provided himself with a "metal polish," to use or sell, he obeyed an irresistible impulse, and turned his face toward Bayfield, in the vicinity of which he hoped to hear some definite news that might determine his future conduct.

From house to house, from village to village, he made his way slowly, selling his polish, finding now and then a clock to oil or repair, and meeting now and then with an adventure.

One day he made acquaintance with a young farmer, who had a clock that wouldn't go, and a tongue that went altogether too well. While Roy was oiling the clock, the said tongue, which had no need of oil, was running incessantly.

The owner asked Roy all sorts of questions, proposed to swap knives, boots, and hats with him, and finally offered to sell him a horse.

“Come, now, Hinckley!” said the young man’s mother, who was able occasionally to put in a word edgeways, “don’t ye trade off that hoss — you’ve no right.”

“I guess I’ve a right,” said Hinckley; “and I’ll sell or swap any thing on the place, from a tip-cart to a gridiron. Jest the hoss you want, friend. Leave your tinkering till after dinner, and come and look at him.”

Roy laughingly said that he had already had enough of horses that winter; but, being tired of the close air of the room, and the young man insisting, he put on his coat, and went out with him to the barn.

“There!” said Hinckley, throwing open a door which looked out on a yard and open shed, “that’s the animal at the rack — thin in flesh, but sound and true — nary ringbone nor spavin, nor tech o’ the heaves, nor nothin’ o’ the sort.”

Roy stood amazed; the steed he was asked to purchase was his old acquaintance, Billy!

“Come!” said the young man, “think about it. Ain’t you tired of bein’ on the tramp? It’ll be enough sight easier for ye to ride. I can sell ye a saddle tew, or a harness and wagon, for that matter; then you can take a few clocks about with ye, and dicker a little. Now that’s an idee for ye to consider; there’s a fortin in it, I bet ye! A few clocks, and a passel o’ hymn-books, side-combs, babies’ rattles, cheap jewelry, tape, any triflin’ nick-nacks — jest a purty business, ye know.”

The speaker watched Roy's face and the curiously restrained smile he saw there, and shrewdly inferred that this fine bait tickled the shy fish.

"Isn't the horse rath — er — old, — eh?" Roy asked.

"Nine year old this comin' spring. Raised in the neighborhood. I've knowed him from a colt. Mother a famous trotter — Mari' Ant'inette — you've heard of *her*? He could trot once tew. I've seen him dew his mile in tew-forty, with jest the tail-end of a second to spare; and he can dew it agin, after he's been fed up to it."

"How happens it that so valuable a horse ever got run down so?" Roy inquired.

Hinckley looked candid as the open sky, scratched his ear, puckered a corner of his mouth, and responded: —

"Ye see, sir, he fell into the hands of a mis'ble shoat 'at didn't know a thing about hosses; run thro' his property, an' got too poor to feed Napoleon — that's his name. Stand round, Napoleon!"

Hinckley accompanied his words with a slap. Napoleon gave a groan — a dreadfully familiar sound to Roy's ear.

"The feller wouldn't part with him — proud as Lucifer — till bimeby the sheriff sold him out. Knowing the properties of the hoss, I rushed in, and bid him off at a bargain."

"Well," said Roy, "what is such a horse worth?"

"Napoleon is wuth — sich a hoss as that is wuth,"

—Hinckley looked at Roy, and then at the beast,—“he’s richly wuth over a hundred dollars. But I’ll sell him for less ’n half — yes, a good deal less. I’ll take fifty, seein’ it’s you, jest for the sake of startin’ ye in business.”

“I think if I should offer you half of fifty, you would take it.”

“No, sir-ree! If the Pope of Rome should come along in his best clo’es, and offer a quarter of a hundred for that hoss, I’d say, ‘Holy Father, no!’ Thirty-five dollars is the lowest price I’d look at — and I’d look at that twice, and be purty hard-up for ready money, ’fore I’d make the sacrificiss. Friend, you smile.”

“I’m pleased,” said Roy, “that I’ve learned the value and pedigree of that horse, and got a sounding name for him. Now, I’ll sell him to you, if you like.”

Hinckley stared. “Hey? What ye tryin’ to come at?”

“I mean, Napoleon belongs to me. Billy, I used to call him. I tried all one day to sell him; and might have disposed of him a dozen times, if I’d had your tongue to recommend him.”

Hinckley looked at Roy out of the left-hand corner of his eye, drew his mouth to a pucker in the same direction, and said, —

“Look here, now, friend; honest?”

“Honest? yes! — a good deal honester than any thing you’ve said to me. Either you picked up that horse in the road, or he was left with you for safe

keeping. He had on a bridle, with rope reins, an' old blanket bound to his back by a rope girt, and — I rather think — a cord tying a loop of the reins to the girt at his side. Am I right?" said Roy.

Hinckley scratched his nose, shut one eye, pinched his ear, and blossomed into a smile.

"Right, in the minutest particular. Only I found the hoss jammed head and shoulders into my woodshed, one mornin' after a big storm, and never knowed how he come there. That's what ma meant by sayin' I'd no right to trade him off. Now, tell me how you lost him."

"I left him in the hands of an acquaintance. I had pressing business, which obliged me to take a train. He had at the same time a horse and cutter. His own horse somehow got away; and, in going for him, he lost sight of this horse; — it was in the night, and a terrible snow-storm, you understand."

Roy was a little surprised that Hinckley understood so well.

"Wal, it's curi's! I've told ma a hundred times I'd give a little to know how I come by that hoss!"

"Now you know. And I suppose you'll give more than a little for a clear title to him. You offered him to me for thirty-five dollars; I'll offer him to you for thirty. That's fair, now."

"A critter like that! thirty dollars! Friend, you're jokin'," said Hinckley, looking at Billy again, in the new light thrown upon his history.

"Nary touch of the heaves," Roy went on, "nor

ringbone nor spavin; only nine years old; mother, famous trotting mare, Mari' Ant'inette; done his mile in two-forty, with the tail end of a second — ”

“ Shc ! ” laughed Hinckley, not at all disconcerted. “ A feller talks sometimes for the sake of talkin.” Comin' right down to hard-pan, now, and talkin' honest, I wouldn't give you over ten dollars for that hoss, now, — not if know myself; and ma'll tell ye 't purty gen'ly I dew ! ”

Roy masked his satisfaction under a horse-jockey's laugh, and exclaimed : —

“ Only ten dollars ! If the Pope of Rome should come along in his best clo's, and offer me — ”

“ Wal, never mind about the Pope of Rome,” grinned Hinckley. “ We're talkin' business now. And you must consider that it's the feed I've put into him now that's brought him up. When I first laid eyes on him, he wa'n't the same hoss.”

Roy confessed that Billy looked a great deal better than when he last saw him; in grateful consideration of which fact, he offered to give Hinckley a bill of sale of him for twenty dollars.

“ No, by Jimmy Neddy ! ” said Hinckley. “ But I'll tell ye now what's my idee of a trade. I'll give ye 'leven dollars and your dinner, and you shall throw in the work on the old clock, and a box of that 'ere polish; or you shall give me five dollars for keep, and take the hoss away.”

This latter alternative suggested to Roy such terrible things, that he hastened to close the bargain.

“By Jimmy Neddy, ma!” said Hinckley, rubbing his hands, the moment Roy was well out of the house, “it’s the biggest thing! All I wanted was a clear title. I can jockey up that hoss, put a little arsenic in a rag on his bit, get him in good feather for swappin’, and put him away at a figger that’ll make your eyes snap!”

Roy would have passed for an exceedingly merry young clock-tinker, as he pursued his journey, laughing spasmodically to himself, for a mile or two, and breaking out into grins and giggles, for no visible provocation, and upon the most serious occasions, at any time during the next twenty-four hours.

“A part of this horse money,” he reasoned with himself, “belongs to Lizard.” And, as his route lay near the brickyards, he resolved to give Lizard a call. This he did; and, finding the little Canadian at home, he received from him a surprising salutation.

“How you do, Roy? I sole dat ’oss.”

“What horse?”

“Dat ’oss, you know — Billy. I got five dollars.”

“You, Lizard, have — sold — Billy — for — five — dollars!”

“Da’s jes wot I say. I got de money for you now.” And Lizard took out a greasy pocket-book.

The actual sight of a dirty five-dollar bill, which the little man fished up with his creased and blackened fingers, made Roy wink hard, rub his eyebrows, and exclaim, —

“Lizard, this is funny! Tell me about it.”

“You see, Drollers he come back dis way; he tell about how he ketch you, and you give him a slip, an’ he lef’ Billy in a snow-storm, to run for you, an’ wen he come long back, he fin’ no ’oss; I say, ‘You ’sponsible for dat ’oss, Mist’ Drollers; he was ver’ good ’oss. So he say to me, ‘You go fin’ him, I will pay for your trouble.’ But I say, ‘I got big job now cuttin’ ice, I can’t go; it may take tree, fo’ days huntin’ for Billy, an’ I not fin’ him aft’ all; or may be I fin’ him dead.’ Fin’ly, he say he give me five dollars for dat ’oss, settle it, and I do wot I please. It is bes’ I can do; an’ ’ere is you money you len’ me.”

“Drollers’s money! Drollers bought Billy!” exclaimed Roy, snapping his finger in the air in a sort of ecstasy. “Keep the filthy lucre, Lizard; and may a kind Providence bless it to you.”

“Wot for you laugh so!” said the little Canadian, wondering. “Billy was good ’oss. I go fin’ him wen grass grows, an’ may be make good t’ing out dat ’oss yet.”

“Don’t you go,” said Roy; “for I’ve sold him — I’ve sold Billy myself.”

He related the circumstances, to which Lizard listened with grave interest, remarking at the close, with a gleam of triumph in his swarthy face and beady black eyes:—

“Now wot you say, Roy? Didn’ I allis tell ye Billy was ver’ mighty good ’oss?”

As Roy was going away, young Lizard screamed after him from the half-opened door:—

“Say, Roy Rockwood, my father *didn't* lick me for not going with you to sell Billy. I told you my mother wouldn't let him.”

“Well, I forgive you. I did a great deal better without you,” laughed Roy; while the elder Lizard, to keep up his credit as a man and a parent in the eyes of his friend, made a dash at the younger, and disappeared with him into the house.

Roy heard a boyish scream, then a shrill, loud woman's voice, then the noise of a tussle; and out came the little Canadian again, with a bound and a war-whoop, and a flying three-legged stool.

Roy looked back once, and perceived the defeated parent stooping to pick up his hat with one hand, while rubbing the back of his head with the other. Concluding from this circumstance that young Lizard had not made a vain boast, but had spoken advisedly of his mother's prowess and protection, he turned quickly, to hide his emotion (there were tears in his eyes), and saw his amiable little Canadian friend no more.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CALL ON THE WIDOW GRAVES.

ROY hastened along the road, which he had traversed once before in the early morning starlight, when he left his lodging in the widow's barn and went to inquire for a man of the name of "Lizard" at the brickyards.

He did not stop to practice his new profession by the way, having resolved to hurry on and risk a final attempt to get his money of the ice-company.

The ice harvest was pretty well over. But Lassarde had told him that there were still a few hands employed about the houses; and, it being Saturday afternoon, he determined to rush in at the moment when they were paid off, and demand his dues with the rest.

Passing the widow's place, he could not resist a desire to speak with his friend Timothy. All being still about the barn, he ventured to call at the house. The widow herself came to the door, with knitting-work in her hands and spectacles on her forehead. Roy rattled off his customary lingo.

"Have you a clock, madam, to clean, oil, or repair?"

or can I sell you to-day, madam, a very useful article of metal polish? indispensable to every housekeeper; the best, and, indeed, the only really good thing in the market, for giving a quick and brilliant polish to silver ware, plated ware, britannia, pewter, brass, tea-pots, door-knobs, spoons, knives, and forks, burnished metal of all kinds; removing the tarnish and restoring the original surface, with the slightest outlay of labor or expense; only thirty cents a box, madam; will you do me the favor to look at it? Give me a tea-pot cover or a spoon, and I will show you in a few seconds what it will do."

The widow was willing to be shown. She admitted him into the kitchen, gave him an old silver spoon, and stood watching to see him polish it, perhaps also to see that he did not pocket it. He was wondering how he should manage to ask about Timothy, when she opened the way to him by a question.

"Was ye ever this way before?"

"Yes, madam," replied Roy (rub, rub). "I was here once; though I don't remember that you looked at my polish. I think you did not" (rub, rub, rub). "But I recollect perfectly well a boy,—a red-haired boy—good-natured countenance. I don't see him about to-day."

"No; and good reason!" exclaimed the widow.

Roy stopped rubbing, and regarded her with mild astonishment.

"Madam, you surprise me. He seemed a very good sort of boy. There was some reason why you

didn't look at my polish; but he treated me very civilly."

"I dare say," said the widow, in an agitated voice. "That was the trouble with Timothy. He was too good-natured where he ought to have been sarcum-spect. Will you believe it? he made friends with a rogue, and kept him hid in my barn two days — over Sunday too. Just think on't!"

"You don't tell me!" said Roy (rub, rub).

"Yes; and a very desprit villian he was — a barn-burner, who might have burned all my buildings over our heads if he'd been so minded."

"You perfectly amaze me, madam!"

"Yes, indeed! And that Timothy smuggled him in, and had him hid there in a hole in the hay — I've seen the hole — one Saturday night, at the very time when the officers was here a-huntin' high and low for him."

"Dear, dear," said Roy. "And that boy appeared such an innocent!"

"Indeed he did; and I'd allers trusted him till then, and might 'a' gone on a-trustin' on him, to my ruin, if't hadn't been for the doughnuts."

"The doughnuts, madam?"

"Why, to be sure, the doughnuts did disappear so dreadful fast, particularly that Sunday; it was unaccountable! For Timothy, he never was a master hand for doughnuts himself; and he wa'n't much in the habit of eatin' atween meals. I'd most broke him o' that, since he'd been with me. It's apt to bring on

dyspepsy ; though my doughnuts wa'n't never over'n above short, but was as good, hulsome doughnuts — if I do say it — as ye ever eat in your life.”

“No doubt of it, madam,” said Roy.

“Wal, as I was sayin', them doughnuts did go like all possessed. I went to the biler where I keep 'em (I gin'lry keep every thing o' that kind in a biler, shet up tight; for I do think it makes poor stuff of any sort of cake or bread to let it dry up. If I cut off a slice o' bread that ain't eat, I lays it right back onto the loaf, and then winds a towel right clust around 'em both, and puts 'em in a tight biler; an' there they keep, jest about as well as if the loaf hadn't been cut at all). But, as I was sayin', when I went to take the things out Monday mornin' (it was washin'-day, ye know, and I wanted the biler. I never neglect to wash on Monday, if it's any decent sort of weather, and if I can manage any way in the world to git the work done).”

“A very common practice, I believe,” observed Roy. “I've known many people to wash on Monday.”

“Not that I do the washin' myself,” continued the Widow Graves. “I've a woman to come in, and help — Mis' Munson, a grass-widow. And my neice, 'Tildy Graves, — she's lived with me about all her life, for that matter, — her father was my brother. He was a carpenter, and a good Christian man, as appeared when he fell from a scaffoldin'; and his last words was, when they picked him up, ‘I die prepared.’”

The widow stopped to take breath and wipe her eyes, while Roy gave the spoon an absent-minded rub, and said, "How affecting!"

"So, as I was sayin', — where was I?"

"At the biler, madam; you'd got to the biler and the abstracted doughnuts, that Monday morning."

"Oh, I remember! — an', when I see what depre-dations had been made — a big panful of doughnuts, kivered up with a cloth, an' not more'n your two han'fuls left, when I took the cloth off, an' looked."

"Is it possible!" ejaculated Roy.

"Yes, indeed! 'Tildy, she didn't know nothin' about 'em; an' so I called Timothy in, an' cornered him. I'll say this for him, that he never could look me square in the face, an' tell me an out-an'-out lie. An' so it all come out about that rogue he'd been harborin' in the barn, an' feedin' on my doughnuts for nigh on to two days."

"Incredible!" said the horrified listener.

"I was sorry to do it," the widow proceeded. "But I lost confidence in Timothy from that hour; I didn't know what desprit character he might bring in, an' conceal on the premises next, to rob an' murder us in our sleep, or burn us alive in our beds. So I had to send him away, though I was sorry enough; for, in other respects, he is a good, faithful boy, an' one of a large family; an' his father bein' a dissipated man, they find it hard enough to git along."

"But," remonstrated Roy, with genuine feeling this time, "was Timothy aware of — of the dangerous character of — this rogue you speak of?"

“Mebby not, at first; but then he knowed as well as I did, that the officers of justice was after him that night, for he went an’ hild the lantern for ’em while they sarched. What could you think of a boy that would keep on a-harborin’ of him, an’ a-supplyin’ of him with doughnuts an’ new milk — he owned up to the new milk too! — after that?”

“And where is Timothy now?”

“He’s to hum to his father’s, waitin’ to hear of another place; but I’m afraid he won’t hear of one very soon; for the story has got round, an’ who do you think would want to trust him now?”

“Too true!” said Roy. “But I — it seems to me — there must have been some reason for — for his strange conduct.”

“Oh, yes, there’s allers reasons for things,” explained the widow. “It appears this rogue (he passed under the name of Walker, though they say that wa’n’t his real name; and it’s allers a suspicious sarcumstance, you know, when a body goes about under false names).”

“Always,” assented Roy.

“Wal, as I was sayin’, he had got in with Timothy somehow, an’ bribed him with a pair of skates.”

“Is it possible! And what could have been this — Walker’s — motive in bribing him?”

“Oh, some develtry! He wanted a chance to rob us, I suppose, but found afterwards we’d nothin’ he cared much for, ’thout ’twas doughnuts. An’ the milk fell short too. I should think, two full quarts.”

“Monstrous!” said Roy. “Two quarts of milk and a pan of doughnuts!”

“Not that I cared so much for the milk and doughnuts,” the widow proceeded; “but the principle of the thing!”

“True, — the principle of the thing, madam! But I can’t think Timothy meant any harm; and, since he is so good a boy in other respects, don’t you think it would be safe to take him back, and try him once more? I should be sorry to have him lose his place, and get a bad name just on account of — this Walker — I believe you called him Walker.”

He said much more to the same purpose; but the widow, terrified at the thought of burglars and barn-burners hiding in her hay, could not be persuaded to give Timothy another trial. Roy forgot to urge the sale of his polish, and rose to go.

“Oh!” said she; “that stuff! It re’ly works to a charm; I’ve been watchin’, though I hain’t seemed to; an’ I should re’ly like a box, if I could only afford it.”

“Madam,” said Roy, promptly, thinking perhaps of the two quarts of milk and the pan of doughnuts, “allow me to present you with a box.”

“What!” The widow, who had meant only to beat him down in his price, simpered, and held the box doubtfully in her hand. “Why, I didn’t suppose you carried your polish about to give it away!”

“I don’t, as a general thing, madam. But I’ve been very much interested in your conversation.”

She accepted it accordingly, and said, to her niece, who came in after Roy had gone :—

“Did you meet him? I wish you had come in sooner; for he’s certainly one of the most agreeable, pleasantest, perlitest, interestin’ young men you ever see!”

“What would she think,” said Roy to himself, “if she knew she had been entertaining a barn-burner in her house!”

He was much inclined to laugh at the adventure; but his mirth was sadly damped by the recollection of Timothy’s misfortune.

“That is the worst of getting into a scrape,” he exclaimed, with self-reproach. “If a fellow injured only himself when he does wrong, it wouldn’t be so bad; but all his friends have to suffer, one way and another, on his account.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHY ROY WAS WANTED BY THE JUDGE.

THIS set Roy to thinking, more remorsefully than he had done before, — though he had reflected seriously many times on the subject, — of the anxiety, shame, and distress, which his thoughtless conduct had brought upon Mabel and the good doctor and his wife.

He looked at his watch; it was time for him to be making his way to the ice-houses.

Roy avoided the town, and, by a cross-walk, came upon a hillside that commanded a view of the ice-works and the reservoir. Seeing some men still at work about the houses, he got behind a huge stone-heap, in an open field, and waited.

The scene looked strange to him from this position. It seemed months ago that he skated for a prize on that thronged and crystal-floored parade, now desolate and covered with snow. He tried in vain to make out just the spot where he escaped from Drollers by a series of desperate leaps. Suddenly, a shriek, then a chorus of loud cries, drew his attention to the upper part of the pond.

He had before noticed a number of boys there coasting down an orchard slope, and sliding off on the snow-covered ice. But now the coasters were abandoning their sleds, and running in great confusion toward a broad sheet of ice, which had formed since the last snow fell.

In a moment, Roy saw the cause of the alarm. Off in the middle of the field of new ice, appeared a spot of open water, and, in the midst of this spot, was something which looked like a black ball. Watching it, he saw that it moved. It bobbed up and down, it turned, it approached the edge of the broken ice, then slipped back and down. Every few seconds, it sent up quick, terrified shrieks. It was a boy's head.

In fact, one of the coasters, through lack of prudence or skill, had let his sled take him off on the thin ice, where, the moment he stopped and attempted to get on his feet, he had broken through.

It appeared that he could swim a little; but, every time he tried to get up on the ice, either it broke under him, or he slipped back: the deadly cold of the water was striking to his bones; and each shriek seemed fainter than the last.

Roy had firmly fixed in his mind the notion that, to succeed in his plan and get safely off, he must under no circumstances show himself until the moment of putting it in execution. He waited, therefore, though with ever-increasing anxiety and impatience, to see the boy rescued by somebody else. Men were running to the spot; but why did they not bring planks,

ropes, ice-hooks, instead of going empty-handed, like lunatics, as they seemed?

“Oh, heaven!” he exclaimed, “they don’t know any thing! They’ll let the boy drown!”

Not a plank, not a rope, not a pole; but there the men gathered at the edge of the thin ice, gesticulating and shouting, as helpless as the frightened boys themselves.

Suddenly, forgetting all danger of appearing in a crowd where he was so well known, Roy darted from his post of observation, and took long leaps down the hillside. He looked eagerly on the way for something in the shape of a plank; and saw, at the end of a stone wall dividing two fields, a short piece of fence built out into the pond, to keep cattle from passing around the shore when they went down into the water to drink. To three posts, a single, broad board was nailed, about sixteen feet long. To this Roy ran, and tried to get it off whole; but, in his hurry, he broke it at the middle post; and, instead of one long board, he had two short ones. He was vexed at this accident at first, but found afterward that it was the luckiest thing that could have happened.

“Mr. Walker! Mr. Walker!” cried half a dozen voices.

By this time, the drowning boy could but just gasp out a faint shriek of agony and fear; and he seemed to be sinking. With his two boards in his hands, Roy started out on the firm shore ice, paused when he came to the tender new ice, threw down his boards,

and slipped along upon one of them. A chorus of warning cries followed him.

“You can’t go there! Mr. Walker! you can’t go there!”

Roy did not seem to himself to be at all excited, as he answered back, in a clear, loud voice:—

“I’m going for that boy! Hold on, boy!” he added, cheerily, “I’ll get you! I’ll get you!”

Resting his weight upon one board, he shoved the other forward, then stood upon that, while he brought the first along. Thus his two fragments served as a sort of enormous pair of detached snow-shoes, which kept him up on ice so thin that a very slight pressure of his foot directly upon it would have broken through.

All the time he kept crying: “Hold on, boy! Three seconds! I’m after ye! Hold on!”

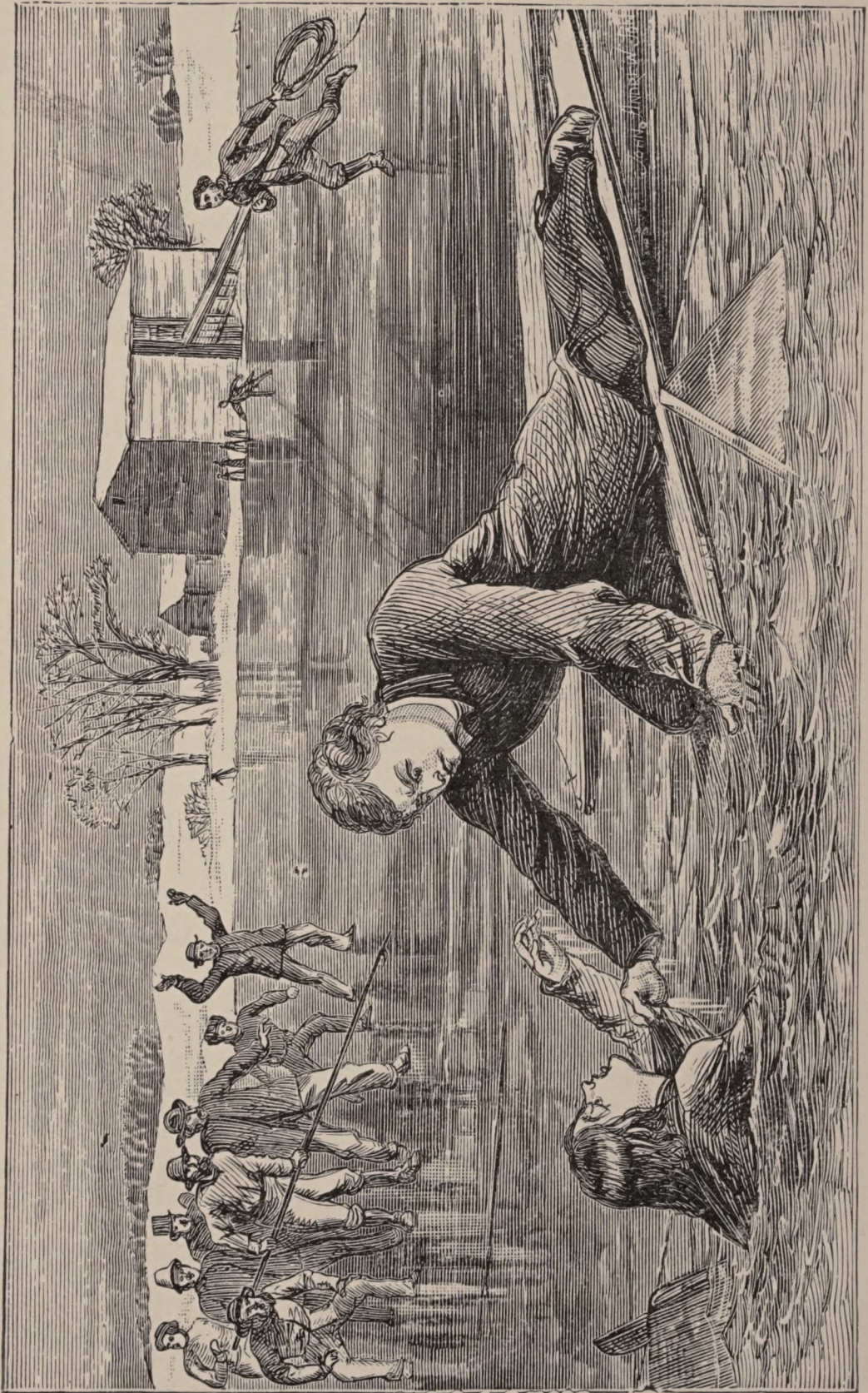
“I can’t!” gasped the boy, beginning to swallow water and gurgle.

“Yes, you can! One second! I’ve got you! I’ve got you!”

And Roy, near the end of one of his boards, reached over and grasped the boy’s collar. But, suddenly, as he attempted to draw him out, board, ice, and all began to sink, like the side of an overloaded raft; and a cold wave rushed up over Roy’s outstretched arm and bended legs. A cry of dismay went up from the shore. Two boys in the water instead of one!

“No! Walker is out again! Oh!”

Some of the spectators were far more wild with ex-



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citement than Roy was ; and there are those who will tell you to this day, that he went straight into the water, and came out like a miraculous man of cork, pulling the boy after him. What really happened was this : —

The moment he felt his board sinking, he sprang back, leaving the boy on the end of it, and was just in time to save himself on his reserved board. Arms, legs, coatskirts, were dripping ; and that gave him the appearance of having had a plunge.

In an instant his overcoat was off, and a corner of the skirt flung to the boy.

“ Catch hold there ! ” The boy caught hold.
“ Cling fast ! ”

“ Oh, I can't. ”

“ You can — you must ! ”

“ I'm sliding off ! ”

“ No, you're not ! You're safe ! Out you come ! ”

And, slowly, carefully, Roy pulled. The board with the sunken end, together with the ice bent down under it, formed a sort of inclined plane, up which the drowning boy was drawn, the soul in Roy's voice inspiring him to make a last effort, in spite of his exhaustion and the deadly ache and numbness the cold had struck into his frame.

By this time, one thoughtful man came, bringing a long rope from the ice-houses. It would have been useless but for what Roy had already done ; for nobody durst go out on the new ice with it ; and it was not until a third attempt was made, that an end of it

was cast within Roy's reach. He seized, and held it fast, and was drawn on his piece of board, with the rescued boy, over the smooth, bending, cracking ice, to the firm edge.

The crowd seemed intoxicated with excitement. Nobody knew what to do next.

"I never saw any thing like it!" — "I wouldn't have done what he did for a million dollars!" — "Ten seconds more, and that boy would have gone down!" Such were some of the cries Roy heard, as he reached the firm ice, and tried to lift the boy upon his feet.

"Take hold here, some of you!" he cried. "No use of getting a boy out of the water, and then letting him die of cold! Here, you!" singling out a stout fellow, who stood staring with the rest. "And you! One at each side. Don't carry him. Make him run. To the nearest house! Now — lively!"

The poor boy, moaning with agony, said he couldn't go — he couldn't even stand. But Roy cheered, assisted, urged the men; and, half carried, half running, the boy was taken up the slope to a house seen through the trees beyond.

Roy, bearing his drenched overcoat, his feet churning water in his boots, was the first to reach the door. He threw it open without ceremony, and shouted, "Help, here! help!"

The two men thrust the boy into the kitchen, and were retreating, when Roy stopped them.

"Come back! You'll let this boy die!"

"What shall we do?" one of them asked.

“Strip him! Have those wet clothes off quicker than you ever did any thing in your lives! Where are the folks?” A frightened old lady came in. “This boy has been in the water. He is dying of cold!”

“What boy is it?”

“I don’t know. Blow up your fire! Have towels ready — hot flannels — blankets to wrap him in. Have you any whisky? That will be good for him — hot as he can take it.”

“Oh, dear!” cried the old lady. “You ask for so many things at once!” She uttered a sudden shriek. “It’s Edgar! Edgar! My nephew! How did he get into the water?”

The men had now got Edgar’s clothes off; and there they stood, holding him up, while he shook and moaned piteously.

“Rub him!” Roy exclaimed. “Briskly! Towels first; then with your bare hands. Don’t leave him till you get warm blankets outside of him, and hot whisky inside. I’m off.” And, having wrung his overcoat out at the sink, and held up his feet to empty the water from his boots, Roy walked out.

He passed the crowd of men and boys lingering about the spot where the rescue had been made, — many of whom started to follow him and ask him questions, — took his sachel from the end of the wall where he had dropped it, and proceeded straight to the ice-houses.

“Mr. Foreman,” he said, finding that officer back at his post (it was he who had carried the rope to the rescue), “I’ve come for my pay. Your company owes me for a week’s work, you remember—an hour or so short.”

“Yes!” said the foreman. “You ought to be paid. But Mr. Westbury told me not to give you your money without consulting him.”

“Where is Mr. Westbury?”

“About town somewhere. He’ll be driving up here by-and-by — course of half an hour.”

“Why must I wait for him?” Roy demanded. “Why can’t I get my pay like another man?”

“There’s some hitch about it,” the foreman replied. “’Tain’t my fault.”

“I know whose fault it is!” And Roy turned to go.

“You’d better wait for Mr. Westbury, and be drying your clothes,” the foreman replied. “You’re very wet; and, after such exercise as you took, you’d be sure to get cold.”

“Can’t help it,” said Roy. “I know their game. Instead of seeing Mr. Westbury, I shall see a policeman. Tell the honorable gentleman that he’s welcome to the money.”

These words called forth an outcry of indignation from a group of half a dozen stout laborers who had gathered near, and overheard the conversation.

“Oh, give the young man his money — he earned it.”

“ You’ve no right to keep back his pay — Westbury or no Westbury ! ”

“ After what he has done this afternoon ! ”

“ Saving the boy’s life, when not one of us dared, or could have done it if we dared ! ”

“ Waiting here in his wet clothes ! ”

“ I’d give it to him if I could,” said the foreman. “ I’m sure Mr. Westbury will when we tell him. Go into the boarding-house, Mr. Walker, and keep by the fire.”

“ And wait till a policeman comes up and lays his hand on my shoulder ! No, thank ye ”

“ No policeman shall touch ye ! ” said one of the men, with an oath. “ Shall he, boys ? ”

“ Not while he’s drying his clothes from fishing that drowning boy out of the water — no ! ” said another.

“ I’ll get my own cocoanut cracked, an’ go to jail myself first ! ” said a third ; and the rest joined in.

Anxious to receive his money, and feeling aguish from cooling off so suddenly after his heat, Roy hesitated, looked round on the faces of those sturdy, sympathetic men, and changed his mind.

“ Fellows ! ” he cried, “ I take you at your word. I’ll wait.”

Two went with him into the boarding-house, and helped him pull off his soaked boots by the kitchen stove.

“ Ah ! but your pants are wet above your knees,” said one ; “ and your arms above your elbows. We can give you some dry clo’es.”

“Bring ’em on,” laughed Roy. “I’m in for it! These clothes will dry sooner, if I can have a chance to wring ’em out.”

He laughed again to see himself in coarse laborer’s clothes, a world too wide for his youthful limbs. But they were dry and comfortable, and he was thankful.

He was sitting thus clad by the stove, while his own clothes, steaming over the backs of two chairs, kept him company, — the men having gone out, — when the door opened, and a whiskered man in a fur cap, with a heavy whip in his hand, walked in. At the sound of his boots and the sight of his strange face, Roy started.

“Is this Mr. Walker?” said the man with the whip.

“I’m sometimes called by that name,” Roy answered, getting rather quickly on his feet, in an old pair of slippers which he could hardly keep on.

“Well!” said the man, bluntly, “the judge wants you.”

Roy stepped quickly back, to keep the stove between them, losing off one slipper at the outset.

“The judge has been wanting me for some time, and I mean he shall want me for some time to come.” Then, calling to the cook, who was carrying dishes into the next room, “Where are these men who promised to stand by me?” he grasped a chair, with the look of a man resolved to stand by himself.

“I don’t know what you mean by his waiting for

you for some time," said the man. "It's only within ten minutes he told me to follow and find you, and bring you to his house. I'm here with the sleigh, just having taken up the doctor."

"What judge are you talking about?" cried Roy.

"Judge Dilworthy, of course. I'm his coachman."

"And what does Judge Dilworthy want of me?"

"That I can't say," repeated the man; "but it seems quite natural that he should want you, since it was his son Edgar that you pulled out of the water."

"Oh! that — that's quite a different matter," stammered Roy.

Getting his foot back into the lost slipper, and then leaning carelessly over the chair, as if he had not had the remotest intention of hurling it at the whiskered stranger, he smiled excitedly, and took time to consider the invitation.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A NEW FRIEND AND A CONFIDENTIAL TALK.

SUCH an honor from such a source — the prospect of making so valuable a friend as the judge, and perhaps of renewing acquaintance with the judge's daughter, — all this would have been delightful, under different circumstances. But his own clothes were still wet ; and how could he think of appearing before the "Queen of the Ice" in that coat which covered him like a horse-blanket, and those trousers, which fitted him like bags ? Then, there was the embarrassing possibility of his present interview with the Dilworthys being interrupted by the ruthless intrusion of a constable.

"Thank Judge Dilworthy for me," said he ; "but tell him I am not in a condition to visit him just now. You see, I've no clothes to wear."

This was the decision to which he came ; and the coachman withdrew, with his whiskers and long whip. After he was gone, Roy's disturbed and regretful thoughts were diverted by a new arrival. Timothy looked in.

“Ah, Red-top!” cried Roy, “I’ve wanted to see you!”

“You did see me,” said Timothy; “but you didn’t seem to know me. I was there when you pulled Ed Dilworthy out of the hole in the ice.”

“I had something else to think of then. But, come here, Red-top; tell me about yourself. You’ve lost your place, I hear.”

“Yes; Mrs. Graves, she turned me off. I didn’t exactly suit her, I suppose.”

“Why don’t you be frank, and say it was all on my account?”

“Because it wasn’t any thing you was to blame for, Mr. Walker; and what’s the use?”

“You’re a trump, Red-top! Did you give Miss Hogan the note I wrote to her that Monday in the barn?”

“Yes; and she seemed terrible worked up about you! told me to tell you to come and see her.”

“That I’ll do when I can. Meanwhile, I’ve another errand for you to do.” Roy took some money from a pocket of his wet clothes. “Go to Miss Hogan now — can you?”

“I dunno’ but I can.”

“Give her this money to pay the balance of my board-bill to the old lady, — there’s also a trifle, which I owe for washing, — and ask Miss Hogan to send me the clothes I left there.”

In spite of all he had heard said against Mr. Walker, Timothy felt an enthusiastic faith in him, and was

glad of another chance to do him a service. Away he ran, while Roy sat waiting beside his steaming clothes.

The men were coming in to supper, when one of them said to Roy, —

“The sleigh’s at the door again ; it’s the judge himself that’s asking for you this time.”

Roy was on his feet in a moment. Then, he made a snatch at his boots, and sat down again. Knuckles and straps cracked as he tried to pull on first one, then the other, and stamped, and strained at the wet and shrunken leather. It didn’t seem to him that he could ever get those boots on again.

While he was tugging at them, a tall figure in a high fur collar came and stood over him.

“Never mind boots or clothes, Mr. Walker ; but come with me, just as you are.”

“Judge Dilworthy !” exclaimed Roy, starting up, and poking his feet again into the slippers that would not stay on.

“I’ve robes to wrap you in, and clothes enough that will fit you, when you get to my house.”

“But, sir, you don’t know — you don’t know all, or you wouldn’t ask me.”

“I know enough,” said the judge. “Bring your clothes ; I’ll send back those you have on. It’s not five minutes’ ride to my house.”

Something in the low tones and quiet manner of the man — something kind, persuasive, yet very decided — flattered Roy, and inspired him with confi-

dence. He forgot Timothy and his errand, Westbury and his money, even the dreaded policeman, and allowed himself to be hustled, with his sachel, boots, and wet clothes, into the judge's sleigh, and buried in furs from head to foot.

"I've a notion," he laughed, as they sped away, "that I'm acting like a madman, going with you in this way."

"Well, I am sane, and I take the responsibility," replied the judge.

"But are you aware," said Roy, "that I am in danger of being arrested at any moment?"

"I heard some such talk," Judge Dilworthy answered, with a smile. "But I've had enough to do with law and justice to show me that a man may be in your position without being necessarily a rogue."

"I'm much obliged to you for saying that!" exclaimed Roy, with a tremor of grateful emotion in his voice.

"As for the danger," added the judge, "I fancy you will incur no more by going to my house, than staying where you are. I believe the intention was to have you apprehended if you should come back to town; but, after what has happened this afternoon, I think the police will be in no hurry to carry out the programme."

These words conveyed so much hope and comfort to Roy's heart, that he could not keep the tears from rushing to his eyes. Then, for the first time, he thought to inquire about the life he had saved.

“Edgar is still at his aunt’s; he has been put to bed there, and the doctor is with him. It really looks as if you had saved his life twice. Even after you got him out of the water,” — the judge’s voice here lost its steadiness, and became husky as he went on, — “he might have perished, if you had not had him taken care of. You are the only person who seemed to have resolution to do any thing, and to know what to do; the men themselves say that. Had you any intimation who the boy was, when you went for him?”

“Not the least. I only knew there was a boy in the water, and that, if he was to be got out at all, it must be at once.”

Roy thought it as well for the judge to know that he had not acted from any special regard to the Dilworthy family.

“Had you no thought of the danger to yourself?”

“I knew there was some danger. Getting into the ice is a very different thing from diving in open water in summer weather; the ice breaks when you try to get out, and the cold is awful, you know!”

“It was heroic!” exclaimed the judge.

Roy was not displeased to hear that; and yet he was honest enough to say:—

“I don’t know about that. What else could I do? It seemed to me the most natural thing in the world.”

“The most natural thing for you,” said the judge. “But not for the rest of them — not for those who stood by and looked on.”

Roy became thoughtful. It was just beginning to dawn upon him, that he had some of the stuff in him of which heroes are made. It had never occurred to him before; and, as he reflected upon it, he said: —

“I suppose almost every man has it in him to do something of the kind in the course of his life; but it takes different circumstances to call out different natures.”

The judge was evidently struck with the modest good sense of this remark coming from the lips of a youth who might have been excused for some self-laudation. But he made no reply to it; for now the sleigh, turning into the judge's grounds, drew up at a side-door of the house.

The judge himself helped Roy to alight, and took him to a large, comfortable chamber up one flight of stairs.

“Make yourself quite at home here,” he said, pulling up the window-shutter. “You will have the whole house to yourself for a little while; for my wife and daughter are both with Edgar, and I am going back there as soon as I have seen you established.”

Roy was relieved to know that he had escaped Miss Dilworthy's eyes for the moment, and gratified at what immediately followed.

The judge, having left the room, returned, bringing an armful of clothes.

“These belong to my son, Wilton, who is at college. I think you will find something to fit you; for he is about your size.” And he threw trousers, coats,

and vests on the bed. "The next room here is my library; perhaps you will find something there to amuse you, if I am not back soon."

Roy watched from a window, and saw the sleigh drive off again with the judge. He then selected a handsome suit of gray clothes, in which he thought he would not object to being seen by Miss Dilworthy, and, while dressing, explored, with boyish curiosity, the adjoining room.

The whole house was moderately warmed by a furnace, and, in the library-room, a cheery wood fire was burning. Everywhere, an air of good taste and coziness prevailed. The novelty of the adventure and the comfort of his situation, after so many hardships, inspired him with a sort of glee; and he walked to and fro through the two rooms, enjoying their luxury and glow, admiring the prospect from the windows, and stopping now and then before a large mirror, which seemed to present to him a prospect equally pleasing.

It was fast getting too dark to admire any thing but the subdued fire-light in the library, when a servant-girl entered, bringing a small lamp, which she placed on the bureau of the dressing-room, and afterward lighted a large one with an agreeable shade, which stood on the library table.

At the laborers' boarding-house, Roy had put on dry underclothing of his own, taken from his sachel; but it now appeared to him that the linen was open to criticism—well enough for a traveling clock-tinker

and seller of metal-polish, but quite too yellow and wrinkled for a guest of the Dilworthy's. He was trying to smooth it before the glass, and blaming himself for not having accepted one of Wilton's shirts, which the judge had offered him, when the servant returned, saying there was a boy down stairs who wished to see Mr. Walker.

It was young Tingley, with Roy's bundle of clothes, from Mrs. Hogan's boarding-house.

"Just the thing I want!" Roy exclaimed, taking out a shirt which had been neatly starched and ironed. "What did Miss Hogan say?" — proceeding at once to change his linen in the next room, and talking to Timothy through the open door.

"She said I might tell you her and Obed had made up."

Roy laughed; he didn't know whether to be pleased with that bit of news or not.

"She didn't know you had come up here," Timothy went on. "But she had heard of your saving Ed Dilworthy's life; that's all over town."

The sound of bells drew Roy to the window; and he saw, in the deep twilight, the sleigh return with a load of people — three more persons at least than it had carried away. Two of these were ladies.

"Miss Dilworthy and her mother," thought Roy.

The third was a muffled figure supported between them, and wrapped to the ears. Roy made another shrewd guess, and exclaimed aloud, —

"Edgar! they've brought him home!"

With little bustle and delay, the muffled form was borne into the house; the doors were closed; the sleigh passed on to the coach-house; and the judge presently entered the library.

He was too polite to appear surprised at seeing two persons when he had expected to find but one. Timothy backed bashfully into a corner; but Roy, having now completed his toilet, met the emergency with that serene confidence which sometimes nothing but a consciousness of good clothes can inspire.

“You see, Judge Dilworthy, I have made myself so much at home here, that I have been receiving company in your absence. This is Timothy Tingley, the boy who loaned me the skates when I went in for the prizes.”

“Ah, yes! I have heard Edgar tell about that.”

“He has come to bring me some clothes I had left at Mrs. Hogan’s boarding-house; and he is going to take back the clothes I borrowed of the men at the ice-houses. I think my own suit must be dry by this time; but, in the meanwhile, you see I have rigged myself out very satisfactorily in a suit of your son’s.”

Roy laughingly struck an attitude, and stood like a young Apollo, in wavy brown locks, starched shirt, and genteel modern gray.

When Timothy was gone, the judge sat down with his guest before the library fire, and said to him:—

“Now, business before every thing. I’ve brought you here to have a talk with you, at our leisure.”

“Talk — with me?” said Roy, surprised.

“Yes; tell me what I can do for you.”

“Well, to be quite frank,” — Roy laughed and hesitated — “if you had asked me that question a few hours ago, I should have said, ‘Give me a clock to clean, or buy a box of my metal-polish.’ That was all I asked of anybody — except Westbury and Company; I did ask them for a little money they owe me, and which I haven’t been able to collect.”

“How’s that?” asked the judge; and Roy related the circumstances.

“Rather small, I must say, for Westbury and Company;” with which comment the judge scribbled something on a sheet of paper. “But answer my question seriously now,” he continued, talking and writing at the same time.

“What can you do for me?” Roy repeated. “If you had not done for me already more than I had any reason to expect, I might ask a special favor.”

“Ask it,” said the judge, folding the paper and inclosing it in an envelope. He had touched a bell; as the door opened, Roy looked to see a servant appear. A “phantom of delight” appeared instead. It was his skating acquaintance, the charming “Queen of the Ice.”

“Ah, Lucy! that you?” said the judge, looking carelessly over his shoulder.

“Jane is busy helping mother; I told her I would answer your bell,” Lucy replied, extending her hand for the envelope.

“Very well; give this to Jenkins; tell him to go with it at once.”

Roy had started to his feet; and there he stood, blushing and awkward (notwithstanding his consciousness of good clothes), not daring to presume upon their previous acquaintance, but waiting for either a recognition from Miss Dilworthy or an introduction from her father. He got neither. Lucy hardly glanced his way; and the judge, accustomed to receiving, in the course of business, many persons whom he never thought of introducing to his family, did not see fit to make himself an electric conductor for this young spark.

Lucy withdrew; and Roy, all in a flush and tremor, sat down again.

“I’ll hear you,” said the judge, turning to him once more. “Name the favor.”

Roy was tempted to reply, “Introduce me to your daughter next time you see me gasping and staring and making a fool of myself in that way!” but there was another matter too near his heart to permit him to make any such foolish speech.

“The boy you saw with me here — the Tingley boy — has got into trouble, and lost his place on my account. Since you have invited me to be frank, I may add that his offence was — harboring me in Mrs. Graves’s barn when the officers were in search of me. She has somehow got the idea that I am a desperate character; and she turned off Timothy because he did me an act of kindness without her knowledge. It was perhaps wrong for him to feed me on doughnuts from her pan, and new milk from her cows; but I be-

lieve him to be a thoroughly honest, good boy, for all that ; and I don't like to think of his suffering for the friendship he showed me."

"Well?" said the judge, as if not seeing quite what Roy was driving at.

"Well," Roy answered, "his folks are poor, I hear; he can't afford to be out of a place; and the favor I ask is this, that, if you have nothing for him to do, you will use your influence to recommend him to somebody who has."

"That all?" said the judge, with an amused smile.

"Why, yes; and I'm afraid it is a matter I ought not to trouble you with. It seems a trifle to you; but it is no trifle to Timothy."

"You ask nothing for yourself?"

"Nothing but this; a kindness to Timothy will be the greatest favor to me."

"And you don't care to tell me about your own troubles?"

"I'll tell you all about them, if you wish, and be glad to," replied Roy. "I need advice, and yours will be very valuable to me."

"Now we are coming to business," said the judge. "I talked with the Bayfield constable when he was here, and heard his side of the story."

"Which was not very complimentary to me, I dare say," Roy answered, with a blush.

"Well, no. But we lawyers have a way of getting glimpses of the other side of a case, when a man

thinks he is showing us only one side. I am a practicing lawyer, and at the same time a local magistrate; it was in the latter capacity that I was consulted by Drollers, who wished to make sure of your being apprehended, in case you should show yourself again about town after he was gone."

"Ah!" breathed Roy, "then you may have issued — or may issue — a second warrant for my arrest?"

"No; that won't be necessary. On his representation you may be detained by the police here until he comes for you. But I don't think that will happen. I've not much fear of one of our constables coming to take you out of my house. But your Bayfield man may be telegraphed to — if anybody cares enough to do him a good turn, or you an ill turn, to take that trouble."

"There is one person — I've an enemy in town. Obed Hocum — it would be just like Obed Hocum to play me that trick. But, before Drollers can get here, I shall be out of his way."

"Are you sure?" said the judge. "Let's hear about Hocum; we'll see if he can't be managed, too."

Roy told the ridiculous story of Obed's jealousy and revenge; adding, "but I hear he has made up with Miss Hogan since."

"That's good news; the edge of his revenge will be dulled a little, and I fancy he will hear to reason."

Roy now told his side of the story; he frankly explained how he got into his present difficulties, and made no attempt at evasion or excuse. The

judge listened with interest, and, at the close, tested the soundness of his statement by a few questions, such as an experienced lawyer knows so well how to frame.

“And what do you propose to do now?”

This was the last question, which Roy answered by announcing his half-formed resolution to return and testify to the facts, if necessary, in Moke Meredith's behalf.

“Is that my best course?” he asked.

“It is a generous course,” the judge replied. “As for the safety of it, that is another thing; we will see about that. Now let us go down to tea; we can finish our talk another time.”

CHAPTER XL.

SOME PLEASANT SURPRISES.

ROY followed the judge with some doubt and embarrassment, wondering whether he was to be subjected to the same awkwardness of situation as before, at a second meeting with Miss Dilworthy.

“I won’t stand and stare this time,” he resolved within himself. “If they treat me so again, I’ll appear as if there was no such girl in existence.”

He was fully prepared to act that indifferent part, when the judge, showing him into a tea-room, where there were in waiting a mild-mannered elderly lady, in short, gray curls, and a radiant young girl, in golden ringlets, said, introducing him, “My wife and daughter, Mr. Rockwood.”

Mrs. Dilworthy advanced to meet him, with eagerly extended hand and earnest, tearful smile of welcome. Her voice was stifled with emotion, as she endeavored to speak and thank him for the service he had rendered the family; and it was a relief to him to turn from this almost painful meeting to encounter the glistening bright eyes of the daughter.

No cold formality now! Nothing could exceed the

charming frankness and cordiality with which Lucy renewed their acquaintance.

“I believe we met once before, on skates,” she smilingly remarked, as if in perfect unconsciousness of having seen him, not an hour before, in the room above. “You made me proud then, Mr. Rockwood; you have made me very grateful to-day!” — her eyes filling and her voice quivering, at the last words.

Her feminine tact and readiness carried her through a scene to which Roy found himself hardly equal. Though usually quick-witted enough to return a joke or parry an ordinary compliment, he was struck dumb and almost moved to tears himself by these ardent expressions of gratitude from mother and daughter. Though it was sweet to know that he had saved a life precious to them, it was always more a pain than a pleasure to him — as it is to all generous natures — to be thanked for any important service.

He managed to stammer, that she had made him very grateful for the good fortune, then quickly changed the conversation by saying, —

“I hope your brother is getting along comfortably; he has been brought home, I believe.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Dilworthy, seating their guest opposite Lucy. “When he heard that you were at our house, he became impatient to get home. He will be able to see you, I hope, after tea.”

“I shall be very glad,” began Roy, winking a tear out of the corner of his eye. “But tell him, if you please, not to thank me; I — I can’t stand that!” And he turned upon Lucy an appealing look.

She gave him a beaming one, that broke into a smile.

“I’ll tell him,” she replied, “that you are not to be thanked. Your saving his life was, as Mr. Toots would say, of no consequence.”

Roy laughed and blushed. “Oh, I don’t mean that! But it was mere good luck, you know, that I was on the spot, and—and happened to know what to do.”

“A good many were on the spot, he says,” answered Lucy; “but nobody else *happened*” (again the beaming look broke into a smile) “to do any thing to help him.”

Roy now had to relate all the circumstances of the rescue, which he did with so much simplicity and humor, that the whole scene seemed to live again before the eyes of his deeply interested little audience.

“It is too bad that Edgar should lose this,” said Mrs. Dilworthy. “He will want to hear it all; and I should like to hear every word of it over and over again!”

After tea, Roy was shown into a small sitting-room, where Edgar was lying on the lounge, waiting anxiously to see him. The boy had received a hint from his sister, that Roy was to be spared the expression of his thanks; he could not, however, help showing, by every look and tone of voice, when Roy came in and took his hand and spoke to him, how grateful he was to the one person out of the crowd who had risked

his own life to save him from a horrible and agonizing death.

“ Well, how do you like cold bathing in midwinter ? ” was Roy’s cheery salutation. And he went on, scarcely heeding Edgar’s reply, that it wasn’t very nice, spoken with a bright and tender smile. “ Do you know, I can’t help thinking about that sled: When I shut my eyes, there it is, just afloat among the fragments of ice, with the ripple running over it, — a sort of salmon-colored sled, trimmed with blue stripes. Many a boy I know would be glad to have it ! ”

“ Any boy you know is welcome to it, ” replied Edgar. “ It got me into the scrape ; but it wouldn’t do the first thing to help me out of it. There’s so much iron on the runners, it almost sank without any of my weight on it. How long were you getting to me with those boards ? ”

“ How long did you think ? ”

“ It seemed to me half an hour ! ”

“ It might have been half a minute, ” said Roy ; “ it couldn’t have been much longer. ”

“ I was in such terrible agony, ” said Edgar ; “ and it seemed to me every moment that I must go down ! I should have given up — I couldn’t possibly have held out — if you hadn’t called to me and encouraged me. What I suffered was worse than dying ; but I seemed to feel that I must keep up, that you would save me. I was awfully selfish. I didn’t think of the danger to you ; but I think of it now. I shudder

when I remember how the ice went down under the board when you first tried to pull me out.”

At Mrs. Dilworthy's request, Roy repeated his account of the rescue, giving many additional particulars, and carrying the narrative down to the time when he mistook the coachman for a constable, and declined to present himself to the family in the attire loaned him at the laborers' boarding-house. Then he had to go back to the beginning, and relate his principal adventures since that memorable night of the fire. He did not spare himself; and his frankness, both in confessing his faults and in showing himself in a ludicrous light, which he did with amusing extravagance when he came to describe his experience with the dreadful horse, gave a delightful flavor to his story; and, for two hours, he kept Lucy, Edgar, and their mother more entertained than they had ever been in their lives.

The judge had withdrawn early in the evening; and, when he returned, he found Lucy and Edgar laughingly discussing with their guest the curious incidents of his escape from Drollers in the snow-storm and his adventure at “Uncle” Sam Paxley's.

The judge sat a little while, listening to the conversation, then remarked, that it was time for Edgar to rest, and offered to show Roy to his room.

Roy thereupon rose, and, bidding the mother and daughter and son good-night, followed the paternal Dilworthy up two flights of stairs, to a cozy little bed-chamber, where two or three surprises awaited him.

On the mantle, was a silver cup to which the judge smilingly called his attention.

“The prize cup!” exclaimed Roy, reading the well-remembered inscription on the piece of paper which still accompanied it, — “*Won by Mr. A. T. Walker.*” He laughed, and looked round at the judge. “Where did this come from?”

“From Purley’s jewelry store, this evening. My son, Edgar, knew it was there; and it was the first thing he thought of when I told him I had brought you home. It was a great pleasure to him to be able to redeem it for you, and have it placed here in your room, where you would see it.”

Roy was glad to have that pleasant souvenir of the day when he first made Lucy’s acquaintance.

“Hello!” he exclaimed, “what’s this?”

As he handled the cup, some money, in bills and fractional currency, had fallen out.

“It is your pay for a week’s work on the ice, from Westbury and Company.”

“But — how — how happened it?” said Roy, still more astonished.

“It is very simple. I am Westbury and Company’s attorney; and, when you told me of the hitch about your money, I immediately sent Jenkins down, with a few lines telling them it had better be paid, and asking to have it sent up, on my responsibility, by the bearer. It was sent, of course.”

Roy pocketed the money, with great glee.

“I’m richer now than I ever was before in my life!

I've had more money, but never money of my own earning; and I find it's only what a fellow earns that he really feels to be his."

"Now," said the judge, "I want you to be perfectly at your ease here, and leave your affair in my hands. I don't think there is any danger of your being disturbed at present. When I was out this evening, I took occasion to call on your friend Obed."

"Ah?" said Roy, with surprised interest.

"Yes; and I took the liberty of saying to him, that you would be pleased to have him convey your respects to Miss Hogan, adding that you would not probably be able to call upon her."

"I see!" exclaimed Roy, "that was to take the sting out of his jealousy. It was very thoughtful in you; and I suppose I had better not see Miss Hogan, accordingly."

"He was immensely flattered," said the judge. "I don't think you need apprehend any danger from that quarter now."

"So much for having you for a friend!" said the grateful Roy.

"Oh!" exclaimed the judge, turning back after he had once started to go, "about the Tingley boy. I have concluded to take him for an office and errand boy, and give him as good a chance as he shows the ability to use. I thought you might be interested to know this."

"Oh! Judge Dilworthy!"

"Good-night, Mr. Rockwood."

And the judge was gone.

Roy took a quick turn about the room, fairly crying with happiness.

Then he sat down, and remained for a long time plunged in reverie, wondering at this singular turn in his fortunes, building hopes, and making grand resolutions for the future.

“I’ll throw away no more years of my life, in boyish follies!” he said, earnestly, to himself. “When I’ve harvested and thrashed this crop of wild-oats, then I’m through with that kind of agricultural amusement forever.”

And he questioned whether he should go back and study medicine with his uncle, the doctor, — or how would he like the law?

CHAPTER XLI.

MABEL AND THE ROCKWOOD FAMILY, WITH OTHER OLD
ACQUAINTANCES.

LATE one afternoon, a few days after the events just related, a peddler, passing through the town, stopped at the house of Dr. Rockwood, in Bayfield. He wore a soft hat with a wide brim slouched heavily over his eyes, and carried a small traveling-bag. A servant-girl appeared in answer to his ring.

“Can I see the lady of the house?” he inquired.

He waited at the open door while the girl withdrew, and heard a voice — a clear, sweet, feminine voice — say, rather impatiently, —

“A peddler I suppose; ask him his business.”

He took a small package from his bag, and, the moment the girl re-appeared, began to rattle off, volubly: —

“Has the family a clock to clean, oil, or repair? Or can I sell them to-day a very useful article of metal-polish, the best thing in the market for giving a quick and brilliant polish to silver ware, plated ware, britannia, brass, spoons, tea-pots, door-knobs, burnished metals of all kinds, — only thirty cents.”

While he was speaking, a girl, or perhaps we should say, a young lady, came into the entry. The daylight was almost gone; yet it was not so dark but he could see that she was a slender, bright-eyed brunette, and that she was laughing, probably at his lingo.

“I don’t think we want any metal-polish,” she said. “And I’ve a cousin who would take it as a great unkindness if we should let anybody else tinker the clock.”

“I don’t wish to interfere with his rights at all,” said the peddler; “but, if you will allow me —”

The girl, standing near him now, face to face, and hearing him speak, interrupted him with a cry of surprise. “Roy Rockwood!”

“Well, Mabel!” Roy said, in his own natural voice, and stood waiting to see what she would say or do next.

Under his jaunty peddler’s air and glib speech, he had concealed a tumult of feelings on coming to that door — a rush of tender memories, shame, remorse, yearning affection, and a fear as to how he would be received. The sound of Mabel’s cheery voice, and the sight of her laughing face, wounded his love, — his self-love, at all events, — making him feel how little he had been missed or mourned. Would he then have had her sigh day and night over his absence, and bedew his memory with tears, while he, with robust heart and cheerful mind, was doing battle with the world? Well, no, I don’t suppose he was so unreasonable as that; yet, to return and find life moving on so

placidly without him, the smooth and tranquil waters having closed so soon over his place, was not flattering; and he could not help thinking, "It would be just so if I was dead, — in a month I should be forgotten!"

So he stood, rather coldly as it seemed, but with a swelling heart, and looked from under his slouched hat-rim darkly at Mabel.

"O, Roy!" she said, "I am so glad!" And she called, "Mother! mother! it is Roy! Where did you come from? Are you really a peddler? You don't act like Roy! The idea of your standing there, and merely offering to shake hands with me!"

"What more would you have me do?" he said, his voice trembling and his heart yearning.

"Nothing, if you have forgotten that we are cousins — almost brother and sister!"

"Mabel! I thought you were the one to wish to forget that! I didn't suppose you would care to be kissed by such a reprobate as I am!"

And, if I add that he cried a little as he caught her in his arms, I hope that even the most unsentimental reader will not think the less of him.

Aunt Dolly came, and the good doctor; and Roy's heart, which had begun to soften, was quite melted by the affectionate and generous welcome they gave him. He felt that he deserved reproaches; and they had for him only kind words and tears and smiles of joy. This was too much for him; and he, who through every hardship and privation, since his own folly drove him from that home, had kept a brave spirit and a dry eye, fairly broke down at last.

“Yes, Mabel,” (he answered his cousin’s question after they had brought him into the sitting-room, and taken away his hat and overcoat and bag, and he had had time to recover himself,) “I am really a peddler and a clock-tinker, a horse-jockey, and I don’t know what else. And what is the news about town?”

“Things are pretty quiet here now,” said the doctor. “We had the last sensation when Moses Meredith went off, and came back in three days in company with an officer.”

“Where is he now?” Roy asked, anxiously.

“Loafing about the village, as usual. He is out on bail. All the boys who were arrested are out on bail, except poor Tommy Twombly; there was nobody to offer bail for him, and he has gone to jail.”

“I hear that he and one or two others have charged me and Moke Meredith with setting the fire,” said Roy. “That is what has brought me home. I am bound to tell the truth.”

“I am glad to hear that, Roy; and it is what I expected.”

“You have heard, then —”

“Yes; Judge Dilworthy’s action in the matter has been talked over with a good deal of interest by the prominent men of the town. He is a man of great influence; and everybody was of the opinion that his terms should be accepted — that you should be permitted to return and give your evidence, and remain exempt from arrest, unless it should be proved that you had deceived him, and that your evidence was

false. He has written to Squire Davis as to what you will testify to ; and, though the squire and Miles Hocum both seem to feel aggrieved at the way you treated Drollers and his warrant, they consented to the arrangement."

"And Drollers has had to 'make due return' of his warrant without his prisoner!" said Roy. "That's rather rough on Drollers! I suppose he had a hard story to tell of my getting away from him."

"Drollers don't seem inclined to say much about that; but the general impression is, that he didn't come off with much credit to himself," replied the doctor. "Was there some adventure with a horse on the ice?"

Roy laughed outright.

"I rather think there was an adventure with a horse! But you have got two stories mixed up; the ice was another affair. I'll give you the correct version of both adventures by-and-by."

"And tell us how you made a friend of Judge Dilworthy," said Mabel, accompanying Roy to his room, and carrying his water-pitcher.

"Yes, every thing; you shall hear the whole story," said Roy, his heart glowing with gratitude and comfort, at finding himself in the dear old home again, a welcome guest, where he had feared to be regarded only as an outcast.

She put down the freshly filled pitcher on the washstand.

"Every thing, you see," she said, "is about as you left it. O Roy! how could you be so cruel?"

“Was I?” said Roy, looking around the little chamber with suffused eyes. “I didn’t mean to be; for I — sometimes I thought you didn’t care very much for me, Mabel! Tell me about it!”

“No, I won’t! You don’t deserve to know!” And yet she went on, and told him how she heard him leave the house, and looked from her window, and would have given the world to call him back.

“If I could only have known how you felt!” said Roy. “I am glad to know it now. And, Mabel, it seems so good to be back here again, and not be quarreling with you, as I used to! It was my fault, I know, that we were always quarreling; and it will be my fault if we quarrel now.”

“No, no, not all your fault, Roy!” Mabel hastened to say. “I was always too quick and sharp with you. I have felt that — and — it has made me unhappy.” Then, she as hastily changed the subject. “Here is your dressing-gown, just where you left it hanging; and your slippers waiting for you. Don’t be a peddler any more; but be a good boy, and stay at home, will you?”

And, with a bright, sweet smile, she vanished from the room. Roy looked after her, as she disappeared; then, with a deep sigh of gratitude and happiness, and a devout upward glance, inwardly renewed his vows of loftier aims and a better life.

After supper that evening, he sat with the family, as in the good old times, — except that never in the past had there been such glowing sympathy and per-

fect confidence between them all, — and told the story of his adventures, until the doctor roared in his chair, and tears of merriment ran down Mabel's cheeks, and quiet little Aunt Dolly's eyes sparkled with fun over her frequent pinches of snuff.

Something beside mirth, however, was excited by the interesting parts of his narrative. Mabel held her breath with thrilling suspense while he drew Edgar Dilworthy out of the water; and somehow his enthusiastic account of the Dilworthy family and of his renewing acquaintance with the "Queen of the Ice," made her singularly pensive all the rest of the evening.

The next morning, Roy went out, and boldly showed himself on the street. Almost the first person he met was Constable Drollers. Roy put on as sober a face as he could, and offered Dumpy his hand, which Dumpy sullenly declined.

"What's the matter, Drollers?" said Roy. "The last time we met, you were only too eager to give me a good honest grip."

"In the way of business, yes!" growled the village constable. "And I should like mighty well to do the same now. But, when you come to friendship, I say, no; I ain't there; my hand's my own, and I don't offer it to no slippery runegades."

"Drollers," said Roy, with persistent good nature, "I'm sorry I've offended you; and, while I admit that you're partly right, allow me to say that you're partly in the wrong. It was all in the way of busi-

ness that I gave you the slip. Wouldn't you in my place have done the same, if you had been bright and spry enough, as I'm afraid you wouldn't have been?"

"No; and I wouldn't ever have been in your place, neither! You deserve state-prison, every one of you young rascals!"

"Well, Drollers, as to that, I for one have been bad enough; and I don't blame a respectable citizen like you for not shaking hands with me. Pure, exemplary, angelic Drollers, who never did any thing wrong in his life, may well frown upon a mass of corruption like me!"

Drollers, conscious perhaps of his own moral as well as physical grossness, grew fiery red, and winced. Roy smilingly went on.

"But there's a good streak in the worst of us, I believe, which you might make something of, if you would only cultivate it. Rogue as I am, I'm not willing to wrong an honest, simple-minded man like you out of a penny. How much did you pay Lizard for his horse, Drollers?"

Drollers glanced around, as if he didn't care to have the conversation in that respect overheard.

"I paid him five dollars out of my own pocket!"

"A good deal more than he was worth, allow me to say, Drollers, little as I know about horses. Does the town or the honorable justice's court compensate you for the loss?"

"I hain't said nothin' about it yet," replied Drollers, "and I don't know as I shall."

“Well, I wouldn’t,” said Roy; “it isn’t a pleasant subject to talk about, for you, I know. Here’s your five dollars, out of *my* pocket; and let’s hush that little horse story up.”

Drollers was sure Roy was ready to burst with inward merriment at his expense, in spite of the serious and sympathetic face the young rogue put on for the occasion. But the five-dollar note, which was at the same time thrust into his hand, was a sober fact. He hesitated before taking it, and looked puzzled and amazed.

“No joke about it, Drollers,” said Roy. “After you lost the horse and paid Lizard for him, I found him, and sold him to another man.” And he briefly related the circumstances. By the time the story was ended, Drollers was good-natured, Drollers was content.

“I declare, Roy,” said he, stuffing the bank-note into his pocket, “you’re an honest chap, after all! I always said ’twas a pity a fine, likely lad like you should get into such a scrape; and I hope — I’m glad there’s a prospect of you’re getting out on’t.”

“Thank you for your good wishes,” laughed Roy. He put out his hand again; and this time Drollers shook it as heartily as he ever shook a hand in his life, — being a rather cold-blooded, flabby creature, for all his flesh.

Roy walked on, and soon came in sight of the meeting-house sheds, the charred ruins of Morey’s old barn, and men nailing shingles on a new roof of the

other barn, which had been partially destroyed by the memorable fire. The scene awakened any thing but pleasant recollections in his mind. He was regarding it rather ruefully, when Moke Meredith came around the corner.

The meeting of the friends was not very cordial. Moke was morose ; Roy, cynical.

“ You’ve come back, hey ? ” said Moke.

“ Seems so,” replied Roy.

“ I think you’re a dumbed fool ! ”

“ No doubt I am, from your point of view.”

“ If I’d got away, I’d have staid away. You wouldn’t have caught me back here.”

“ But it seems you *are* back here.”

“ You know why,” said Moke, sullenly, as if Roy had been to blame for the fact. “ *You* got off from my uncle’s pretty well.”

“ Yes, thanks to you,” Roy answered, sarcastically. “ It was very kind in you to claim that *you* were the true Moses, just at the right time ! And how manly it was to complain of me, as if I was to blame for your misfortune, and try to drag me into it ! Well, we’ve all been foolishly to blame in the past ; but I, for one, take a straightforward, honest course in the future. Are you with me ? ”

Instead of answering directly, Moke began to complain of the false charge made against him and Roy by Twombly and Bradish.

“ They thought, seeing we belong to the first families, — my father a minister, and your uncle a doc-

tor, — the easiest way for them to get out of the scrape would be to lay the blame on us, as if any thing we were concerned in would be hushed up.”

“If I remember, you took that view of the matter yourself,” said Roy; “and I warned you of your mistake. What have you and the other boys owned up to?”

“Mighty little,” Moke replied. “It’s mighty convenient to have a poor memory when the lawyers are trying to corner ye! What are *you* going to remember?”

“Every thing,” said Roy, promptly.

Moke turned greenish pale.

“You’ll lug us all in, as Iry and Tommy did, like a couple of thundering fools.”

“I shall corroborate their story where they have told the truth, and contradict it where they have lied, that’s all. That’s what I am here for. You’re lugged in already.”

“I know something that will spoil their chances, if it gets out,” muttered the minister’s son, vindictively. “Turkey Burnet told me, after they blowed on us.”

“I guess it’s something I always suspected,” said Roy. “They had a hand in the mill fire last spring?”

“Yes, they set it; and it was Tommy that set Carter’s barn too. Can any one blame us now if we blow on them? It’s these very fires that roused up such a feeling in the community about this fire.”

“Has Turkey any proof of what he says?”

“Yes; they bragged to him and Herky Little of what they had done without being found out; and Eyeteeth was with them when the mill was set, though he had nothing to do with it but furnishing them with whisky. It was their brags that induced Turkey and Eyeteeth to join them in this last scrape; then Turkey, to make the thing respectable, got me into it; then you came along, and we got you to furnish the matches on purpose to have you mixed up in it.”

Roy was a good deal excited by this revelation.

“And you had matches all the time?”

“Our pockets full,” laughed Moses, as if it had been a good joke.

Roy’s eyes sparkled, and a cold smile played about his lips, which twitched a little.

“It wasn’t my idea; don’t lay it up against me, Roy. It had been all talked over before you came along. They were going to get me to furnish the matches; but I didn’t happen to have any — I don’t smoke; I chew. So they said, ‘Try it on the next feller, if he’s the right sort.’ The next feller was you. It was all understood, without a word, the minute you joined us. Now, to pay for my telling you so much, be easy on me in giving your evidence. I was led into it the same as you, you know; you can say that.”

“How do I know that what you tell me is true?”

“About the matches? If you don’t believe it, — there goes Dod Alcott! ask him.”

Eyeteeth was driving up the main street, in his

father's grocery wagon. Hearing a whistle and seeing the boys, he reined up by the Meeting-House Square, where Moses and Roy came and stood by the wagon; and the following conversation occurred: —

“Any thing to say, say it quick; for I've got business,” said Dod. Looking around, he added, in a low voice, “The fellers hadn't oughter be seen talking together.”

“See how cunning he is,” said Moke, admiringly, but with a sly wink at Roy. “I believe all the bright ideas come from him. Say, Dod, whose plan was it to get me to furnish matches that night?”

Dod looked quickly around again.

“I don't know any thing about that night. I don't know any thing about any matches.”

“Of course, we understand that,” said Moke, coaxingly. “We don't any of us know any thing about the fire; do we, Roy? Roy is all right. It was a mighty cute idea, Dod; and we were saying just now, that it couldn't have come out of any head but the cunning one — the head that proved a match for old Hocum's.”

“He didn't git much the start of me. I was up to him.” And Eyeteeth sniffed and grinned.

“Do you know, Dod was actually the cause of Hocum's patronizing the dentist?” said Moke, turning again to Roy. “Fact. When Hocum was questioning him, Dod kept turning his head.

“‘What do you do that for?’ says Hocum.

“ ‘Cause your breath is bad,’ says Dod, sharp.

“ I tell you, he got the laugh on to Hocum; and it’s been a standing joke ever since. Hocum went right to his partner, Packard, and says he, ‘Packard, have you ever noticed that I had a bad breath?’ Packard’s afraid of Hocum; he don’t dare to say his soul’s his own while the old one is around. He kind o’ gasped and glared, and finally smiled, and said, says he, —

“ ‘To tell the truth, I *have* noticed it.’

“ ‘And do you think others have?’ says Hocum.

“ ‘To tell the truth,’ says Packard, ‘I *have* heard it spoken of by others.’

“ ‘As a very bad breath?’ says Hocum.

“ ‘As a perty bad breath,’ says Packard.

“ ‘Why have you never spoken to me about it?’ says Hocum.

“ ‘I have hinted it delicately as I could,’ said Packard. ‘I’ve told you I thought you had a tooth that needed tending to,’ says he.

“ One of the boys overheard this talk; and there was a pretty general smile in the street when Hocum walked into the dentist’s office the next day. He went in every day for a week; and, every time he went in or out, folks laughed. All owing to Dod here — his ready wit,” Moke added, while Dod giggled and sniffed again.

“ I’ll tell ye all I know about them matches,” said the cunning one, putting down his head, and speaking confidentially. “ I don’t know who first started

the notion; suthin' I said, I guess, — sounds like me. They all fell in with it; and, when Roy come along, we was ready to try it on to him. That's all I remember. I hain't got a very good memory for what happened that night, ye know!" and, sniffing and chuckling, Dod drove along.

"Got it out of him, didn't I?" laughed Moses.
"Oh, ain't he cunning?"

CHAPTER XLII.

IN WHICH ALL ENDS AS PLEASANTLY AS COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

MILES HOCUM, chairman of the board of selectmen, was at his desk in the back room of his store, smiling genially over a missive which had just been brought to him from the post-office, when somebody said, —

“Good-morning, Mr. Hocum.”

Miles looked up, and saw a young gentleman hat in hand, standing before him. His countenance changed somewhat; but he continued to smile, as he replied: —

“Ah! good-morning, Roy! When did you get home?”

“Last evening,” Roy replied. “I’ve made it my first business to call and see you.”

“Thank you. If you had done so before you left town, it might have saved you some trouble.”

“I’m sorry to have given anybody trouble, Mr. Hocum. But I’ve had a little myself. I wasn’t prepared to answer your inquiries before.”

“You are prepared now?” said Miles, with a smile of the utmost persuasiveness.

Roy took an easy attitude in his chair, crossed his legs, twirled his hat, and answered that he was.

“The matter has passed out of my hands,” said the selectman. “But I should like well enough to hear what you have to say before you appear and make your deposition before the justice. You have taken counsel of Judge Dilworthy, I believe?”

“I have made a confidant of Judge Dilworthy; and he has undertaken to act as my friend,” Roy replied, with a tremor of grateful emotion in his tones. “As I have nothing but the truth to tell, he advised me to come to you and tell it.”

“I think it very good advice,” said Miles, softly and pleasantly. “If what Judge Dilworthy writes is true, we shall be glad to have you as a witness, as we should have been in the first place if you hadn’t” — Miles sheathed the harshness of the term in a sweet smile — “run away.”

“If I had known what I know now,” Roy frankly made answer, “I should have staid at home.”

“What do you allude to?”

“To this,” Roy answered: “I have been told that the call on me for matches that night, was only a trick on the part of the boys to drag me into the scrape; they had matches of their own all the while. More than that, as I learned this very morning on my way here, it was Tommy who set Carter’s barn, and Tommy and Iry together who set the mill fire last spring.”

“How did you learn that?” Roy frankly explained.

“That’s a very important item, if true,” said Miles, excitedly, with a smile that glittered in his glassy eyes, and made a remarkable display of gold and ivory, where formerly the foul and blackened teeth had been. “Will you go over now to Squire Davis’s office, and make oath to your statement?”

“There or anywhere,” Roy answered, readily.

As they were about leaving the room, Mr. Hocum, putting away some papers, paused at the missive Roy had found him smiling over, and remarked:—

“Here is a document that may perhaps interest you, Roy. I believe you know my nephew, Obadiah Hocum?”

“I have that pleasure,” said Roy, smiling in his turn. “I have met him on two or three interesting occasions.”

“And do you know”—Miles glanced at a name on a showily engraved card—“Miss Florinda Hogan?”

“Miss Hogan! the excellent Florinda!” exclaimed Roy. “She is a very good friend of mine.”

“I am glad to know it,” said Miles Hocum. “She is to be married to my nephew a week from Thursday; and I have just received this invitation to the wedding. Now, if you please, we will go and see Squire Davis.”

This business with the justice having been performed to his satisfaction, Miles Hocum, on their return, said to Roy, as they were about to part at the door of the store,—

“If you will step in a minute, Roy, I’ll give you something which I guess may be you’ll be glad to have.” Roy stepped in, accordingly, wondering what the something could be. Miles opened a private closet in his back office, and handed out something in a green baize bag. “After your sworn statement,” said he, “I don’t know as there is any reason why you shouldn’t have this again. I hope you won’t take it to any more fires, Roy.”

Roy clasped it in a sort of rapture. It was his violin.

There seemed to be now every reason why Roy should be contented. He was free, and out of danger; he was restored to his home; the worst consequences of past follies had been averted; and he had only the present and future to care for.

And yet he was secretly miserable. He could not feel at ease regarding his former companions; and every thing associated with them and that last wretched crop of wild-oats filled him with pain and disgust. He was restless; he longed once more to get away from Bayfield. Mabel rallied him.

“You wish to get back to your Queen of the Ice!” she said, with sparkling eyes.

“On the contrary,” he replied, “I am thinking of going to selling metal-polish, and repairing clocks again. I can’t settle down here; and I must be doing something.”

It was in this state of mind that a letter from Judge Dilworthy found him. It surprised and agitated him at first; but it had the effect of clearing his sky like a thunder-shower.

Roy explained the matter to his relatives.

“Before I left him, I had some serious talk with the judge about my future occupation; and I happened to say that I should like to be an architect, or something of that kind, much better than a lawyer or a doctor. He approved of my choice, and said he had a brother, who was quite eminent as an architect and landscape gardener. I never thought much more about it; but now it appears he has consulted his brother, in my interest, and got a place for me in his office.”

The news caused considerable emotion in the family; and even Mabel and her mother, who consulted only their own feelings in the matter at first, were obliged at last to admit that this was an offer which it would be wise for Roy to accept.

And accept it he did. As soon as the affair was decided, he became impatient to enter upon his new career; and, in five days from the receipt of the judge's letter, he once more left his Bayfield home — under what different circumstances this time from the first!

By the judge's invitation, he visited the Dilworthy family on his way to Boston, and passed a delightful day with them; then pursued his journey, cheered by the additional good news that his home was to be in the family of his employer, and that Lucy Dilworthy often visited her Boston friends.

Roy did not have to return, and give his evidence against the barn-burners on their trial, as he had expected to do; a circumstance at which he was greatly rejoiced. Since he made his statement to Miles Hocum, the whole affair had taken a turn which nobody anticipated then. As soon as it was known that Bradish and Twombly, who had given false testimony against others, were themselves the leading culprits, and that the setting of other fires, particularly the mill fire, could be proved against them, there was a strong reaction in favor of their companions, — of Moses Meredith particularly, who, on his father's account, not at all on his own, had a strong church influence exerted in his behalf. The result was, that Bradish and Twombly were indicted, and afterward duly convicted and sentenced, for firing the mill; while prosecution for the later offence was dropped.

The lesson of these events was not lost upon Roy. He had sowed the last of his wild-oats, and thenceforth only innocent recreations could divert his mind from his new profession, in which he took — and still takes — great delight. He has constantly risen in it and in the esteem of his employer, with whom it is said he is soon to be associated in business and connected by marriage.

THE END.

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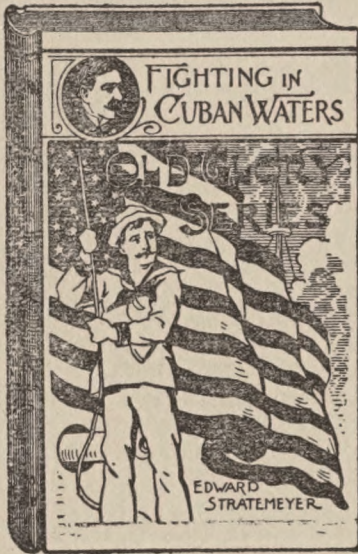
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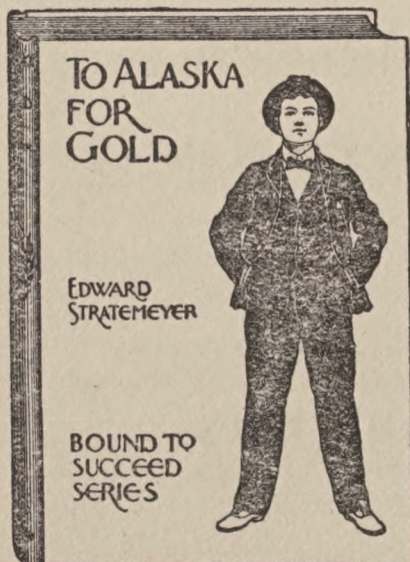
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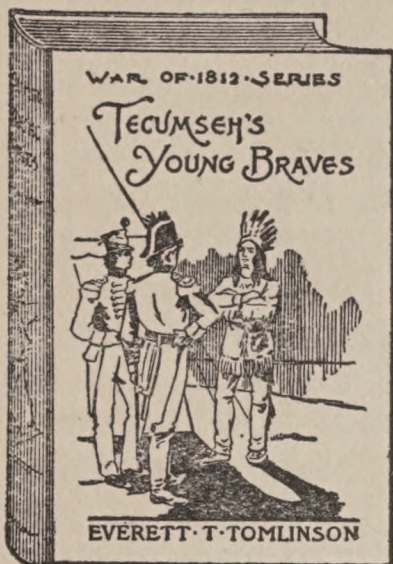
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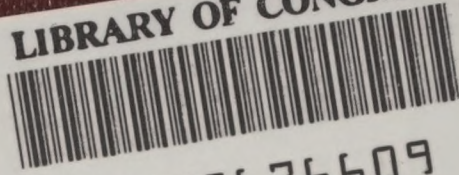
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