



THE SILVER MEDAL





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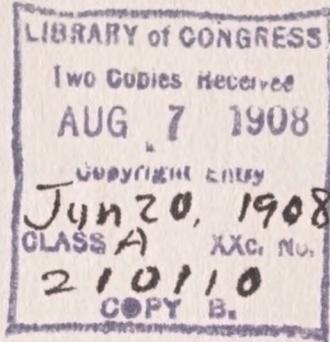
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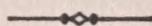
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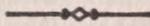


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THE SILVER MEDAL.



CHAPTER I.

A WELL-LAID SCHEME.

IT'S a big thing, it's all planned, and we are going to let you in!"

That was the first Benton Barry ever heard of the affair. He stopped nicking the fence with his jack-knife, straightened himself where he sat bent over his knees on the top rail, and listened intently while Luke Snaffy went on:

"It ain't every fellow we'd give a hand in this game, you understand. There's three of us already, and if you go in, there'll be four. That's enough; don't want no more."

"What is it?" Benton asked, with excited curiosity.

They sat on the fence by Watson's woods. Luke looked cautiously all about, and then, lowering his voice, proceeded:

"It's none of your little harvest-apple or water-melon affairs! We're dead broke, every one of us, but we're going to have a high old time."

"How? Tell me how!" Benton said, impatiently. "That's what I want to know. If it's safe, I'm with you, of course."

"So I told the boys," Luke replied. "We three could swing the thing alone, but I said, 'There's Bent Barry,' I said; 'a royal good fellow! It's too bad to keep him out.'"

"Much obliged to you for your good opinion," said Bent.

He actually blushed with pleasure, although he knew very well what Luke Snaffy's praise was worth.

"A royal good fellow!" That meant a bad fellow, anything but royal,—one who was as resolute in wrong-doing as the worst of his companions, as desperately fond of what they called a "high old time," and as reckless of the future.

Bent was sixteen years old, rather short, but well formed, with a bright and pleasant face, and a certain air of refinement, which showed that he belonged to a good family.

The Barrys were, in fact, among the most respectable people in town, and Benton might have had all the advantages of home and school which a boy could wish; but he had thrown them away.

I hardly know what was the trouble with him. He was a boy of strong sympathies, and there was

nothing he wouldn't do for a friend when — as his sister Martha used to say — “he took a notion.”

He could master a lesson in geography or arithmetic as quickly as any boy, and he often showed great skill and industry in carrying out schemes in which he was interested.

And yet his best friends knew that he was selfish and unobliging, backward in his studies, and strangely unwilling to apply himself to any useful occupation. Was this all owing to the influence of evil companions? If so, how did it happen that he had come under their influence?

I am afraid I must say that bashfulness — which is generally such an amiable trait — was the cause of his choosing, or allowing himself to be chosen by, low associates. He found in bad company the ease and freedom he could not enjoy in good.

There is no such refining influence for boys and young men as the society of good girls and noble women.

This privilege might have been Bent Barry's, for he had an excellent sister, and she had charming friends. But he was too diffident to take advantage of it; at the same time he was ashamed to *own* that he was diffident. So he pretended, and finally made himself believe, that he hated the girls, and always spoke of them with contempt.

Falling in with a class of boys who made him forget his bashfulness, Benton's sympathetic disposition — another trait of amiability — helped him on towards his ruin.

Our heartstrings vibrate in accord with the tone of the society we live in, and a boy like Benton could not be in daily intercourse with hard and coarse natures, like Luke Snaffy, Seth Cavoort and Will Wing, without becoming hard and coarse like them.

There was a time when Bent had a good deal of pocket-money, which he always shared with these companions; but when his father found that indulgence of this sort only made him unsteady and ill-natured, he had cut off the supply, and Bent was now interested in any scheme that promised further dissipation.

But when Luke told him just what the new plan was, he drew back.

“What ye ’fraid of?” said Luke.

“Oh, I ain’t afraid!” Bent replied. “But if we should do such a thing, and ever get found out!”

“But we ain’t going to get found out, I tell you. The whole family is away, gone to the mountains. They won’t be home for a month. There ain’t a soul in the house. Old Jason takes care of the place in the daytime, but he goes home to sleep. We can get in just as easy any night, and have the run of the house, and drink John’s bottled cider for a week, if we want to, without being suspected.”

“Any other house than the Harrisons’!” Bent protested.

“Well, show me the other where we’ve any such chance,” argued Luke.

Bent's too easy nature began to give way.

"But you won't touch anything but the cider?" he said, trying to quiet his conscience.

"Of course not, — without it's a few trifles," Luke replied. "We must live, ye know, and it ain't living without ye can have a good time once in a while. They're rich; they won't miss the little we take."

There was a special reason why Bent did not wish to injure the Harrison family. He did not mention it, however, but allowed it to be buried in his dull and feeble conscience under the arguments which Luke continued to urge.

He ended by yielding, of course. Other conferences followed, at which Seth Cavoort and Will Wing were present. Then came the carrying out of their well-laid plan.

More than once in the mean while his scruples with regard to doing any wrong to the Harrison family had come up in Bent's mind. They made him sick at heart whenever he listened to them, and he wished he had never been let into the scheme. But having once assented to it, he was ashamed to draw back, and on the appointed evening he prepared to meet his accomplices.

It was Tuesday, the 10th of August, a date which he afterwards had bitter cause to remember. He went home early, pulled off his coat and shoes in the sitting-room, stretched himself on the sofa, and talked a little while with his mother and sister, then

at nine o'clock went up-stairs to his room. Mrs. Barry drew a deep breath.

"Oh," she said, "if Benton only knew what a relief and comfort it is to see him come home early and go to bed like other boys, I am sure he would do it oftener!" And the poor woman wiped her eyes.

Martha made no reply, but she thought, "If she can get a moment's comfort out of his conduct towards us all, I'm glad, and I won't say a word to spoil it." For the strong, sensible girl had little patience with her brother's ways.

He went to his room whistling carelessly, put out his light, and sat by the window waiting. The moon was up. The sky was partly filled with broken clouds. The garden trees were silvered by the soft still light. The night was dewy and cool, and singing-crickets foretold the near approach of autumn. It was a beautiful but lonely scene, and somehow it did not make Benton Barry feel happy.

"I wish I hadn't promised," he muttered at the open window. "Little good shall we get from anything done in that way. John Harrison's folks, too!"

The old scruple again; but he stifled it, and set his teeth hard as he watched the moon struggling through clouds. Ah, if only his mind, like the moon, could have come out of its clouds triumphant in its purity and brightness!

The church-clock struck ten. That was the signal.

His father had already gone to bed when Bent came home, and he had long since heard his sister go to her room. The house was dark and still ; only the moon shone in at the windows, and the kitchen clock ticked.

It was not the first time Benton had stolen silently down stairs when all the rest were asleep, pushed the fastenings of the entry door softly back, and put on his shoes on the grass outside. But now he did the same again with extraordinary caution.

“ If anything should happen,” he said to himself, “ they must be able to swear that I was at home and abed.”

The place of meeting was the shelter of an old apple-tree standing in a vacant lot on Ash Street, a lonely and unfrequented street at night. The rear entrance to the Harrison estate was in that street, and Bent had to pass it on his way to the rendezvous.

He paused and looked over the fence into the gloomy garden. Just then he heard footsteps. Somebody was coming. It might be one of his companions. No ; it was a slow and stately step, and he saw the figure of a man coming along the middle of the road.

To avoid being seen, Bent thought first of jumping over into Harrison’s garden. But that wouldn’t do ; and to turn and walk back the way he had come might excite suspicion.

The only other thing to do was to walk right on,

as if he had as honest a right there as anybody, keeping far enough from the middle of the street to avoid being recognized.

But now, just as he thought he was going to get safely by, the man turned out of the road, as if on purpose to see who was hurrying along by the fence, where there was no path or sidewalk, at that hour of the night.

Bent knew him. It was old Dr. Lombard.

At the same time the boy instinctively threw down his head, so that his hat would hide his face, — for they met in the full moonlight, — and pressed on.

“Good evening,” said the doctor, peering curiously at him.

“Good evening,” Bent responded in a false tone of voice, and was relieved to hear the old man go tramping on without more words.

He was terribly afraid he had been recognized, and he related the adventure to his three accomplices, whom he found waiting for him under the apple-tree.

Benton ventured a feeble remonstrance against going any further; but he was utterly unable to resist the ridicule which it called out.

The boys did not go back on Ash Street at all, but found their way across two intervening gardens to the Harrison place.

There stood the unoccupied house, with closed blinds, in the midst of moonlit trees and shadowy shrubbery.

The boys went completely around it first, keeping well in the shadows, to make sure that nobody was near; then Seth Cavoort was stationed at one corner, and Benton at another, to keep watch, while Luke and Will disappeared around the west side.

Bent sat down under some bushes, and waited. He was not a very courageous boy, except in the presence of others leading him on, and left to his own reflections in that dreary solitude, his heart was all in a flutter of apprehension.

Once or twice he thought he heard somebody approaching; but it was only the wind moving the trees.

Then certainly he heard footsteps; and he was about to give the signal-whistle agreed upon in case of danger, when he saw Seth coming towards him.

"There's no use of two keeping watch outside," Cavoort whispered. "You stay, and I'll go and help the fellows."

He disappeared. All was still again. Only the crickets kept up the strange dreary see-saw of their song. Then Bent heard a faint tinkling sound, as of broken glass.

"It's the window," he said to himself, with a painful contraction of the heart.

He could keep his position no longer. He crept around the house until he could see three dark forms in the shadow by the library window.

The blinds were open. Then the window, which

they were evidently at work at, seemed also to have come open, and one of them put in his head.

After a moment's pause, the head was drawn back; and a terrible thought occurred to Benton.

"What if some of the family have come home, and are in the house now!"

Had the burglars heard movements within?

No; for presently another head was put in at the window. It was followed by the shoulders,—a spring, and the whole body disappeared.

"That was Luke," Bent thought. "He said he would be the first one in the house, and the last out."

The two others followed, and the blinds were carefully closed again. Bent alone was on the outside. He drew near in a little while, and peeping through the blinds, could see a streak of light beside the curtain, which was pulled down.

"They have lighted the gas, as they said they would," thought Benton.

And he moved off to see if any glimmer could be detected at a distance. None. Curtains and blinds concealed everything within.

The village clock struck eleven. Then two or three streets away a solitary dog began to bark at the moon. Soon other dogs in the distance responded. Bent did not like those sounds. When evil-doers are astir, they prefer that dogs should be asleep.

"What are the fellows about all this time?" he

thought, wishing he had gone in with them, or that he had at least insisted on Seth's remaining outside with him. It was terribly long and lonesome keeping watch out there!

At length a noise at a side door, like the clicking of a bolt, attracted his attention; and as it did not open, he crept up and tapped lightly. His signal was recognized, and the door was cautiously opened by Seth.

"What are you doing?" Bent demanded in a whisper.

"Getting ready to leave," Seth replied. "We shall all go out by the door; only Luke will stay in to fasten up, and then get out of the winder."

"Can't I come in now? I'm tired of standing guard."

"Yes, come in. I don't believe there's any use in your staying out any longer."

Benton went in, and the door was closed after him. It was not the first time he had been in that house. He had once been carried into it, more dead than alive, and there kind hands had brought back the breath into his almost lifeless body, the warmth into his chilled limbs.

Did he remember the time? And did the special reason why he did not want to injure that house make his heart sink now as it had not done before? His heart did sink, as well it might. A sight met his eyes which filled him with amazement and dismay.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUR WHITE SACKS.

As the boys had taken nothing with them to carry off their booty in, Benton believed that they really meant only to drink some of John's cider, and help themselves, as they said to "a few trifles."

But now he found how deplorably he had been deceived. What astounded and alarmed him, when Seth Cavoort let him into the house, was the sight of three white sacks standing by the entry door. Each had a knot in one end, and a big bunch of some very irregularly shaped materials in the other.

"What are those?" Bent asked.

"Them's piller-cases," said Cavoort, with a grin. "And the boys are fillin' another, so there'll be one apiece for us to lug. I tell ye, it's a rich go!"

"What's in them?" Bent asked.

"All sorts of things, — you'll see when we overhaul 'em. They're lookin' for silver now, but I believe all the silver has been carried out of the house."

"You took the pillow-cases off the beds?" said Bent, still looking ruefully at the tied-up sacks.

"Of course; where should we get 'em?" Seth replied, touching one with his foot and causing a slight rattling sound in the contents. "Luke was for taking a sheet and making one big load; but Will

and I said the piller-cases would be better. Here comes Will with the cider!"

Will was bringing up from the cellar a couple of bottles. "We had to break open the wine-closet to get 'em," he said. "Luke's filling the other pillow-case with bottles. We're going to save lugging by drinking these."

Luke came up with the fourth white sack, which looked very weighty, as he swung it to its place beside the others on the floor.

"Narry bit of silver!" he said, as he passed his sleeve across his sweaty forehead. "But we've got a good haul, and we've worked hard for it."

"You said only a few trifles!" Benton exclaimed.

"Well, that's just what we've got," laughed Luke; "and now we're going to have a treat. Guess John Harrison will smile when he sees what's left in his wine-closet! Nobody got a cork-screw? Never mind."

He broke off the neck of a bottle on the edge of the kitchen sink, and filled glasses brought from a closet.

The boys drank; Benton drank with the rest. He was only too eager to warm his quaking heart with cider. "I'm in the scrape," thought he, "and the only way is to put it through."

After a couple of glasses he forgot all about his obligations to the family he was helping to despoil; and caroused recklessly with the rest.

The first two bottles emptied, Luke took another

and held the neck over the edge of the sink, but before breaking it, paused.

“Look here, boys!” he said. “I guess two will do; we agreed not to take any risks, you know. Now we’d better see to getting out of this.”

He slipped the bottle into the fourth pillow-case, and tied it up.

“It’s early yet, — only half-past eight o’clock!” said Benton, laughing, as he pointed at the kitchen clock, which had stopped on that hour.

“We won’t go home till morning; we won’t go home till morning,” Seth began to sing, and Will and Bent joined in.

“Hush your noise!” said Luke, in an angry whisper. “I planned this thing well; it’s worked all right so far, and I ain’t going to have it upset by your fooling!”

Having quieted his companions, he made them help him set the sacks out of the door. Then, charging them to keep watch over their booty in the shrubbery close by, he bolted the door after them, put out the rest of the lights in the house, jumped out of the window they had got in at, closed it, shut the blinds carefully, and joined them in the bushes.

After a brief consultation as to the route to be pursued, they shouldered each his sack, and started across the gardens again, as they had come.

“All right, so far!” said Luke, as they stopped to rest when they were again under the apple-tree in the vacant lot. “Take a good long breath, boys; then we’ve got to cross the street.”

“That’s the worst part,” said Benton, “with those confounded white things shining in the moonlight! I’m glad the dogs have stopped barking.”

Everything was quiet when they started again. They crossed the street, put their sacks over the fence beyond, and got over after them, stealthily and successfully.

Then four dark figures, each bearing a white sack in the moonshine, might have been seen hastening along by a low wall between two fields.

They *were* seen, in fact; and presently swift feet came rustling the dry grass of the pasture edge behind them.

“Yow — yow — yow!” said the shrill yelp of a very small cur, as he paused and barked at them at a safe distance.

“It’s only old Jason’s dog,” said Luke, rallying his startled companions. “Don’t be afraid of that little mite of a thing!” Old Jason Locke’s house was on the street twenty rods from the point where they had just crossed. They had no doubt but he was fast asleep; and they had made no account of the “little mite.” But the barking of a small dog is sometimes, like the hum of a mosquito, more annoying than dangerous.

So it proved in this instance. Little Tip was even more afraid of the boys than they were of him, but his vivacious yelping was something terrific. And now, aroused by it, another and much larger dog came bounding from another direction across the field.

“Git! git!” muttered Luke. “We shall have all the dogs in town after us next!” And the boys ran.

To the sharp treble of the small dog was now joined the big dog’s heavy bass, as they followed in swift pursuit.

The woods were not far off. But there was a wall to climb; and as the boys went scrambling over it with their sacks, closely pursued by the dogs, an ominous sound of shattered ware was mingled with that of the tumbling stones.

Luke, who carried the sack of bottles in his hand, caught it up, but too late. There had been a collision; and as he shouldered his load, he presently felt a stream of cool liquid trickling down his back, under his summer clothes.

Seth and Benton stopped to hurl a couple of stones, which drove the dogs back, and then followed Luke and Will into the woods.

The animals jumped up on the wall, which they did not pass, and for the next hour kept up — with other dogs that joined them — a chorus of barking which the fugitives could hear half a mile away.

“This makes me sweat!” said Seth, as they slackened their pace in a small, open, moonlit glen.

“What do you think of me?” said Luke. “My bag is the heaviest, though it ain’t so heavy as it was before I got over that wall!”

“I thought I heard bottles break,” said Benton.

“You may say bottles!” said Luke, with grim humor. “Instead of emptying ’em down our throats,

I spilled 'em down my back; and I've been sweating cider for the last quarter-'n-hour."

They had struck a rough wagon-track in the woods, and this soon led them to a bridge crossing a gully, in the midst of dark bushes on both sides. That was the spot which had been chosen for hiding their booty.

Luke led the way through the bushes, down into the little ravine, and the four white sacks disappeared from the glimpses of the moon beneath the low, level bridge.

"Now, so far, so good," whispered Luke, as they stowed their packs under the edge of the timbers, and covered them with bark and boughs. "The dogs was an accident that couldn't be helped; but they didn't hurt nothing but a bottle or two. Now, if everything is quiet, we'll go a-hunting, and meet here to-morrow, take a drink, see what we've got, and what we'll do next."

The boys then returned, by a different route, to the village, where they separated. Benton went home, entering the house with his shoes in his hand, and creeping up stairs, like the thief he was.

"Here I am! and I haven't been out of my room since nine o'clock," he chuckled to himself, as he at length tumbled into bed, satisfied that his escape from the house had not been discovered by the family.

The chuckle did not come from his heart. He wasn't happy as he lay thinking over the events of

the night. The meeting with near-sighted old Dr. Lombard; the solitary watch outside the Harrison house; the sound of tinkling glass; the sight of the white pillow-cases in the entry, tied up with the plunder; the drinking of the cider; the retreat across the fields; the pursuit of the dogs,—everything whirled in his brain, till he sank wearily to sleep.

Then wild dreams pursued him. Once, as he was climbing a wall with his white sack in the moonlight, a great dog seized his leg and held him, till he woke with a start of terror.

He slept at last, in spite of bad dreams, and woke late the next morning to memories almost as disjointed and disagreeable as the dreams he took them for at first.

“I thought you went to bed early last night!” his sister Martha exclaimed, looking at him sharply, as he came down-stairs after the family breakfast.

“So I did,” said Bent, carelessly; “but I didn’t hear any bell this morning.”

“I was so glad you could sleep!” said his mother, indulgently, taking his toast out of the oven and pouring his coffee.

“If she only knew the reason why I slept so well!” thought Benton, as he sat silent and morose at the table.

He was the last at the rendezvous in the woods that forenoon. As he crept in through the bushes, with his gun and game-bag, he found Luke and Will

and Seth waiting for him. They had untied the pillow-cases and were examining their contents.

“By George!” Luke was saying, in whispers, “ain’t it too bad that vase is broke? *That* was in *your* bag, Will!”

“It must have got hit when we lunged over the wall, and you cracked the bottles,” said Will. “But that statuette is all right. No — !”

The exclamation died in his throat.

“Who would have thought the confounded thing would break so easy?” said Will, in huge disgust; “for I’m sure I hardly touched the wall.”

“We might have sold that for ten dollars, let alone the vase,” said Luke. “But, one thing about it, ’twould have been rather hard to carry off. Now, these little picture-frames we can pack right into our game-bags, and walk through the town with ’em, if we choose.”

“You said you didn’t find any silver. But what’s this?” said Seth.

“Oh, that card-receiver,” Luke replied. “I didn’t count that; I was speaking of forks and spoons.”

“What did you bring away daguerreotypes for?” Bent demanded.

“Daguerreotypes? We didn’t!” said Luke. “We couldn’t stop to take the photographs out of the frames; but we didn’t see any daguerreotypes.”

“What’s this, then?” and Bent fished out of the pillow-case he had himself carried away a small, neat morocco case, which he opened.

Something fell out. It was not a daguerreotype. Luke gave a vicious laugh. "More silver, Seth? We thought Bent would be particularly interested in that."

It was a silver medal. On one side was an embossed shield, with a pair of clasped hands in the centre — the symbol of human brotherhood. Below the hands, occupying the lower division of the shield, was the device of a ship tossing on a stormy sea; while in the division above were two life-boats putting off on the waves.

Over the shield was a scroll, and above the scroll was the figure of a small house. On the scroll under the house was the word REFUGE. Within the rim of the medal was the inscription: HUMANE SOCIETY OF MASSACHUSETTS. At the bottom was the date, 1791.

But it was the reverse side that interested and astonished Bent. This is what he saw and read:

REWARD OF MERIT.

To

John Harrison,

for humane exertions

in rescuing from drowning

Benton Barry,

March 1st,

1870.

COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE.

"What's the matter, Bent?" said Seth, snatching the medal. "Hello! I'd forgot all about John Harrison pulling you out of the water that winter!"

“Why, don’t you remember?” said Luke. “We was skating, late in the season; the pond was ready to break up, but there’d come a rain, and then a freeze, and glazed the ice over, and we was fools enough to go on to it.”

“Seth wa’n’t there, but I was,” spoke up Will. “And I remember how Bent cut through, and the ice cracked so all around him we couldn’t get at him, and he couldn’t get out; and how he did yell!”

“Yes,” said Bent, reaching out and getting hold of the medal again as it was passing from hand to hand in the dim light under the bridge. “And I guess *you’d* have yelled if *you* had felt the cold strike to your bones, as I did, and seen the fellows stand round, not daring to help, but only telling you what to do, when you couldn’t do anything but slip back from the ice and drown,—drown,” he went on, passionately, “as I might for all you, when John Harrison came and got me out and carried me home. Risked his own life to save mine,—and what a worthless life I’ve made of it, after all!” And Bent bowed himself over the medal, with tears of anger and shame in his eyes.

“I never knew he got the Humane Society’s medal,” said Will. “But he deserved it. I wouldn’t have took the risk he did!”

“No, I don’t think you would!” Bent retorted, with savage sarcasm. “Not one of us would have done such a thing for another; and why should he do it? for a fellow like me!”

"Perty good joke," Luke laughed, in his low, vicious way, "that Bent should have paid him by hooking the medal!"

"I?" Bent cried out, shaking his fist close to Luke's chin. "Say that again, and I'll —"

"Hush your noise!" said Luke. "Anybody going by could hear you, within a mile."

"I don't care if anybody does!"

Benton lowered his voice, however, and withdrew the shaking fist. Once more he leaned over the medal, scowling blackly.

"We can hammer it out so that John Harrison himself wouldn't know it again, if he should see it, and sell it for old silver," said Luke. "There's five or six dollars in it; shouldn't you say so?"

"I d'n' know; lemme heft it," said Seth.

"No, sir!" Bent exclaimed, resolutely, shutting the medal in its case. "You don't heft it, and you don't hammer it out, not if I know anything!"

"Look here; no nonsense, Bent!" said Luke. "That's a part of the spoils, and they've got to be divided equally, you know."

"I'll keep this for my share. You may have all the rest. Good-bye." And Bent pocketed the medal and seized his gun.

"You can't blame him for wanting to save that out of the plunder," said Will. "But don't go, Bent; don't go. Stop and have some cider."

The others entreated and threatened, but to no purpose. Bent was thoroughly aroused, and they were afraid to lay hands on him.

“Never mind,” said Luke, “if he’s contented with his share. He won’t dare to blow on us. Hanged if I thought he’d feel so about that medal! I thought he’d look at it as a joke. It was by the merest chance I picked it out of a drawer, and saw what it was.”

Meanwhile Bent Barry was tramping back through the woods, with the medal in his pocket, and remorse and rage in his heart.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN UNDER THE WINDOW.

BENT did not go immediately home. For an hour or two he wandered about in great distress of mind, furious at himself for the part he had played in the robbery, and wondering what he should do with the medal. More than once he took it out and looked at it as he sat on a rock or a log in the solitary woods.

*“For humane exertions in rescuing from
drowning Benton Barry.”*

With what feelings of disgust he read his own name there! How strange it all seemed — that John Harrison should ever have saved *his* life; that *he* should have helped to steal the medal awarded for that heroic deed, and that he should now have it in possession!

He could not think of any act of meanness or ingratitude worse than that. If he had not meant to steal the medal, he had been willing to despoil his benefactor of other things.

“The idea of their hammering it out, and selling it for old silver!” he exclaimed, indignantly. “What sort of fellows are they? And to think it is for them that I’ve given up everything else, and made such a fool of myself!”

Bent was not altogether without heart or con-

science, as some folks had good reason to think. And now his nature was stirred to its very depths.

At last he made up his mind what he would do with the medal. John Harrison must have it again; and after questioning anxiously in his mind how to get it to him, and considering all the dangers and difficulties in the case, Bent said :

“I’ll go and drop it through the broken window, where some of the family will find it when they get home.”

That was decided upon. Then what?

“After that,” he reflected, “the best thing I can do is to go and put myself at the bottom of the pond again, where John Harrison won’t find me. I wish he had never found me. Then this thing couldn’t have happened. I was a better boy then than I’ve ever been since.”

Yes, he would either drown himself or run away; for, in his present low state of spirits, he felt sure that his share in the robbery would be found out. Even if it should not be, he knew he must live in constant fear lest it might; and in his intense disgust with his associates and himself, what comfort could life be to him where he was?

But boys do not drown themselves, often as they wish themselves out of the world. And the running away remained a vague intent in Bent’s mind. He felt better after he had resolved what to do with the medal, and went home to a late dinner.

He walked by both the front and rear of the Har-

rierson place that afternoon, and saw the blinds of the house closed, and old Jason at work in the garden as if nothing had happened.

“He don’t suspect anything yet,” Bent said to himself, “and the folks haven’t got home. I’d give the world if it was back in the house there, where Luke found it — if everything was back there !”

It was misery to think that the great wrong which had been done could not be undone. He tried to forget that, and think only of the one act of reparation now in his power.

But no rest to his mind was possible as long as the medal remained in his pocket. He was afraid to approach the house by day, and he longed for the night to come.

Almost before the fading twilight was lost in the splendor of the lately-risen moon, Bent slipped around the corner into Ash Street, and once more approached the Harrison place.

He met no one ; the way seemed clear ; and he climbed noiselessly over the fence into the garden. Then he paused again.

No living thing stirred, either in the dim grounds before him, or in the street behind him. He found a shady path between rows of pear-trees, and glided towards the house.

There was a barn to pass, and he crept very cautiously around that. Then there was the house, casting its huge shadow over the trees and shrubbery and bits of grass plot on the side where the library-window was.

Bent stopped by a trellis to watch a minute. There was the window, dimly visible in the gloom. Twenty paces, and he could reach it, open a blind, and fling the medal through the break in the pane made by his companions the night before.

He stepped stealthily forward, and crossed a little belt of moonlight between the end of the trellis and the shadow of the house. His hand was on the morocco case, — so small, and yet such a dreadful burden to his soul !

He passed a syringa-bush, and stopped again before stepping up on the grassy embankment of the house under the library-window. He had afterwards no idea how long he had stood there, when he became conscious of a frightful thing.

Beside the syringa-bush, and partly behind it, on the very bank he was going to put his foot on next, sat a human figure.

It was a dark figure, and it looked so much like the shadow it sat in that Bent stood almost facing it, not more than two or three yards off, for he knew not how many seconds, before he was aware that it was a man.

It seemed a wonder that he should have seen it at all. A moment more, and he might have stepped up and put his hand through the broken pane in the presence of that mysterious figure.

His fingers relaxed their hold on the medal. A chill crept through his flesh, and stirred the roots of his hair. He stood, fascinated with fear, looking at the man, the man looking at him.

Then Benton turned to run.

At the same moment, the man got up and ran after him. He limped, he wheezed, and the swift-heeled fugitive quickly left him behind.

Then the man called out, "Here, come back! I know ye, ye young scamp! Come back, if ye know what's good for yourself!"

Then Bent knew, what he had suspected before, that the man was old Jason.

But did old Jason know Bent? At any rate, he had not called his name. So the boy, relying on the chance that he had not been recognized, ran all the faster, if that was possible, threw himself over the fence into the adjoining garden, and got away.

It took him a long while to get over his fright, and then he was filled with vexation and despair. How easily he had been led into doing wrong! And now what unexpected difficulty had arisen when he would have repaired that wrong!

That is often the way. Sin is like a mouse-trap; it is easy to get in, but hard to get out.

He took a roundabout course through the village, and found Luke talking with Seth at the widow Ca-voort's gate.

"Hallo! what's up?" said Luke, seeing how agitated and out of breath he was.

"It's found out," Bent whispered, getting into the shadow of the post.

"What's found out?" demanded Seth.

"That the house has been broken into."

Luke grinned, in his vicious way, in the moonlight, and asked, with affected coolness, how Bent knew that.

“I was there just now, and found old Jason on the watch by the library-window,” Bent explained. “He was sitting on the bank by the bush, and I was almost in his arms before I saw him, and he did give me an awful scare!”

“Yes, I see,” said Luke. “But *I* should like to know what you was there for.”

“I’d just as lief tell ye,” Bent replied. “I went to take the medal back.”

“What did ye go to take the medal back for?” said Luke, with a cold sneer.

“Do you think I could keep *that*, Luke Snaffy?” Bent retorted. “If you do, you are an awful sight meaner fellow than I took you for, and you believe me to be more like you than I’ve got to be yet.”

“Wal, ye needn’t git mad about it,” said Luke. “The plunder was yours to do what you pleased with, and if you wanted to carry it back, of course I’ve no objection.”

“And I’ll tell you the conclusion I’ve come to,” Bent whispered. “*All* the plunder ought to go back. I’ll help about it. We’ll pack it up in the pillow-cases again, and leave ’em where they’ll be found by old Jason in the morning. That’s the only way out of the scrape I can see.”

Luke looked at him in silent disgust for a moment, then said:

“You talk like a fool, Bent Barry. I was never so disappointed in a feller in my life. I thought you had more sense — say nothing 'bout more pluck; didn't you, Seth?”

“Don't quarrel, boys,” said Seth. “That's the foolishhest thing we can do now. Bent got upset by the medal; that's what makes him so kind o' shaky.”

“He talks about a way out of the scrape,” Luke went on. “I don't see that we're in any scrape. Of course we knew it would be found out some time that the house had had visitors. We was prepared for that. Now, what else is there? If old Jason knew ye to-night, that may be a clue to you, but ye mustn't let it be a clue to us, now I warn ye, Bent Barry!”

“I don't think he did know me, it was so dark right there in the shadow,” said Bent. “But you needn't trouble yourself to warn me in that threatening way. I'm not going to blow.”

“Wal, ye better not!” said Luke, with a malicious laugh.

“But I was serious in what I said about the plunder,” Bent insisted. “It was an awful thing to do, boys! I didn't realize it. And now I shan't feel right about it, and I don't believe you ever will, till it is carried back.”

“May be so; I don't know,” said Seth. “But you're too late.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why,” said Luke, “you didn’t think we was going to keep all that truck on hand till there was a hue and cry about it, and it would be dangerous to tote it out?”

“What have you done with it?” Bent demanded.

“Some of it we haven’t done anything with, and I guess there ain’t no need of your knowing about the rest; is there, Seth?”

“The less said about it now the better, I think,” Seth replied.

This was all the satisfaction Bent could get out of his friends, and after talking with them a little while longer, he went disconsolately homeward.

CHAPTER IV.

A DANGEROUS SECRET.

HIS plan of returning the medal having been defeated, Bent was in greater trouble of mind in regard to it than before. In his desperation, he was tempted to fling it away in the street; anything to get it out of his hands. But he knew very well that he could not put it off his conscience in that way.

Then he thought he would hide it in a wall, where he could find it again, and get it to John Harrison, somehow, after the excitement about the robbery had gone by.

But before he was able to make up his mind to any course, he found himself at his own door.

"I'll take the night to think of it," he said; and went in, still carrying the dreadful burden in his pocket. He hid it in the corner of his trunk, and went to bed.

Now there had once been a key to Bent's trunk. But he was one of those boys who can never take care of anything; and he had not taken care of the key. So that now, when he particularly wanted it, of course it wasn't to be found. And he didn't dare to inquire for it the next morning.

"They'll want to know why I'm so anxious to lock my trunk just at this time," he said to himself, and

concluded it would be best to say nothing about it to any one.

“Benton,” said his father, who was a travelling agent, and was about starting off on a long journey immediately after breakfast, “I want you to go to the depot with me and carry my carpet-bag.”

Bent did not want to go to the depot, nor, indeed, to any other public place, until he had at least put out of the way that special evidence of his guilt in the little morocco case. But he could not openly disobey his father, and he said, “Yes, sir,” with a show of readiness which he did not feel.

He was sure that old Jason must know of the robbery by this time; and expected little less than that the news of it would be all over the village that morning. What he feared still more was that he had himself fallen under suspicion.

“Never mind,” he said to himself, with all the resolution he could muster. “I’ve got to face it. The worst thing I can do is to flinch, or appear afraid of anything.”

So he went with his father,—a quiet, subdued sort of man, who had long since lost faith in his only son, and with it a large part of the hope and courage of life.

“Benton,” he said, with a tremor in his voice, as they approached the station, “I expect to be gone two or three weeks, and I would give you a word of advice now before we part if I thought it would do any good.”

He paused. Bent made no reply. He knew that his father had but too good reason to feel that any such word would be as useless now as it had been in the past.

"As it is," Mr. Barry resumed, after a painful pause, "I shall only say this: When I get back, your summer vacation will be over. Then you must decide on one of two things: Either you must enter school again in a very different spirit, and with very different motives, from what you have shown hitherto, or I shall put you to a trade. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Benton, humbly.

"You know," his father went on, "that if I should see you make the most of your opportunities, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you. *Do you know it?*"

"Yes, sir," again the boy faltered, devoutly wishing that he could leave the past and all its evils behind him, and begin a new and true life from that hour.

"So I have said, and so you have said before," Mr. Barry continued. "I don't know why I repeat it. You care nothing for what I say, and I have little faith in your promises. You *don't* know, Benton! you don't know how much my future has been bound up in you, and with what grief I have seen you scorn your advantages, and choose those things which can only lead to misery and disgrace."

The boy wanted to vow, then and there, that he *would* do differently; that he *would* deserve his

father's love and trust. But either his old diffidence, or a want of confidence in himself, kept his wretched mouth closed.

They parted in silence, having now reached the station. And Bent, relieved at seeing among the people there no sign of excitement regarding the robbery, hurried home.

He had thought the trunk, even without a key, a safer place for the medal during his brief absence than his own pocket. But he now said resolutely to himself as he ran up-stairs, "I'll take it into the woods and hide it in a hollow tree before I ever come back."

He heard a rustling sound as he approached his room, started forward with alarm, and was just in time to see his sister Martha leaning over his open trunk with the morocco case in her hand. She was just going to unclasp it.

"Why, Bent," she said, on seeing him enter, "what girl's picture have you got here?"

"Give it to me!" he said, springing forward.

"What are you afraid of?" she answered, with troubled surprise, seeing him white with excitement. "I won't look at it if you don't want me to."

But the case was already partly opened, and as he snatched at it, the medal rolled out upon the floor.

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"WHY, what is it?" said Martha.

"None of your business!" Bent muttered, pursuing the medal as it rolled under the bed.

He did not find it for a good reason. While he was looking for it, on his elbows, with his head under the bed, the little fugitive piece of silver, having made a circuit and rolled out again, laid itself down gently and softly by Martha's side.

So great was her curiosity, she could not resist an impulse to pick it up. But as she was stooping for it, Bent floundered out from under the bed's edge, saw her hand go down, and with a stroke of his own intercepted it.

He had the medal. But she had his secret.

"Why, Bent! Bent Barry!" she exclaimed, in utter amazement. "Where did you get that?"

"Get what?" he growled.

"What indeed!" she answered, regarding him with eyes full of suspicion and censure.

"What were you rummaging in my trunk for, any way?" he demanded, pocketing the medal and reaching for the empty case. "Give me that!"

He spoke so fiercely that she gave it to him without a word. She still looked at him with her sorrowful, searching eyes, and said:

“You never came honestly by it, I’m sure of that; you are so eager to hide it.”

“You needn’t say anything about coming honestly by things, after I’ve caught you at my trunk!” he retorted, starting to go out.

“Ask mother what I was at your trunk for,” Martha replied, with spirit. “She sent me to get your underclothes, and mend them up for you, before you want to put them on in the fall. That was honest enough, wasn’t it?”

“Well, but you needn’t be prying into my private affairs,” said Bent, turning back after he had got to the door.

“I wish you had no private affairs that won’t bear prying into,” was the girl’s prompt reply. “It would be better for you, and for all of us. But I had no intention of prying. I saw what looked to be a picture-case of some kind, and had just taken it up when you came in.”

“Well, you found out it wasn’t,” Bent murmured, recovering from his first shock of terrified surprise, and feeling that he must make peace with his sister.

He was sick at heart with anxiety to know just how much she had discovered, and to come to an understanding with her.

“If I can believe my eyes,” she said, “it was no picture at all, but that silver medal—John Harrison’s silver medal.”

He affected to laugh at the idea.

“Well, I am not so sure it is his; but,” she in-

sisted, "it is just such a medal and just such a case. I have seen it a dozen times; and I have had good reason to be interested in it, with your name on it, too, Benton Barry!"

"Well, and mayn't there be another like it somewhere?"

"Yes, I've no doubt there are a good many like it, awarded to people for risking their lives to save those worse than themselves from drowning. But I don't believe there's another in this town."

"Well," said Bent, sitting on the bed, "this is John Harrison's medal. What of it? Couldn't he have let me take it?"

"Shall I ask him if he did?" queried Martha, with a piercing look.

"No, you needn't take that trouble. I'll tell you all about it,—that is, all I can tell,—if you'll promise never to speak of it."

"I'll promise nothing of the kind," replied the frank and honest girl. "But if you've been up to any mischief, as I see very plainly you have, you'd better tell me, or tell some friend, who will give you good advice."

Bent hesitated. She went on:

"I know more about your ways than you think. Something has been wrong with you for a day or two. You were not abed and asleep night before last, as you wanted us to think."

"How do you know?" said Bent, guiltily.

"I know! I saw it in your face in the morning,

for one thing. Then you were mightily troubled all day."

"Yes, I was," Bent confessed. "And I want to tell you what it was. But I can't unless you promise."

"If you tell me anything, I promise to do what I believe is for your own and everybody's best interest," said Martha, plainly and firmly. "That's the only pledge I can make."

Bent sat scowling gloomily for a minute, then said:

"I'll tell you now all I can tell. I saw a fellow have this medal, and I took it, to carry it back to John Harrison. That's the solemn truth. He shall have it again, I pledge you my life. And it will be all right, unless you blow on me; then I don't know what may happen."

"I know very well what has happened already," said Martha. "Some boys have been in Mr. Harrison's house. You needn't deny it. And I believe you are one of them, Bent Barry! Who carried off the medal?"

"I can't tell."

"Why not?"

"Well," said Bent, remorsefully, "he is a friend of mine — or was, I'm ashamed to say."

"I should think you *would* be ashamed to have such friends!" his sister exclaimed. "Are you my brother Benton, that used to be so innocent, and that everybody loved so? Oh, where has that

brother gone? For you are not he; but some bad spirit has driven him out and taken his place."

Martha began to cry. Bent sat remorseful and morose, while she stifled her sobs and wiped her eyes, and resumed:

"I used to think there was no brother like my brother. We all were so proud of you. We had such hopes of you. Now look at mother—she is actually afraid of you. She don't dare cross you in the slightest thing; she so dreads your frowns and your growls. And father—he has grieved over you till he has grown old before his time. What do you think of yourself, Bent Barry?"

"I don't know," murmured the miserable youth.

"It's time you did know. Where's your self-respect? You haven't any. You go with a set of low rowdies, and are as bad as they. And now one of them has stolen the very medal John Harrison got for saving your life; and you can't give his name, because he is your friend!"

"And because I might get myself into a scrape, too; you may as well know the truth," said Benton.

"I thought it was so!" she exclaimed. "What will mother say?"

"You needn't run right off and tell her," replied Bent. "That will do no good."

"No good at all, only to break her heart again, as you have broken it so many times before," said Martha. "But there's one thing I must do at once."

"What's that?"

“Write to Amelia Harrison. Her folks ought to know that the boys have got into their house.”

“Then you’ll have to tell how you knew it, and that will bring me in,” said the wretched culprit. “Well, do it — if you want to see a brother of yours —”

It was now Bent’s turn to cry. Thereupon her sisterly heart began to relent.

“I don’t want to bring you into any difficulty, Benton. But that is what is certainly coming, if you keep on doing as you have done lately; and perhaps the sooner it comes about, the better for us all.”

“Maybe,” said Bent. “But I promise you, if I get well out of this scrape, I won’t get into another, and I’ll have nothing more to do with those fellows.”

Martha did not put much faith in his promises; he had made and broken too many. But he was her brother, and she longed to help him.

“What else did the boys take?” she asked.

“I don’t know. I only saw the medal,” said Bent, lying stoutly.

“And you did not take that, nor anything?”

“I didn’t take that, nor anything.”

She did not know whether to believe him or not.

“And what are you going to do with it now?”

“I was going to hide it in the woods till I had a good chance to send or carry it back.”

“Don’t do any such thing,” said Martha. “Take it to Jason Locke, and tell him how you came by it.”

If you will only do that, I know very well that the Harrisons will never give you any trouble about it. Perhaps you will not even have to mention any names, though I advise you to own up to everything."

Bent was struck by the good sense of this suggestion; and after some hesitation, said that if he was sure no names would be insisted on, he would take the medal to old Jason.

Then he confessed how he had already tried to put it into the house.

"In that case," said Martha, "the sooner you act, the better. You haven't a minute to lose. Don't wait till it is found in your hands. And don't — if you want me to befriend you — don't go and hide it in the woods."

"I won't," replied Bent. "I'll go straight and give it to the old man."

He left her with that promise. But as he went from the house, he said to himself:

"I can make up a story. I can say I picked it up somewhere. Why didn't I think of that before?"

He had his little fiction all arranged by the time he reached the Harrison place. But he had not got his courage quite up to the point of telling a good stout lie without flinching.

So, when he saw two men talking with old Jason in Mr. Harrison's yard, he could not make up his mind to go in, but walked past the gate.

That was a fatal error.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSTABLE KEACH.

ONE of the men walked quietly out of the gate, and followed him. It was Giles Keach.

When Bent looked back over his shoulder and saw Giles coming after him at a good pace, a dreadful idea occurred to him.

Keach was janitor of the town-hall ; he was also a policeman.

Was he in pursuit of Benton ?

Bent did not know. His guilt made him afraid. But he durst not start and run ; indeed, he knew that to run would be worse than useless. For had not Seth on one occasion tried his legs with Keach, and been beaten ? And Bent was no match for Seth.

So Bent walked slowly, and let the officer come up with him.

“ Good morning, Benton,” said Keach, cheerfully.

“ Good morning,” Bent replied, with his heart in his throat.

“ You don't seem to be in much of a hurry,” said Keach.

“ Not much,” said Bent.

“ No very pressing business on hand this morning ? ”

“ Nothing very pressing.”

"I'm glad of that, for, I'm sorry to say," — Keach laid his broad hand, in a kindly sort of way, on the boy's shoulder, — "you're wanted."

Bent gave a start and a gasp.

"Yes, my boy. I have Judge Carson's warrant for your arrest."

Bent felt sick. His knees shook under him. Yet he managed to say, with a sort of forced calmness, though he was ashy about the lips, and the smile he put on was ghastly:

"Must be some mistake! What am I—"

"What are you wanted for? Well," said the policeman, "it is not my place to explain that; but I may as well tell you that a house in town has been broken into, and it's thought you may possibly know something about it."

"I don't know anything about any house being broken into," said Bent.

"All the better for you," said Keach. "I trust it'll turn out so."

"What are you going to do with me?" Bent asked.

"Take you before Judge Carson so soon as he is ready for the case. Meanwhile I suppose I shall have to lock you up. Do you want to go home first?"

"No," said Bent. "If I have got to go to the lock-up, I may as well go straight along."

But immediately he changed his mind. There was the medal in his pocket. It was too late to give

it up now, and declare that he had found it. And if discovered on his person, it would be fatal evidence against him.

How bitterly he regretted not having followed Martha's advice! No doubt if he had walked up to old Jason, he could have handed him the medal before the warrant of arrest was served.

Was there no way he could get rid of it?

"I *would* like to go home first," he said, "and tell my folks that I am taken up, but that it's for something I know nothing about."

"Very well. I'll accommodate you," said Keach.

Now, when Martha, five minutes later, looked from the chamber-window and saw her brother coming to the gate with a man close to his side, she guessed only too quickly what was the trouble.

Yes, the man was Keach, the policeman; and he was walking with his left hand under Bent's arm!

She thought first of her mother, — what a blow it would be to her! To prevent it, or at least to postpone and soften it, she hastened down stairs.

But too late. She heard her mother's stifled shriek. The poor woman was already at the door.

"Oh, Benton! what is it?" she was saying, with a mother's fear and anguish in her voice and face.

"Nothing I'm to blame for. Mr. Keach can tell you more than I can," said the youth, with the bravest air he could put on. "You needn't think I'll run away from you," — he drew his arm away from the officer, — "for I won't."

“ I don't think you will,” said Keach ; “ but boys are sometimes foolish enough to try.”

He, however, released his hold of his prisoner, and stood talking, in a kind, neighborly way, with Mrs. Barry, telling her he hoped her son would come out of it all right, while Bent whispered to Martha :

“ Watch your chance when he isn't looking. It's in my pocket — the one towards you. Put your hand down to take it when I give it to you, and don't let him see.”

Poor Martha was too guileless a girl ever to do anything secret or stealthy. And now she was in a state of terrible agitation. But she felt she must help her brother by doing what he wished.

A moment more, and the medal would have been safely transferred from his pocket to her own.

But, unluckily, Bent made a slight movement of the body. Keach, who was watching him over his shoulder, turned instantly, and saw the girl's hand, just as it was withdrawn, holding the morocco case.

The officer's hand was immediately on her wrist.

“ What's that ? ” he said.

Martha was not accustomed to deceive. But she had a quick wit, and now her sole object was to save her brother.

She remembered what she had herself first taken the case for, and answered promptly :

“ You don't care for a girl's picture, do you ? ”

“ No, of course not. But under the circumstances anything he has on his person I suppose I must take in charge.”

The officer was perfectly polite, but he held her hand firmly.

“ Oh, Mr. Keach ! to please me,” she pleaded.

“ I’ll promise not to look at the picture, if that will please you,” he replied. “ But I shall have to take it.”

Then she saw that there was nothing else to do but to give it up.

He put it in his own pocket unopened, and marched his prisoner away, while the distressed mother and sister stood watching and weeping at the gate.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRISONER.

THERE is something mysterious about village boys. Where do they all come from so suddenly, when the upsetting of a wagon, or a dog-fight, or any other exciting thing takes place in the street?

When Bent Barry was arrested by policeman Keach, not another boy was visible. But now they seemed to start up on all sides, like Roderick Dhu's men at the signal of his shrill whistle. From up-street and down-street, from main-street and by-street, they came running and hooting, until the wretched captive, on arriving at the lock-up, found himself surrounded by a mob of his young acquaintances.

Keach drove them back, with threats of arrest if they did not keep quiet and disperse; and led his charge down a pair of stone steps to a door under a corner of the town-hall.

This door opened into a large, low basement room with grated windows. On the left was the bar, writing-desk, and benches of the village police-court. On the right a grated door opened into a dark entry beyond.

There was nobody in the court-room when Keach brought in his prisoner, closed the street-door behind him, searched his pockets, took away his knife, and then conducted him to the dark entry.

It was a very small entry, only a few feet square; and on each side of it were two more doors with grated openings, each leading into a cell with white-washed wall and a floor of brick.

"I haven't got to go into one of those holes, have I?" said Bent, drawing back.

"Yes, you have," said the policeman.

"Why not leave me in this large room? I couldn't get out if I tried."

"Maybe you couldn't; but I am responsible for you, and if you were my own brother, I should have to do with you what I do with every prisoner."

Bent had kept up pretty well until now. But when he found himself in one of the little, dismal cells, with Keach on the other side of the grated door, locking it, his heart sank miserably.

All the daylight that entered there had first to pass through the barred and curtained windows of the court-room, then through the entry-door and cell-door; so that there was but little of it left by the time it reached the prisoner.

"Don't leave a fellow in the dark," he implored.

"Oh, no," said Keach; "you shall have all the comforts of the place."

He struck a match, and lighted a jet of gas in the little entry. That wasn't much like the free and open light of heaven, but it was better than nothing. It shone into the cell, making a fantastic checker-work of the shadow of the grating on the white wall at the end.

"How long shall I have to stay here?" Bent asked.

"Till Judge Carson comes home, any way. Then if you can get bail you will be let out."

"When will I have my trial?"

"You must be brought before the justice within twenty-four hours of the time of your arrest. We can't keep a man longer than that."

"Then what?"

"Then if there's no evidence against you, you'll be discharged. If there's evidence enough to hold you, you'll be committed to the county jail, or bound over, to await the action of the grand jury. If they find an indictment against you, then you'll have to stand a jury trial before the superior criminal court. That's the way it works, my young friend."

So saying, Keach, having locked the entry-door, went out through the large room, and presently Bent heard the outer door closed and locked.

He could still hear the mob of boys hooting outside. But that noise was quickly stopped after Keach appeared among them. Then the only sounds that reached him were the faint clatter of hoofs and the rumble of wagon-wheels in the street.

He was alone — alone as he had never been before in his life.

You are not alone, my boy, when in the street or in the woods, or in your room at home, though you have no companion. You have liberty; you have free thoughts, and if you choose, you can in a few minutes rejoin your friends.

If you would know what it is to be alone, get into a lock-up, as Bent did.

The cell was six feet long and four feet wide. Any boy can measure off a corner of his room, and see how large a space that is. Two long strides will show you the length, and a shorter step and a half the breadth. Do you see it?

At one side was a coarse, hard, soiled mattress, on an iron frame fastened to the wall. Above this was another frame, which could also be used as a couch; but it was now turned up on its hinges and fastened flat against the side of the cell.

The room contained absolutely nothing else but a prison slop-pail; not a wash-stand, not even a stool.

If Bent wished to sit down, he must sit on his bed or on the brick floor.

He had not seen either of his accomplices in the crowd. But no doubt they had heard of his arrest by this time. What would they do?

He walked restlessly to and fro within his narrow bounds, and heaped curses upon those bad companions. He blamed his sister too; he was inclined to blame everybody but himself.

“I might have got to the woods with that medal if it hadn't been for her. And what did she let Keach see her take it for? It's all over with me now! No use of making up a story; nobody'll believe a word I say.”

Then he sat down on his bed and gave himself up to miserable reflections.

He heard the village clock strike eleven, and remembered how he had listened to the lonesome striking of the hours on that moonlit night when the evil was done for which he was now to suffer.

“Only night before last!” he said to himself. “It seems to me a month.”

How tediously the time dragged! He thought it must be near the middle of the afternoon, when again the clock struck. He counted.

“One — two. I knew it was late as two. Three — four. But I didn’t think it was four. Five — six. Is it so near night? Seven — eight. That clock’s crazy! Nine — *ten* — ELEVEN — TWELVE!”

Bent was appalled. He had been in his cell but an hour since he counted the last peals of the clock. It was now noon.

Not long after he heard the street-door open, and Keach’s voice in the court-room. Then another — a woman’s grief-stricken voice — reached him.

Then the keeper came and unlocked the grated doors, saying:

“Your mother is here, Bent. You can come out and see her.”

She had advanced to meet him; but the sight of her boy — her only son — coming out of that wretched den, overcame her, and she turned away with a stifled sob.

Bent came out with an injured and sulky air, and followed her to a bench before the bar. There she made a show of putting down and arranging a bas-

ket she had brought in, while she was in reality hiding her tears.

Then she said, in a half-choked voice :

“ I’ve brought you some books and papers to read, and some dinner, Benton.”

He answered, sullenly :

“ I don’t want anything to read, nor anything to eat, either.”

She was too much used to his ingratitude and ill-nature to be surprised, or even offended.

“ Oh, yes, my son,” she said, recovering her self-control, and seating herself on the bench. “ You’ll want something to amuse you. And I thought you would relish some of my cooking more than anybody else’s, though I am sure Mr. Keach would bring you a good dinner.”

Keach was still in the room. But he soon went out through a door which led to another part of the basement.

She opened her basket, and set out her little store of dainties on the bench.

With the pies and jellies he loved, there was a substantial slice of boiled ham, which was his favorite dish. He was a boy, after all ; and no boy in health, whatever happens, can long forget that he has an appetite.

He sat down on the other side of his dinner, and attacked the ham, but still with a surly air.

“ How long before I am going to get bail, any way ? ” he asked.

"I don't know. I have telegraphed to your father," she replied, "and I am sure he will start for home as soon as a despatch reaches him."

"Have I got to wait for him?" he growled over his victuals.

The truth was, the poor woman had already spoken to her friends and neighbors about this business of bail. But none of them had seemed quite willing to give a bond for his appearance at court. Either they were afraid he would run away, or they thought a little jail experience would do him good. Bent, I am sorry to say, was not popular with the sober village fathers.

Mrs. Barry explained this to him as delicately as she could. In his heart he could not blame them. For he had secretly determined that, if once admitted to bail, he would take himself well out of the way, no matter who had to pay the forfeited bond.

He had an excuse for scolding his mother, however.

"Don't feel so bad about it," she pleaded with him. "If you are innocent, you won't be kept in confinement long. I have sent to town for Mr. Barstow."

"What have you sent for Mr. Barstow for?" Bent asked, although he guessed very well why.

"Lawyer Barstow," she explained. "I thought you'd better have counsel."

"Well, maybe I had," he muttered. "What do folks say about it? Everybody knows, I suppose."

“Yes, it’s all over town that the Harrison house was broken into, and that you have been taken up. Now, my poor boy,” she appealed to him, with tears of grief and affection, “can’t you tell your mother everything?”

“I didn’t break into the house. That’s all there is to tell,” said Bent. This was all she could get from him; but she was grateful even for that.

“I felt sure you were innocent!” she exclaimed, with more tears. “So don’t be down-hearted. Everything shall be done for you that can be done. Good-bye, my poor dear boy!”

Keach had now returned, and was waiting to let her out.

Mr. Barstow came out from the city in an early train that afternoon, visited the lock-up, and had a talk with the prisoner.

And now Bent made another mistake. He ought to have told his lawyer everything, and followed his advice. But he could not make up his mind to be truthful.

Mr. Barstow did not urge him. Perhaps, since he was to try to convince others that the boy was innocent, he did not care to hear a confession of his guilt.

Judge Carson, who had issued the warrant in the morning, and then gone to town on other business, also came out that afternoon. And when Keach brought Bent his supper, he told him that his trial was to take place that evening at seven o’clock.

"The sooner the better," said Bent, although the announcement gave him an anxious thrill.

"If I'm to be kept locked up," he thought, "I'd rather go to jail, where there are other prisoners, than stay in this lonesome place."

After he had eaten his supper, he sat on his mattress, thinking over what he had already told Martha and Mr. Barstow, and what he should say to the judge, when he heard the street-door opened, and the footsteps and voices of men entering the courtroom.

Then Keach came to unlock his cell-door and take him out.

The judge and Mr. Barstow, and two of the selectmen of the town, were already within the bar which fenced off the further end of the room, standing with their hats on, in the mingled daylight and gaslight, chatting and joking under the low ceiling.

The space which Bent had to cross was rapidly filling with spectators. Boys were in the majority. He knew almost everybody, and everybody seemed to know him, as Keach led him through from the cell to the bar.

"There he is! there he is!" he heard somebody cry out at the door.

And then there was a rush down the steps of more boys, eager to get a glimpse of their comrade in trouble.

"You stand back there, and keep quiet, or you'll

get hustled out, every one of you!" Keach called to the noisy ones, and there was a momentary hush.

How often in his capacity of policeman and janitor of the town-hall he had spoken to Bent in just that official, authoritative tone! The poor fellow wished he was one of that free and reckless crowd now.

It was a hard place for a bashful boy, to sit on a conspicuous bench inside the bar, and be stared at by everybody; that is, by everybody lucky enough to get within sight of him. The crowd pressed up to the bar; those behind stood on tiptoe to look over the shoulders of those before, while those still farther back jostled and elbowed for place.

The judge, having uttered his last joke, took his seat and laid off his hat; and Keach called for order in the court. Meanwhile Lawyer Barstow placed himself at the table, with writing materials before him, and the prisoner at his elbow.

It was a warm night, and the windows were open; and looking in through the grating of one of them, with other faces appeared the face of Luke Snaffy.

His eyes met Bent's, and he gave him a dark, determined look.

That look said, "Don't you tell of me!" Then Luke's face was withdrawn from the grating, and Bent saw it no more.

The judge, after a little formal business with the officer who had returned the warrant, informed Bent that he had been arrested for housebreaking, on a

complaint entered by Jason Locke, and asked if he was ready for trial.

Mr. Barstow answered for him, "We are ready."

He had just told Bent that if he wished to have his case continued to the next day, when Mr. Barry would probably be at home, he could have his trial postponed. But Bent did not know how his father could help him, or that anything would be gained by delay.

A smiling young reporter for the village newspaper, having got through the crowd, now seated himself at a corner of the table, prepared to make of the case something pleasantly interesting for his readers.

The first witness called was Jason Locke.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE JUDGE CARSON.

OLD JASON was thin and bent, and he had a poor little puckered face and small black eyes.

Having taken the usual oath, to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he stood between the judge's table and the bench on which Bent sat, and, after answering a few questions, went on with his story.

"Wal, ye see, Mis' Harrison's folks had left me in charge of the place, and though I wa'n't expected to stay there nights, I had to look after it days, and every mornin' I went carefully around to see if there was any appearance of things havin' been disturbed. For I felt responsible —"

"No matter about your responsibility," said the judge. "Tell us what you know of the house being broken into."

"That was Tuesday night," said old Jason.

"Tell us how you know it was Tuesday night."

"Because I'd seen nothin' suspicious before then, and it was that night I heard the dogs bark."

"What dogs?"

"Wal, my dog begun it, and woke me up out of a sound sleep. I says to my wife, says I, 'Becky,' says I —"

"I don't know that we care to hear what you said

to your wife," remarked the judge, while a laugh ran through the crowd. "Tell us what you heard and saw."

"That's what I *am* a-tellin'. My dog begun it; and I says to Becky, 'Becky,' says I —"

The crowd laughed again.

"Order in the court!" roared Keach, behind the judge's chair.

"Well, go on," said the judge, seeing that the old man must be left to tell his story in his own way.

"'Becky,' says I, 'that's Tip; and he's barkin' at suthin', this time,' says I. For he'd been barkin' at nothin', earlier in the evenin'; it was one o' them air moonlight nights that make dogs feel sociable. But I know the difference 'tween the bark of a dog that's barkin' jest for comp'ny and the bark of a dog that's excited by the sight of some strange critter. So I says to my wife, 'Becky,' says I —"

"What time of night was it?" the judge inquired; while the reporter wrote very fast, grinning over his paper.

"Not much after midnight," he replied.

"Did you look at the clock?"

"No; but there was no more sleep for me that night, or till 'long towards mornin'; an' I think I must have laid awake nigh onto an hour when I heard our clock, an' then the town-clock, strike one. Our clock was a leetle mite fast."

"Did you see anything?" the judge asked.

"Wal, as I was goin' to say, I says to my wife,

'Becky,' says I, 'that dog never'd bark so in this world if there wa'n't somebody around.' She thought so, too, an' said I'd better git up an' look out o' the winder. By that time another dog had set in — a big dog — both right over in the field back o' my house."

"What did you see?"

"Suthin' mighty queer," replied the old man, casting his eyes about the court-room, and talking to the interested spectators. "The dogs was havin' a tearin' time, but I couldn't see 'em, nor nothin' at fust, but jest two or three white things — looked as if they might be geese — movin' along on top o' the wall. 'Becky,' says I, 'for massy sakes!' says I —"

"What were the white things?"

"Wal, of course, I knowed they couldn't be geese: geese don't climb walls, and scoot along that way; and 'twa'n't the motion of flyin' — 'twas ruther the motion of trottin'."

"How many did you say there were?"

"I made out three, and finally four, but that was when they went over the next wall into the woods. But by that time my eyes had got used to the night, an' I see suthin' 'sides the white things."

"Tell us what."

"Wal, as I said to my wife, 'Becky,' says I, 'each one o' them white things has got somebody a-car-ryin' on't!' says I. An' that was the fact. The thieves was a-runnin', an' the dogs was a-chasin' on 'em behind the fust wall; then we see 'em all four go over the t'other wall an' into the woods."

“ Did you recognize either of the thieves, as you call them ? ”

“ Nary one ; an’ I wa’n’t sure at the time they *was* thieves ; an’ what on airth the white things was they was a-carryin’ neither me nor my wife could form the slightest idee. But as I said to my wife, ‘ Becky,’ says I, ‘ there’s suthin’ wrong,’ says I, ‘ you may be sure ; an’ if I thought’ — ”

“ Did she see what you have described ? ”

“ Yes ; an’ that, an’ the barkin’ o’ the dogs for an hour after, an’ the mystery on’t, which we talked over an’ over, all put together, was too much for her narves, an’ that was why I had to call in Dr. Lombard to her the next day. An’ Dr. Lombard he said, says he — ”

“ Never mind what Dr. Lombard said,” again the judge interrupted.

Bent had sat listening to the old man’s testimony with as courageous a face as he could command, wondering if it betrayed to everybody that *he* knew very well what the mystery of the white things meant.

He was extremely anxious to know what evidence there was against him beyond the medal found on his person. And now when Dr. Lombard’s name was mentioned, his countenance changed.

Evidently the judge did not know what the boy knew was coming, or he wouldn’t have stopped the old man.

“ Tell us about the robbery,” said the judge.

“That’s just what I was a-tellin’,” the witness resumed. “For it was what the doctor said that set me on the track.”

Bent felt sick. He made but sorry work of trying to keep his countenance firm and calm; he knew that he was looking pale.

“Very well; go on then,” said the judge.

“When I told the doctor about the fright she got the night afore, an’ what a mystery it all was, he says, ‘That reminds me,’ says he, ‘of suthin’ I see last evenin,’ says he.”

Here Bent’s lawyer, for the first time, interposed.

“I object. These *says I’s* and *says he’s* are taking up the time, and serving to amuse the spectators rather than to throw any light on the case. If Dr. Lombard has any important testimony to give, he can give it here; we don’t care for it at second-hand.”

“Dr. Lombard has been summoned,” the judge explained, “and he will be here, I understand, in the course of the evening. Meanwhile, I don’t see any great objection to letting the witness tell what it was that set him, as he said, on the track of the robbery.”

The lawyer thereupon withdrew his objection, and old Jason resumed.

“‘As I was goin’ along Ash Street, about nine o’clock,’ says the doctor, says he, ‘I met a young feller,’ says he, ‘and I shouldn’t have noticed him if he hadn’t acted as if he wanted to avoid me. I

was in the middle of the street, an' he was over close agin the fence,' says he, 'an' as I moved over towards him, he put his head down, so as to hide his face, or partly hide it,' says he.

" ' Was this near the Harrison place ? ' says I.

" ' Yes, ' says he ; ' the boy seemed to be skulkin' by the Harrisons' fence ; an' I wondered then, ' says he, ' whether any mischief was plottin' in consequence of the family bein' away. ' "

" That went through me like a shot, " the witness continued. " I jumped up, an' says I, ' Did you know the feller ? ' says I. He said he thought he did, for it was bright moonlight, an' he was kin' o' near-sighted — "

" We will hear the rest from Dr. Lombard himself, " said Mr. Barstow, while Bent drew a long breath. " Now we know it was something the doctor said that set the witness on the track ; and he can go on and tell us what was the next thing he did. "

" I took the key, an' rushed right over to the Harrison place. I'd been there that mornin', an' found the house all shut up an' quiet. But now I looked sharp, an' noticed some tracks acrost the strawberry-bed. I traced 'em goin' and comin' ; an' it looked as if a passel of fellers had got over into the garden from Haskell's lot, an' gone back over the fence agin, in perty nigh the same place. I felt skairt ; for says I to myself, says I — "

" What else did you discover ? "

“ I found tracks around the house ; an’ then I unlocked the door an’ went in. Fust, I didn’t notice anything out of the way ; blinds all shet, curtains all down, an’ doors an’ winders fast. I opened one in the kitchen. An’ then I see a bottle with the neck broke off in the sink, an’ glasses that had been dranked out on ; visitin’ cards spilt on the parlor-floor ; things upset gener’ly ; and piller-cases stripped off’m the beds ; an’ then I knowed what the white things was I had seen lugged off.”

“ Could you tell what other things had been taken ? ”

“ No ; for I didn’t know everything that was in the house ’fore it was broke into.”

“ How do you know it had been broken into, if you found doors and windows all fast ? ” Mr. Barstow inquired.

“ Wal,” said the old man, a shrewd smile puckering his mouth and twinkling in his small black eyes, “ that was a mystery to me till finally I stepped on a piece of glass under a winder in the lib’ry. Then I whipped up the curtain, and diskivered a hole made in a pane just under the fastenin’ of the sash. The thieves had reached in and unfastened it when they got in, and then reached in and fastened it agin after they got out.”

“ Then what did you do ? ”

“ Then I fastened up everything agin, and went straight to find Mr. Nason, for I knowed he was one of the selectmen, an’ a friend of the Harrisons. He

went with me an' looked at the house; an' says he, 'I'll send right off to let the Harrisons know; an' meanwhile you'd better say nothin' to nobody, but jest keep a sharp lookout, an' likely enough you'll ketch somebody.' So I worked in the garden, an' then went home to supper, but slipped back jest at dusk, an' hid by a syringa-bush, near the lib'ry window that had been broke into; for I thought if the thieves come back for more plunder, that was the way they would get in."

"How long did you keep watch?"

"Not more'n an hour; which wa'n't half so long as I expected, for the thieves — or the thief — was a bigger fool 'n I thought. It wa'n't much after nine o'clock when I heard somebody; he was comin' by the barn, kin' o' tiptoein' along, an' stoppin', an' then comin' a few steps further."

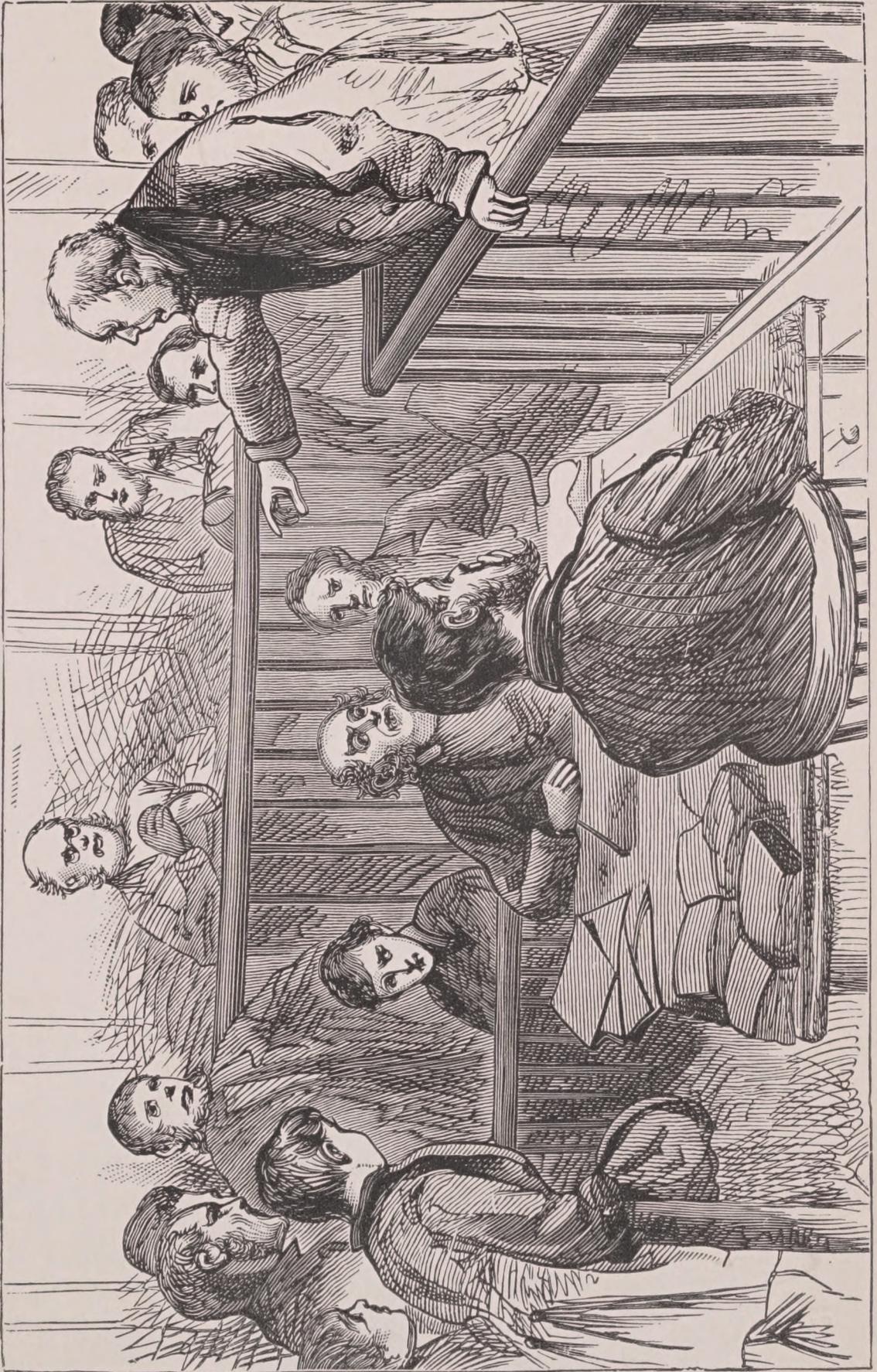
"Was it dark, Mr. Locke?"

"Perty dark where I was, in the shadder of the house, by the syringa-bush. But I had one good look at the thief as he crossed a strip of moonlight 'twixt the barn an' the house. Then he come an' stood right afore me, not further off 'n from me to him now." And the witness turned to look at the prisoner.

Bent did not start or stir; not a muscle of his face moved; but he kept his pale features and glistening eyes fixed steadfastly on the old man.

"Well, go on," said the judge.

"Jest as he was goin' to step up on the bank un-



der the winder, then he see me. He stopped and stood stock-still; an' neither on us spoke nor stirred for a matter of eight or ten seconds. Then he took to his heels, an' I after him."

"Did you catch him?"

"Not much!" said the old man. "He legged it like a deer. But I had got what I wanted. I knowed the feller."

"Who was it?"

Again the old man turned and stretched out his hand towards Bent.

"That's him."

"You're sure?"

"I ain't sure; I'm positive!" exclaimed the witness. "That's the way he come to be took up. I spoke to Mr. Nason about it, and he said I ought to make a complaint to you, an' git out a warrant."

"How did you recognize the prisoner at that time?"

"How? Wal," said old Jason, wonderingly, "how do you recognize anybody? He looked like Bent Barry; and I was ruther expectin' 'twas Bent Barry; for Dr. Lombard had told me he felt sartin 'twas Bent Barry; that he —"

"No matter about that!" Mr. Barstow objected.

But too late. So when he came to cross-examine the witness, he tried to make of this part of the evidence a point in Bent's favor.

The next witness was Dr. Lombard, who swore quite positively that Bent was the boy he met on Ash Street on Tuesday night.

Mr. Barstow did not care to question him. So far, the evidence against Bent was by no means conclusive. The next and last witness was Policeman Keach. He explained the manner of the arrest, and produced a small package, tied up in a piece of newspaper, which he said was found on the person of the prisoner.

“Do you know what it is?” the judge inquired, as he received it.

“I do not. And I shouldn't have thought much about it if I hadn't seen him give it to his sister when he thought I wasn't looking. She called it a girl's picture, and tried hard to keep it out of my hands. I took it, but I promised not to look at it; and the first thing I did after I got to my room was to put that paper and string around it.”

Bent heard this part of the testimony with extreme anxiety, and quite forgot that all eyes were upon him, while he watched intently to see what the judge would do.

“You have acted very discreetly,” said the judge, with a smile. “But I suppose the court will have to take cognizance of the contents of the package.”

So saying, he removed the wrapper and opened the morocco case. Bent saw with a sinking heart a gleam of the silver medal.

“This is no girl's picture!” said the judge, surprised; and holding the medal in the light, he began to read the inscription:

“ To John Harrison, for humane exertions in rescuing from drowning Benton Barry.”

A rustle of excitement ran through the crowd of spectators.

Whatever doubt there might have been regarding the previous evidence, this seemed terribly decisive.

The boy-prisoner, then, was a monster, who had stolen the very medal which had been awarded to his preserver for saving his life !

Poor Bent knew that he looked the guilty wretch he was. His last hope had vanished. He was prepared for the worst. He resolved to attempt no explanations ; and when asked if he wished to be examined, — knowing that he would be put under oath, and closely questioned, — he replied, after a brief whispered consultation with his lawyer :

“ I didn’t steal that medal, and I never broke into anybody’s house ; and that’s all I can say.”

“ Can’t you explain how you came by the medal ? ” the judge asked, regarding him sadly.

“ I took it to return it to the Harrisons ; but I can’t tell how I came by it, for I promised not to.”

As this was all he would say, Mr. Barstow now rose, and made a few remarks in his behalf.

“ Your Honor will see,” he said in conclusion, “ that there is no valid reason why the prisoner should not be discharged. What if one witness has sworn that he saw him on Ash Street, near the Harrison place, on Tuesday evening ? Suppose he had seen your

Honor or myself there? Would that implicate us in the robbery? And what if another witness, prompted by what he had been told by this one, did *imagine* he saw the boy approach the broken window in the Harrison house the next evening? That is as lame a piece of evidence as I ever heard in my life, and I am sure it must have seemed so to the court. As for the medal, it is utterly preposterous to suppose that this boy should have stolen it. In fact, there is no evidence whatever that it *was* stolen. Whoever had it before Benton Barry took it in order to return it may have had it honestly. Before a theft can be charged, it is necessary to show that something has been stolen. Who has sworn to that medal? Who can say, even, that it was in the house when the house was broken into?"

Mr. Barstow argued so plausibly and so earnestly that poor Bent almost began to believe himself innocent, and to hope that he might be released.

But the judge promptly decided that there was evidence enough to hold him for the grand jury. And as nobody came forward to offer bail for him, it became the painful duty of the court to commit the prisoner.

"What does that mean?" Bent whispered to his lawyer.

"It means," was the cold reply, "that you will have to go to jail."

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN HARRISON.

OFFICER KEACH once more took charge of the prisoner, and the court adjourned.

Bent was led back through the dispersing crowd to his miserable cell.

"I'm not going to be shut up here again, am I?" he said, despairingly.

"Yes, you are," replied the officer; "for to-night. It's so late you can't be taken to jail now until to-morrow."

The boy felt a strange horror at being locked up again in that lonesome place. For one night! How could he live through that night?

"Why won't somebody bail me?" he exclaimed, ready to break down under his load of misery.

And after he was locked in his cell, he sat down on his bed and gave way to a fit of sobbing.

Keach cleared the court-room, shut the windows, and put out the lights. Only the entry gas-jet which shone into Bent's cell was left burning low.

Then Keach himself went out, and turned the key in the strong lock of the street-door.

Bent was alone, with a terrible night before him.

The weather was warm, and the gas-light and the crowd had made the atmosphere of the court-room hot and close. And this was the air left for the prisoner to breathe.

What was worse, mosquitoes had come in during the evening. They were not very noticeable amidst the excitement of the trial, for then they had the court and spectators to prey upon. But now their attentions, which had been divided impartially among so many, began to be concentrated on one.

Did they scent out their victim? or did the low burning gas-jet attract and guide them? Bent did not know; he only knew that they came pouring into his cell.

Keach had offered him a blanket, which he had declined, the night was so warm. He wished he had it now, to cover his face and hands from the humming swarm of tormentors.

He used his handkerchief instead, and tried to sleep. But in a few minutes, stifled, stung, he started up in a frenzy of despair.

"Oh, I shall die!" he cried out; "I shall die!" And springing to the floor, he paced to and fro, slapping his face and hands, and gasping for breath.

"Where is my father? Oh, father! father!" he called, "why don't you come?"

When it seemed as if he could endure no more, he flung himself exhausted on his bed, feeling that he should certainly die there before morning.

There came a noise at the street-door, a turning of the key in the lock, voices and footsteps entering; then the sudden flash of lighted gas in the court-room.

Bent knew that more than one man had come in. One was Keach; who was with him?

"Is it my father?" he tremblingly asked, as the officer appeared at the grated door of his cell.

"Your father? no," Keach replied.

Bent's heart sank again.

But Keach proceeded to unlock the cell-door.

"Am I going to jail to-night?" the prisoner inquired.

"No, my boy."

Bent was puzzled, hardly yet daring to hope.

"What is it, then?"

"It's bail; that's what it is," replied the officer.

The iron door swung back with a clang, and Bent walked out, dumb with astonishment and joy.

In the court-room he found Judge Carson and the good friend who had come to deliver him.

It was he who saved him once before, when nobody else came to his rescue. It was he whose "humane exertions" the wretched boy had repaid with the basest ingratitude. It was the owner of the stolen medal.

"Oh, John Harrison!" Bent's voice broke forth in a sob, as he bowed his shamed and convulsed face over the hand that grasped his own.

"I have but just got home, or I should have been here sooner," said young Harrison, with a tremor in his own voice at sight of the boy's emotion. "Luckily, the judge hadn't gone to bed; but I had to wake Keach up out of his first nap."

Bent stood and trembled, and shed tears down his remorseful face.

“Aren't you glad?” said the young man. “I've come to sign your bail-bond, you know, so that you can go home to your mother, and sleep in your own bed to-night.”

“But — *you!*” stammered the prisoner. “After I — ”

Almost he would rather have gone back into that dismal cell than have accepted freedom at the hands of John Harrison. If he had never before known what coals of fire were, he knew now.

The bond was signed, however, and he was free. He had no words to thank anybody. He started to go.

“I'll walk with you,” said John Harrison, cheerily, coming to his side.

And they went out into the sweet night-air, and the light of the moon and stars.

Bent tried to say something, but his voice stuck in his throat.

“I've seen your mother,” said John Harrison, as they walked up the street together. “She had had no doubt but that your innocence would appear, and that you would be discharged. She had just heard of the different result. We must hasten, my boy, for she is suffering on your account. You and I, Bent, don't know how mothers suffer when their boys are in trouble!”

Still Bent could not talk. John went with him to his father's gate.

“Now, hurry in,” he said; “they are sitting up for you.”

“You come in, too, won’t you?” said Bent. “*They* can thank you.”

“No need of any thanks,” John replied. “Good-night.”

Again Bent struggled to speak; but before he could get his voice the young man was gone, walking fast down the moonshiny street.

“He must think I am a brute!” said Bent to himself. “How he has treated me, and how *I* have treated him!”

He was still lingering at the gate, when the door opened, and his mother stood and looked out, with the dim glow of the lamp-lit entry behind her.

“Is that you, my son?” she said in a hopeful, tremulous voice.

He murmured something, and advanced to the doorstep, where she fell sobbing upon his neck.

Martha stood in the little room beyond, watching him with brightly glistening eyes.

“Well, you have got out, have you?” she said, as his mother, still weeping for joy, drew him into the house. “Was that John Harrison who came to the gate with you?”

“Yes,” said Bent, humbly. “He gave bail for me, when nobody else would.”

“Just like him!” Martha exclaimed.

“But why—how happens it—that you didn’t get discharged?” faltered his mother; “as I certainly

hoped and believed you would, if you were innocent."

The remorseful boy could not stand that.

"Because I am *not* innocent!" he burst forth impetuously.

"Not innocent!" gasped his mother, sinking down upon a chair. "You told me --"

"I didn't steal the medal, and I said I didn't break into the house. But that was half a lie. I knew all about its being broken into."

"You were there?"

"Yes, I was there; I *went* into the house after the fellows had *broken* in. The law, I suppose, would make me out as bad as they are. So I couldn't own up to what I did do, and I wouldn't name them — I wouldn't be so mean as that."

Mrs. Barry was dumb with consternation. Martha compressed her lips, and kept her severe eyes on the guilty boy. He sat with his head sunk on his breast, his features working, and his breath coming short and thick, after his impulsive confession.

"How did you — how did you come to —?" his mother asked at length.

"Because I was a fool; I don't know of any other reason," said Bent.

"And what are you going to do now?" Martha asked.

She had less charity for him than her mother had, as was natural enough. She thought he ought to suffer.

“Take the consequences, I suppose,” Bent replied, more firmly than he had before spoken.

He even found a consolation in that thought; he had done wrong, and he would take the consequences. It was a sort of pillow of rest to his miserable head as he lay thinking over his conduct, alone in his room that night.

“I won’t shirk. I won’t try to get off by laying the blame on others,” he said to himself again and again. “But I will just get through the best I can — and take the consequences.”

John Harrison’s generous and noble conduct had produced a strange effect upon him. It was as if a great light had streamed in upon his darkened conscience. His previous inward struggles, on discovering that he was implicated in stealing the very medal awarded for the saving of his own life, had prepared him for that light.

He now began to compare himself with John.

“He was just about as old as I am now when he pulled me out of the water. But what a different boy he was! He was full of fun, and as fond of a good time as anybody. But he never let his fun interfere with his studies, or anything he ought to do. He was always ready to help others — even to risk his life,” — as poor Bent knew only too well.

“That made his folks always so fond and proud of him — as well they might be! while I — ”

He gnashed his teeth at the thought of his own folly and guilt.

Yet John was a plain sort of young fellow, without the least pretence of goodness or heroism.

“Not particularly good-looking,” thought Bent; “and so quiet! That’s what almost made me forget he ever did save my life. He seemed to have forgotten it himself, as if it had been a sort of accident. But his bailing me out of jail to-night shows that it wasn’t an accident, nor anything of the sort.”

So the tired and unhappy boy thought and thought, until he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

MORE PRISONERS.

THE next day his mother and sister tried to make him talk more freely about the affair, and name his accomplices. But he was afraid he had already said too much, and he remained reserved and silent.

Martha gave him sound advice. "Your only way," she said, "is to go right over to John Harrison, and tell him everything. He can do more for you than anybody else can."

It would have been well for him if he had followed this wise counsel. But he could not make up his mind to tell all the truth.

He was alone in the garden that afternoon, in a wretched state of mind, not knowing what to do with himself, when a tall, lank, ill-dressed girl came and spoke to him over the back fence.

It was Jane Cavoort, Seth's sister.

"He wants to see you," she whispered, "up in Watson's woods; he says you will know where."

"I'll see," he muttered, adding to himself, as he walked away, "They don't dare to be caught talking with me now. I wish I might never speak with one of them again. But I'll go."

He did not like to show himself on the street, so he stole out by the back way, and hurried to the woods.

Having got over the fence where he had first talked over the miserable business of the burglary with Luke Snaffy, he gave a whistle, and presently saw Seth come out from behind some bushes.

"What do you want?" Bent sulkily demanded, as they approached each other.

"What do you suppose I want?" said Seth. "It's to see ye, and talk with ye, of course. How are ye getting along?"

"Like a horse in the mire; thanks to you fellows," Bent replied.

"Needn't thank us," said Seth. "If you hadn't gone to carry the medal back when old Jason was on the watch, 'twould have been all right. And that was your fault, not ours."

"But who took the medal in the first place, and got me into the scrape? Oh, it makes me mad to think of it!" Bent exclaimed.

"There's no use being mad," Seth answered. "You're in a scrape, and now the next thing is to get out."

"Get out! That's easily said."

"And easy done, too."

"I should like to know how," Bent said, incredulously.

"Perfectly simple. You're free. You've got legs of your own. Run away." And Seth stood regarding him with a grin.

"But I am out on bail," said Bent.

"I know it. But that makes no sort of difference. Put out!"

“And leave John Harrison to pay my bail-bond — five hundred dollars?”

“Why not?” said Seth. “He can afford it.”

Bent was so full of wrath and indignation that he could not speak for a moment. He turned away with a furious countenance, and Seth thought he was going.

“Why, what’s the matter?” he cried. “Look here! What have I said?”

“Don’t you know?” Bent replied, turning back and facing him. “That shows what sort of a fellow YOU are!”

“Why, I don’t see,” said Seth.

“No, you don’t! *He* saved my life when nobody else would; then, after I had gone with you fellows to break into his house, *he* bailed me when nobody else would. After all that, you would have me give him the slip, — leave him to pay the bond; and you don’t see how mean it is! That’s the worst of it.”

Bent turned away again.

“But what else *can* you do?” Seth demanded, following him.

“I can die, for one thing; and I will before I will do such a thing as that,” said Bent.

“And look here!” Seth persisted; “you ain’t going to blow on us?”

“That’s what you’re anxious about! That’s what you want me to run away for! I understand! And now I know why you sent for me to meet you here.”

“Well, of course. Though you’ve got into a scrape, I don’t see why you should drag us in.”

"You needn't be afraid!" said Bent. "It's lucky for you that I've got more honor than all the rest of you. I guessed what you wanted of me. And there's one thing, Seth Cavoort, I wanted to see you for."

"What is it?"

"That plunder has all got to go back, what there is left of it. That troubles me more than anything else now. If you don't see to it, I shall manage somehow to let John Harrison know where it is."

"We'll see to it," Seth promised, readily.

He had no idea of keeping his promise. And yet Bent was saved the trouble of warning John Harrison.

Luke Snaffy had already taken alarm and left town; and that evening Seth Cavoort and Will Wing made up their minds to follow him.

"Since *he* won't run away, *we* must; for of course he'll blow on us," said Seth, judging Bent by himself.

The two fugitives resolved to carry off a little more of the plunder, and approached the old bridge in the woods for the purpose. The moon had just risen when they stole through the bushes down into the ravine. Seth was foremost, stooping low, and dragging his carpet-bag after him; but just as his head was well under the edge of the bridge, he gave a start, and threw himself back upon his companion.

"What is it?" Will whispered.

"Somebody there," replied Seth, hastily retreating.

"Must be Luke," said Will.

“Boys! boys! it's me!” the *somebody* called after them in a suppressed voice, and they halted in the bushes.

“It ain't him!” cried Seth, and started to run.

Two persons, instead of one, sprang out from the shelter of the bridge. The truth was, the hiding-place of the plunder had been discovered that morning, and some friends of John Harrison had taken turns in keeping watch there ever since.

Will was seized by one of them, and captured after a struggle; while Seth got away by sheer good running, but without his bag.

It was now Will's turn to occupy the mosquito-thronged cell in the dismal town lock-up; and he had hardly left it for the county jail when he was succeeded by another culprit.

It was Seth Cavoort, who had been arrested by the police of Boston.

He, too, was committed to jail to await the action of the grand jury. But Luke Snaffy was still at large.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIAL.

THE grand jury met in two weeks, considered the evidence against Benton Barry, Will Wing, and Seth Cavoort, and found bills of indictment against them for breaking and entering the premises of Abel Harrison on the night of the 10th of August. These indictments, or formal charges, carried the cases to the superior criminal court, by which they were to be tried.

Meanwhile, Bent's father had come home, more broken than ever by this new sorrow, and several interviews had taken place between him and Lawyer Barstow, at which Bent was present.

At one of these interviews Barstow stated that he had talked with the district attorney, who promised that, if Bent would consent to give true and full evidence against his accomplices, the charge against himself should be dropped. "It was John Harrison who got him to make that promise," the lawyer added; "and I think you should take advantage of it."

His father also urged and entreated him, but Bent remained stubborn. He would never, he said, give evidence against anybody merely to save himself. He did not steal the medal; he did not break into

the house. He would simply stick to that declaration, and take the consequences.

Even while his father tried to convince him that he was acting from a mistaken sense of honor, he could not but admire the firmness with which his son refused to sacrifice others in order to secure his own safety.

The weeks that dragged by were weeks of terrible anxiety and suspense to the wretched boy. Much as he dreaded the trial, he wished it might come speedily, so full of suffering was the intervening time.

In February the court was in session, and Bent was expecting every day to hear that his case was reached, when a new incident occurred. Luke Snaffy was recognized, from his photograph, by an officer in New York, arrested, and taken home.

When brought before Judge Carson he was confronted by an unexpected witness. This was a Boston pawn-broker, in whose possession a pair of the stolen vases had been found. He had described very accurately the person of whom he received them, and now he positively identified Luke as that person.

It was too late to get his case on the docket for that session, and there was talk of postponing the other cases, in order that the four culprits might be tried together.

It was with this uncertainty hanging over him that Bent entered the court-room with his father

on the morning when at last his case was to be called.

They took their places within the bar. Soon Mr. Barstow appeared and spoke with them; and then came another lawyer, a celebrated pleader, whom Mr. Barry had also employed to defend his son. This was Mr. Sourby. He had but a cold and careless word for his client, from whom he turned in a lounging, weary sort of way, and went to talking with a group of men near by.

“Little he cares for anything in my case but his fee and his reputation,” Bent thought.

Other lawyers came in; some stood talking, or sat looking over papers. Jurymen entered, some with newspapers, which they read in their seats; the very men upon whose verdict the poor fellow felt that his fate was to hang.

Then appeared an old man, thin and bent, with puckered face, who took his seat in the witnesses' box. It was old Jason Locke. Bent knew he had come to testify against him.

Other witnesses followed, and, in the mean while, the benches behind the bar were filling with a crowd of rough and vicious-looking spectators. Bent also recognized a number of his own acquaintances, whom interest in the famous burglary case had brought to court.

Then a sight met his eyes that made him shudder. A number of prisoners were brought in, handcuffed to a chain. Two of these were Seth Cavoort and

Will Wing. Less fortunate than himself, they had been unable to get bail. They had been kept in confinement since their arrest, and were now brought into court like the lowest and most dangerous criminals.

Then entered at a side-door the judge and clerk of the court, preceded by the sheriff, who thumped with his staff of office on the floor, and called out in a loud voice :

“ COURT ! ”

The buzz of voices ceased ; the judge took his seat on the bench ; and a pompous deputy sheriff, standing up at a side desk, proclaimed :

“ All persons having anything further to do with this honorable court, adjourned to this time and place, may now draw near and give their attendance, and they shall be heard. God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ! ”

It was a winter's day, but already the air of the court-room was becoming close and heated from the steaming crowd.

Two of the prisoners, convicted the day before, had been brought in to receive the sentence of the court, which the clerk read to them — three years each in the state prison.

Another wished to plead guilty, and avoid a trial. The clerk addressed him :

“ James Burns, your counsel waives the reading of the indictment in this case, which charges you with a larceny of a harness from a barn in North

Cambridge in July last. Are you guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty," said the culprit, standing in the prisoners' pen, beside Seth Cavoort.

His counsel then addressed the court, asking for a mild sentence. He got it — six months in the house of correction.

These proceedings had a very solemn import for Bent Barry, who felt that his turn was coming soon. They took up the time until he heard with a start his own name called. The case of the COMMONWEALTH *against* BENTON BARRY had been reached at last.

The cases of Seth Cavoort and Will Wing were called at the same time.

To Bent's relief, and to Mr. Barstow's surprise, the district attorney did not urge a postponement, in order that Luke Snaffy might be tried with the others. They found out afterwards why he did not desire a delay.

The indictments were read by the clerk, solemnly charging the boys with the crime for which they had been brought to trial, and to each the question was put:

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

And each in turn — Seth and Will in the prisoners' pen, and Bent inside the bar — stood and made answer:

"Not guilty!"

The jury of twelve men having been chosen, and duly sworn to "well and truly try" the matter before them, the trial began.

The district attorney, in a plain, quiet, straightforward talk, opened the case for the Commonwealth.

As he went on, stating point by point what he was prepared to prove, Bent was filled with consternation. His face was flushed, and he was hot all over, except his feet, which were clammy-cold. The prosecuting attorney seemed to know all about the burglary, to its minute details. How had he learned so much?

But he did not seem to have heard of any mitigating circumstances in Bent's case, which he made out to be as black as any.

When he sat down, Bent found himself in a steaming sweat,—his feet still cold, his head hot.

"Can he prove all that?" his father asked, in an anxious whisper.

"I don't know; I don't see how he can," Bent faltered.

Mr. Barry heaved a sigh of discouragement. From that time he had small hope of his boy's acquittal.

Old Jason Locke was the first witness, and he made fun for the jury and the spectators until the court adjourned for dinner.

In the afternoon Dr. Lombard was called to the stand. He was followed by Officer Keach, who swore to the capture of the silver medal. It was produced in court, and Bent saw it passed round among the jury.

The next witness was one of the young men who had captured Will Wing at the old bridge. He was sharply cross-examined by Lawyer Cody, a bluff,

red-faced man, who acted as counsel for Seth and Will.

The witness had identified an old carpet-bag which he found on the spot, and which he believed Will or Seth had carried there when they went for the plunder.

"But you don't *know* that," the lawyer insisted. "You don't know but that *I* carried it there."

"Perhaps you did," replied the witness, dryly; "but I didn't catch you."

Even the honorable court joined in the laugh against the lawyer.

"You don't *know*," he again urged, shaking his finger at the witness, "that that bag belongs to either of the defendants."

"No," was the quiet reply. "I think it more likely they stole it."

The laugh was against him every time. Still Cody pressed the witness.

"You can't *swear* that they were going in under the bridge for any of that plunder. You don't *know* but their object was perfectly innocent."

"Well, no," said the witness, with a humorous drawl; "they may have been going in there for a prayer-meeting, but I don't believe they were."

"You can go!" roared the lawyer, angrily, amidst the laughter that followed. And the witness stepped down.

John Harrison was called to swear to the house having been broken into, and to identify some of the stolen property. He gave his evidence regarding

the medal with a reluctance which made it all the more damaging to poor Bent.

The district attorney read aloud from the inscription: “ ‘ *For humane exertions in saving the life of Benton Barry.* ’ It seems you had, on a previous occasion, saved his life, and that the medal was awarded for that action ? ”

John gave a modest nod of assent.

“ And it was stolen from the house during the absence of your father’s family last summer ? ”

“ It got out of the house some way,” said John.

“ And the boy whose life you had saved,” said the attorney, with strong emphasis, turning to give Bent a severe glance, “ and who had the medal in his possession when he was arrested for the burglary, never had it with your knowledge and consent ? ”

John was obliged to answer no.

“ That is all,” said the attorney.

“ One moment, if you please,” said Mr. Sourby, as the witness was about to step down.

Then followed questions which the prosecuting attorney objected to, and which were fought over for the next hour with great vehemence by both sides. Mr. Sourby put them in all sorts of ways, with great ingenuity and perseverance, and finally made it appear, by John’s answers, that he did not believe Bent stole the medal; that he would have trusted him with it; and that he believed he took possession of it in order to return it.

Bent was filled with hope. Even his father felt

encouraged. They saw now what an able and valuable counsel the great Sourby was.

But the appearance of the next witness dashed their hopes. It was Luke Snaffy, brought over from the jail in charge of an officer. With a vicious, defiant smile, he mounted the stand.

Then Bent knew why the district attorney had been so willing that the trial should go on, and how it happened that he was so well informed regarding the details of the burglary. Luke had done what Bent would not do: he had confessed everything, and consented to give evidence against his companions.

But now Sourby sprang to his feet, and a great battle ensued over the admission of this evidence. It lasted till the court adjourned, the judge reserving his decision till the next morning.

After the adjournment, Bent went tremblingly with his father to an interview with their lawyers in a private room.

Sourby, who appeared so languid and weary in the morning, was now fresh and vigorous. "Will Luke's testimony be admitted?" Mr. Barry inquired.

"Certainly," the lawyer replied. "The court can't decide any differently. I was fighting merely to gain time. I must be prepared for the cross-examination. That wretch will tell everything. And now, my boy, *you* must tell *me* everything."

Bent consented, and then and there related all that he knew regarding the burglary.



To his surprise, he slept well that night, and entered the court-room the next morning in a calmer state of mind than on the previous day.

The decision of the court was as Sourby had predicted, and Luke was put upon the stand.

He told a pretty correct story, except that he was too much inclined to throw the blame upon his accomplices, and to shield himself.

He was cross-examined first by Seth and Will's lawyer; then Sourby took him in hand.

"You young fellows," said the eminent counsel, beginning in the gentlest manner, "entered on this unfortunate business rather as a matter of fun than anything else, I believe?"

"Yes, we thought we would have a little sport," grinned Luke.

"And that's the way you represented it to Benton Barry when you first proposed it to him, sitting on the fence in Watson's woods?"

Another admission from the grinning Snaffy.

"But after you got into the house you made a more serious thing of it than you at first intended?"

"Rather more serious."

"You and Wing entered first, by the window; then you say you let Cavoort in at the door. Which of you let Barry in?"

"I believe it was Cavoort."

"You had been in the house then some time, hadn't you?"

"Yes; we had got about ready to leave."

"But you stopped to drink something; that was natural. Barry got a little gay, didn't he?"

"He got to feeling a little better."

"He hadn't been feeling very well, then?"

"He'd been kind o' blue."

"Kind o' blue?" repeated the lawyer, encouragingly. "What was he blue about? A little astonished, perhaps, to find what you had been doing in the house?"

"Yes, he was some astonished," Luke answered, with another grin at the recollection.

"Felt sick, in short," the wily lawyer went on, "till you cheered him with a little liquor. Then, when he discovered the medal in your possession the next day, he was astonished again, wasn't he? A little angry, in fact, when you proposed to hammer it out and sell it?"

"He didn't seem to like the idea."

"You said, in your direct testimony, that he offered to take it as his share of the plunder. Now, didn't he say that simply in order to get it into his possession?"

"I suppose he did."

"And don't you know that his sole object in getting control of it was to restore it to its rightful owner?"

"I don't know that," said Luke.

"Perhaps you haven't thought much about it. But now I want you to recall an interview which took place between you and Barry and Cavoort the

night after the housebreaking. Do you remember that Barry came up to you and Cavoort while you were talking at Mrs. Cavoort's gate?"

"Yes, I remember about that."

"And he told you, did he not, that he had just been to put the medal through the break in the library window, and that he had seen a man keeping watch there who frightened him?"

"He seemed a good deal frightened," said Luke, evasively.

"And he told you what he went there for?"

"He got scared when he first saw the medal —"

Luke was trying to go back on his track, and make the matter appear worse for Bent, but Sourby stopped him.

"Never mind about that. Did not Barry say that he had been to put the medal you stole back into the house?"

"I believe he did."

"You *believe!*" said Sourby, sternly. "Don't you *know* he did?"

Luke twisted himself about, grew very red, and reluctantly admitted — quailing before the lawyer's terrible look —

"Yes, he did."

"Why didn't you say so, then?"

"I d'n' know!" said Luke, quite losing his self-possession, and looking foolish and embarrassed.

"You do know, too!" thundered Sourby. "All along you have been trying to make out as bad a

story as possible against the boy you got into the scrape. Isn't that the fact?"

"I d'n' know 's I have," said Luke, trying hard to get back his vicious, defiant grin, which had deserted him.

"*You d'n' know 's you have!*" repeated the lawyer, with overpowering sarcasm. "Well, we have had enough of *you!*" and with a gesture of utter contempt, he motioned the witness to step aside.

Luke obeyed, cringing like a whipped cur. An officer immediately took him in charge, and conducted him back to jail.

Bent was in a glow of triumph. It seemed to him that his case actually stood better than it did before Luke gave his testimony.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEFENCE AND THE VERDICT.

SNAFFY was the last witness for the government.

The prosecuting attorney here rested his case, and Cody opened for Wing and Cavoort.

He was followed by Barstow, who stated briefly the line of defence which had been decided upon in Bent's case.

"Even from the evidence produced here by the State, you must have been satisfied," he said to the jury, "that if Barry was in any way concerned in the house-breaking, he was dragged into it ignorantly and unwillingly.

"It seems hardly necessary, after the shameful confession made here by the ringleader in the robbery, that we should take the trouble to put any witnesses of our own on the stand. Yet we shall show you, by Barry's conduct after the burglary, that he could have had no motive for committing it; that he was not a criminal, but, if anything, a dupe."

Witnesses were then produced to break down Luke's character for veracity, and to show that both Seth and Will were in their beds, asleep, on the night of the house-breaking.

Even Seth's widowed mother — a poor old heart-broken creature — took the stand and swore, in a tremulous and scarcely audible voice, that she knew

her son could not have been out of her house that night after half-past eight o'clock.

"How do you know?" the boy's lawyer asked.

"Because he was in at half-past eight, and went to bed at nine; and I was up all night with a dreadful attack of rheumatiz, and I went to his room twice, thinking I would send him for the doctor, but he was so fast asleep I didn't have the heart to wake him."

The district attorney was quite gentle in his cross-examination of the unhappy woman. There was no reason to apprehend that her testimony would have much weight with the jury, and even he could not but feel pity for the widowed mother giving false evidence to save her son.

Will's father swore roundly that he locked *his* son into his room on the night of the burglary, and that he could not possibly have got out at either door or window.

The prosecuting attorney, in the cross-examination, led him on, step by step, to make out Will a sober and quiet boy, who rarely went out nights.

"Then why," he suddenly asked, "did you think it necessary to lock him into his chamber on the night of the 10th of August?"

This was a poser. Poor Mr. Wing hid his trembling hands under his coat-tails, and opened and shut his mouth like a fish, without making a sound.

"That will do," said the attorney, with a satisfied smile.

Seth Cavoort was then put upon the stand, pris-

oners being permitted by our laws to testify in their own behalf, and courts and juries taking their evidence for what they consider it worth.

Seth leaned on the rail before him, and doggedly denied that he had anything to do with the burglary, or that he knew anything about the carpet-bag found near the old bridge, and the plunder found under it.

He was obliged to admit, however, that he was with Will at the time of Will's capture; and when cross-examined, he made sad work trying to explain why he was in the woods that night, and why he ran away.

He was followed by Will, who also denied everything.

"Were you aware," said his lawyer, "that your father locked you in your room on the night of the 10th of August?"

"I didn't know as he did that night, but I knew he did some nights," replied Will.

"Do you know of any reason *why* he sometimes locked you in?"

Cody had had a brief whispered consultation with his client before putting him on the stand, and it was plain that an effort would now be made to bolster up the elder Wing's shaky evidence on this point.

"Yes, I do," said Will, boldly; "'coz I git up and walk in my sleep sometimes."

"Is that fact generally known?"

"I guess not, for my folks don't like to speak of it; they think it might injure my prospects."

There was a pretty general laugh at this, and Will himself had to grin. The attempt to explain the inconsistency in his father's evidence was almost too transparent, and nobody — certainly not Will himself — had ever before suspected that he was a boy with "prospects."

The district attorney made a great deal of fun in the cross-examination, especially when he urged Will to say what his "prospects" were, and how they could be injured.

"Well, for one thing," replied Will, hard pressed, "if I should want to get married, and the girls knew I walked in my sleep —"

The end of the sentence was lost amid the laughter that convulsed the spectators and the jury, and shook even the sides of the court.

Order being restored, Martha Barry was called to the stand. Bent had been laughing with the rest. But he did not feel like laughing now.

Martha testified to finding the medal in his trunk, and to his having started out in order to return it to Jason Locke, the morning when he was arrested.

Sourby continued: "Then, when the officer brought him to your house, your brother wished you to take the medal, and you attempted to do so. Was it to help him steal it?"

"To help him steal it!" Martha repeated, indignantly, not quite seeing the lawyer's drift.

"I think not," said he, with a smile. "Nobody suspects you of any such motive. But will you be kind enough to tell us what your motive was?"

‘To keep that precious medal safe, and get it back to Mr. John Harrison, where I knew my brother wished it to go,’ said Martha, her face beaming with all the purity of truth.

Bent had been listening with intense interest to every word that fell from his sister’s lips, and when this answer came, he was blinded by a gust of tears.

It had been a question whether Bent himself should go upon the stand ; but his lawyers decided that he should not, to his immense relief and satisfaction. Martha’s evidence had produced a strong effect, and Sourby wished to have the case go to the jury as soon as possible.

It had been all along a great disadvantage to Bent that he was tried at the same time with Wing and Cavoort ; and now their lawyer had to make a long argument in their behalf.

Sourby followed in a brief but eloquent plea for his boy client. There could be no crime, he declared, without a *motive* ; and no *motive* had been proved in Bent’s case. “On the contrary, as everything goes to show, he had not at any time the slightest intention of committing a burglary.”

Bent knew well how far this was from being true ; yet he hung upon the great pleader’s words with trembling hope.

“He, at the worst, simply followed the lead of a vile companion, who persistently deceived him as to the object of the visit to the Harrison house. To Benton Barry it was merely a boyish freak. You,

gentlemen of the jury, all have been boys yourselves, and some of you are fathers of boys; you know their faults and their temptations; and you are not going to judge one who does a foolish thing as you would judge a man."

He followed up this part of his plea until some of those fathers on the jury benches winked at him with moist eyes, and tears started down Mr. Barry's cheeks.

He then dwelt upon the boy's astonishment and heart-sickness when, after being *let into* the house which he had no hand in *breaking into*, he saw what had been done. Lastly, he drew a strong contrast between the self-confessed guilty wretch who would have pounded out the Humane Society's medal and sold it, and the younger and weaker boy, who had so honestly, earnestly, even heroically, rescued it and attempted to return it.

"Such a boy, whose worst fault is a too sympathetic and impulsive nature,— whose misfortune is that he fell into bad company that deceived and misled him,— such a boy awaits your solemn verdict.

"And I confidently rely upon you," said the great lawyer, in conclusion, "not to blast his whole future life for the commission of a single fault; not to plunge a most respectable family — a father and mother and sister — into life-long sorrow and grief and shame on his account; but to restore him to them, and to society and a useful career, by meting out to him the justice and mercy which you would wish to have meted out to one of your sons in his place."

It was a most effective plea, and if the case could have gone at once to the jury, Bent would have been safe.

But now the district attorney rose, and in a cool, quiet, unimpassioned, convincing tone, closed the case for the government.

He complimented his eminent legal brother in the highest terms for the eloquence to which they had just listened. "But," said he, "romance is one thing, and hard facts are another. Unfortunately, we have to deal here with hard facts." And he proceeded to show what the facts in Bent's case were.

"He joined the young house-breakers in the same spirit and with the same motives which actuated them. What if he did not intend that the *boyish freak* — as the learned counsel ingeniously terms it — should go as far as it did? A similar excuse might be set up for almost every culprit brought to this bar. When evil-doers, especially the young, set out in the course of crime, they seldom intend to go as far as they do go.

"For that course is a downward course, and once launched in it, 'tis not easy to stop. They put from the shore with confidence and glee; they are drawn gradually into the current; and almost before they are aware, they are dashing in the rapids, and overwhelmed in the Niagara of crime.

"I don't think any more of Luke Snaffy," the attorney went on to say, "than the other side does, or you probably do, gentlemen of the jury; but his

story is so far corroborated, that we are obliged to accept it as substantially true.

“He says there were four engaged in the burglary; and Jason Locke saw the four white sacks carried off by moonlight. The venerable Dr. Lombard had already seen, on the evening of the burglary, the Barry boy prowling in the rear of the house that was to be despoiled.

“Can you doubt that he was wilfully and knowingly participating in the crime with which he here stands charged? — that, if he did not with his own hands break into the house, he aided and abetted the others by keeping watch while they broke in? — or that he was one of the four who carried away the four white pillow-cases filled with plunder?”

“Gentlemen, you *cannot* doubt! You would *like* to doubt, — so would I! But it is my duty to present to you the facts as they are; and yours to render a verdict, not in obedience to your sympathies, but in strict accordance with those facts.

“You have heard a good deal about Barry’s astonishment and heart-sickness when he found amidst the plunder the very medal awarded John Harrison for saving his life. Well might he be astonished, — well might he be heart-sick!”

And the attorney proceeded unsparingly to depict the baseness and ingratitude of the boy who had not only broken into the house of such a benefactor, but had actually assisted in carrying away, with other plunder, that sacred medal.

"*A boyish freak!*" he repeated, with rising vehemence. "Gentlemen, that was a boyish freak of the kind we are here to punish! If such freaks are to go unpunished, we may as well close the court at once and go home.

"But we are told that a boy who could commit such an act of horrible ingratitude as that *got into bad company!* Where, let me ask, could he find worse company than himself? They were all bad company, and he was as bad as the rest."

Bent all this time sat in a stupor of conscious guilt and despair, seeing himself as he was shown by the merciless attorney. He no longer hoped for anything.

He scarcely listened when the attorney went on to review the cases of Will and Seth, or when the judge gave his final instructions to the jury.

They had risen from their seats. Judge and jury were solemnly standing.

Then an oath of fidelity was administered to an officer, who took the twelve men in charge and conducted them to the jury-room, where they were to make up their verdict.

It was getting late; there seemed to be no hope that they would soon agree, and in a little while the court adjourned.

The spectators went out reluctantly. The lawyers took their hats.

"We may as well go home," said Mr. Barry, from the depths of his utterly hopeless grief.

Bent rose mechanically. To pass another night with the uncertainty of the verdict hanging over him seemed too dreadful. But he started to go. Just then Mr. Barstow, who had passed out through a side door, came walking quickly back.

"The jury have agreed," he said. And presently in marched the twelve, still guarded by the officer. Bent sank down again, feeling very faint.

Spectators came crowding back. The prisoners were brought in. The judge returned to his seat. Order was restored.

"Mr. Foreman, and gentlemen of the jury," said the clerk, standing in his place before the judge's long desk.

The twelve rose to their feet, solemn, silent, amid the hush that ensued.

"Have you agreed upon a verdict?"

And the foreman answered, "We have."

"Seth Cavoort, William Wing, Benton Barry," said the clerk, "stand up!"

The culprits obeyed. Again the clerk addressed the jury.

"What say you? — is the defendant, Seth Cavoort, guilty, or not guilty?"

"GUILTY."

"Is the defendant, William Wing, guilty, or not guilty?"

"GUILTY."

The intense silence was broken by a slight rustling movement of the crowd at each response.

It seemed to Bent that he was changing to stone as he stood awaiting his own fate.

“Is the defendant, Benton Barry, guilty, or not guilty?”

And the foreman responded, in the same firm, deliberate tone:

“GUILTY.”

So it was. Even the eloquence of Sourby had not availed to secure the boy's acquittal.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTERWARDS.

It seemed hard, but it was just. None knew better than Benton Barry himself that he had broken wholesome and necessary laws, and that he deserved punishment.

He seemed to be in a dream, and was quite surprised when, after a little talk with the lawyers, the court adjourned and he was still free.

“Come!” said his father, in a stifled voice.

“What is it?” said Benton, regaining his courage.

“I am not going home?”

“Yes,” said his father.

“I don’t see,” the boy faltered. “The foreman said *guilty*.”

“Yes; but your bail holds good until you have received the sentence of the court. That is deferred until to-morrow.”

The words seemed wrung like drops of anguish from the father’s heart. He took his boy’s arm. In silence they walked out together.

It was evening when they reached home. Martha, who preceded them by an hour or two, had told her mother that the case was looking brighter for Bent, and that the trial was near its close.

Mrs. Barry, full of anxiety, yet not without hope,

was on the watch, and at the approach of her husband and son, she flew to the door.

Bent, who was foremost, met her with a more resolute and cheerful face than he had shown for a long while. The agony of doubt was past. The worst had come, and he had grown strong. The poor woman, deceived by his looks, cried out :

“ It is all over ! ”

“ Yes, mother,” said Bent, calmly but seriously.

“ Oh, and you are *acquitted* ? ” And she tottered forward to throw herself on his neck.

It was a terrible moment to Bent. He was beginning to know what it was to break a mother’s heart.

“ Tell her, father,” he said, a great sob convulsing him.

“ Not *guilty* ? My boy is not found *guilty* ? ” she cried out, wildly.

She did not hear the answer. But she saw her husband’s face, which told her all.

They carried her into the house. Bent thought at first the news had killed her ; but slowly life and suffering came back.

Her boy had come home to pass one more night with her, to sleep once more on his old bed, before receiving the sentence of a felon, and meeting a felon’s doom.

Then Benton knew, as he had never known before, what a home it was whose blessings he had thrown away, and what deep and loving hearts were those his reckless misdeeds had crushed.

“Why didn't I see how it was? Why didn't I stop to think?” he said to himself, in the loneliness of his room, as he lay awake that night.

There had been some talk of appealing his case, in the hope that he might have another trial, and be acquitted. But Bent himself said “No.” The verdict rendered was a just verdict, and his father had already spent more money in trying to get him off than the family could afford.

So he passed his last night under the old roof, and sat at his mother's table for the last time, for he knew not how long.

In the morning, when the hour came for him to depart, it seemed as if his mother could never let him go. She clung to him with passionate love and sorrow. She repeated over and over her words of affectionate counsel. She implored him to remember his good resolutions, and take the lesson of his punishment in a humble and true spirit.

“For if I live to see you come home and begin life anew, with a new heart, we shall feel that even this sorrow has not been without its blessing.”

Then she prayed with him, and afterwards remained still on her knees when his father took him away.

In court that morning there was more talk by the lawyers, Mr. Barstow making a strong plea for mitigation of sentence in Bent's case.

The judge was himself inclined to mercy. But the offence was a grave one — breaking and enter-

ing a dwelling-house in the night-time, with felonious intent, which is *burglary*. The boys had been duly convicted, and the punishment required by law was imprisonment in the state prison.

Cavoort and Wing were first sentenced to two years each.

Then the clerk addressed Bent, who stood to receive his doom.

“Benton Barry, hearken to the sentence the court has awarded against you. The court having duly considered your offence, orders that you be punished therefor by imprisonment for the term of one year, one day of which term is to be solitary imprisonment, the residue thereof to be confinement at hard labor; that the sentence be executed upon you in and within the precincts of the state prison at Charlestown, in our county of Middlesex; and that you stand committed to the common jail until you shall be removed to the state prison, in execution of your sentence.”

As one year was the shortest term in the state prison which the law allowed, and as Bent had expected the same punishment as that awarded to Seth and Will, he felt relieved and grateful.

It was hard enough at the best. Bent was immediately taken in charge by an officer, and after brief leave-takings with his father and two or three friends, he was conveyed to the county jail with Seth and Will. There was no longer any distinction made in his favor.

From the jail he was taken in a close wagon, with half a dozen other prisoners, and carried over to the state prison.

There he was washed and clipped, and put into the prison uniform, and locked up in a cell which was to be his lonely home for one year, and a place of such bitter memories, longings, and regrets, as you, my boy, in the freedom of your life, surrounded by relatives and friends, can hardly imagine if you would.

After his first day of solitude, Bent was taken out and drilled to march and keep step in a file of silent felons; then set to learning a trade in a work-shop full of criminals, under the eye of an overseer, where to speak, or even to look around at one's fellows, was a punishable offence.

After working all day in utter silence, the gang was marched back in single file at night—*tramp, tramp*—to the kitchen-window, where each man received in a pewter dish the coarse fare of his supper, which he carried to his cell, and ate in solitude behind the iron grating of his bolted door.

How often, in those lonely hours, munching his bread and molasses or boiled beef and potatoes, Bent thought of his mother's table, and the sweet privileges he had thrown away!

Sundays he had for reading and for writing letters. Never a week passed without bringing one letter at least from his mother and sister, while he, who had always before hated the sight of pen and

paper, now took comfort in writing regularly to them.

He also attended services in the chapel on Sunday, where one day he saw an old acquaintance. It was Luke Snaffy, also in the prison uniform, with cropped hair.

Though Luke had made his confession and given evidence against his companions, in the hope of receiving favor, no favor had been promised him. Put on trial, he had been convicted, and sentenced to three years of hard labor.

Of course Bent had no opportunity to speak with his former companions, although Seth and Will were in the same work-shop with himself; nor had he any wish ever to speak with them again.

Occasionally the chaplain of the prison visited him, or the warden talked with him; and now came a never-to-be-forgotten day.

He was taken from the work-shop, and told to wash himself; then conducted to the prison reception-room, where he was met by his mother and Martha.

I fear it was an occasion of more sorrow than joy to them all. And yet there was comfort in the interview. They brought him books and flowers, and news of the outside world; and they found him already looking forward to beginning a new life after his release.

He had been told that by good behavior he could shorten the term of his imprisonment one day for

every month. That would be twelve days taken off from his year.

It did not seem much at first. But towards the close, these twelve days loomed up like a little eternity. How could he have endured to pass them in prison? With what gratitude and joy he accepted the respite which the warden's recommendation to the Governor and Council brought to him at last!

He *had* taken the lesson of his punishment in the right spirit; he *had* remembered his good resolutions and the tearful entreaties of his mother; and when restored to his home and to her it was soon found that the change wrought in him was worth all it had cost.

The shadow he had brought upon his youth still hangs over him; but it grows lighter as the years go by and he leaves the dreadful past farther and farther behind him.

A little while ago he visited his sister (who, the reader may be interested to know, is now the wife of John Harrison), and saw the silver medal on the parlor table, where she had placed it.

She started to put it out of his sight, but he stopped her. "Why shouldn't I bear the sight of it," he said, "since I think of it so often? And why shouldn't I bear to be reminded how I was twice saved? — once from drowning, and again from something worse than all the troubles I went through!"

THE TODDLEBYS ON A TRAIN.



CHAPTER I.

WADLEY TODDLEBY'S MISTAKE.

OLD Mr. and Mrs. Toddleby, of the County of Worcester, in the State of Massachusetts, had never in their lives been fifty miles from home, when the great journey was undertaken of which I am about to write a history. Their eldest son, Joseph P. Toddleby, Esq., had been fifteen years settled in Brockport, Monroe County, State of New York, and they were now for the first time going to visit him.

Great were the preparations for that journey. They were to take with them their youngest son, Wadley, and leave the house and farm in the charge of their daughter 'Lizbeth, and John Blake, the hired man, who, being fond of each other's society, did not raise the slightest objection to the arrangement.

Among the indispensable preliminaries to the undertaking was the writing of a letter to Joseph, to let him know they were coming. The letter was penned by 'Lizbeth, and Wadley carried it to the

post-office. As there were no stamps in the house, his mother gave him three cents for the postage. On his way home he went through the woods, and filled his pockets with walnuts. Returning, the coat he wore was hung up, and not taken down again till the day they were to start.

“This cut will be jest the thing for you to wear on the journey,” said his mother. “Only brush it up a little, and — The land! what have you got in the pockets?”

“Nothin’, only nuts and things,” said Wadley.

A pan was brought, and the nuts and things were emptied into it.

“Why, my son, where did ye git these three cents?”

“By-y-y!” said Wadley in amazement, “I didn’t know them three cents was there! I d’n’ know where they come from more ’n nothin’!”

Now pennies are not so common in the Toddleby family as to be seen lying around loose, or to be found in pockets where their presence cannot be accounted for. The three, therefore, that turned up with the walnuts and marbles and bullets and spools which Mrs. Toddleby emptied into the pan remained a profound mystery, exciting all sorts of conjectures with regard to their origin, until suddenly Wadley, opening his eyes with consternation, exclaimed, “I SNUM!”

“What, my son? But don’t say you snum agin.”

“You give me three cents to pay the postage on

that letter ; and I snum if I didn't forgit all about it till this minute !”

“ Now I want to know if you did !” exclaimed Mrs. Toddleby, who could with difficulty be brought to think that Wadley ever did anything he could be reasonably blamed for. “ How *did* you happen to ?”

“ You're a pretty fellow to send on an errand !” said 'Lizbeth. “ The letter might just as well not have been written. Instead of going to Joseph, it'll go to the dead-letter office, if it wasn't prepaid.”

“ What's that ? what's that ?” cried Mr. Toddleby, coming into the house. “ This 's a pretty fix !” when the matter was explained to him. “ Here we've made all arrangements to go, and they hain't got word on't ! I never see sich a stupid head as you be !” seizing the boy by the shoulder.

“ He ain't so very much to blame,” interposed Mrs. Toddleby. “ We're all liable to forgit sometimes. There, don't, father !”

“ I ain't shakin' him none to hurt, only to wake him up a little. He seems more 'n half asleep, 'times. Didn't yer mother tell ye over 'n' over agin not to forgit to pay the postage ?”

“ Yes — but — ” began Wadley.

“ I suppose it slipped his mind,” said his mother. “ Things sometimes slip *your* mind, father, careful as *you* be.”

“ Never anything as important as that. What are we to do ? For you yourself said you wouldn't on no account start off on sich a journey without writin'

aforehand, so 's to be sure Joseph's folks would know when to expect us, and be to hum, say nothin' 'bout bein' prepared for comp'ny."

"The land!" said Mrs. Toddleby, turning away with a deprecating air, "I don't imagine it'll make a grain o' difference; though of course I'd ruther they'd have got the letter. But we'll take it along with us, and tell how it was, and that'll excuse us, and we'll have a good laugh over Wadley's mistake. I guess the' ain't no danger but what they'll be to hum, fast enough. It'll be jest as well to take 'em by surprise."

"But *you* know how *you* always hate to have anybody come *here* a-visitin', 'thout your knowin' it, so you can have somethin' cooked for 'em, and the house slicked up a little."

"Oh, we're Joseph's own folks, so he won't mind."

It was accordingly determined that they should make the journey as if nothing had happened; although Mr. Toddleby declared that a blunder at the outset was a bad omen, and that he foresaw that they were going to have trouble.

"If it had been my blunder, instead of Wadley's," 'Lizbeth said confidentially to John Blake, the hired man, "I should never have heard the last of it; and ma would have been so worked up by it, I verily believe she'd have stayed at home."

They were to go by the afternoon train, and soon after dinner John Blake brought the old one-horse wagon to the door.

The trunk which Mrs. Toddleby had been three days packing was locked and strapped; the new travelling-bag, bought expressly for the journey, was also got ready; and Mrs. Toddleby, in her slate-colored drawn-silk bonnet, pongee dress, and black cloth cloak, with her red cashmere shawl on her arm and her black lace veil on her head, and Mr. Toddleby in his big snuff-colored great-coat and tall black hat, and Wadley in his little snuff-colored great-coat and tall black hat, — an exact copy of his father in every particular, — kissed in succession the cheerful 'Lizbeth, and climbed up into the high one-horse wagon.

“Be sure and take good care of everything,” said Mrs. Toddleby, arranging her pongee. “And don't forgit what I told you about —” this thing and that thing, repeating for the twentieth time her parting injunctions.

“Oh, I'll see to everything; and be sure to take good care of yourselves,” said 'Lizbeth. “Good-bye.”

“There's one thing, now!” exclaimed Mrs. Toddleby, making a snatch at the reins as John Blake was driving off. “Wait a minute! that brine, — if you think it wants changin' —”

“Come, we can't stop to talk brine now,” cried Mr. Toddleby, who was getting nervous about the train. “Them steam-cars don't stop for nobody; and we shall haf to hurry, or git left.”

“Never mind,” said Mrs. Toddleby over her shoulder. “I'll tell Blake about the brine. Don't fail to

write!" — raising her voice as away they went. "And look out for fires!!" — flinging back a final scream from under her black lace veil.

Mr. Toddleby gave Blake his charges about the farm and stock as they rode to the depot, which they reached an hour before the cars were due, notwithstanding his fear of being too late for them. The trunk was checked, the tickets bought, and after waiting about six hours, — which appeared to be only one hour by the clock, — they were snatched up by the thundering train.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. TODDLEBY JUST STEPS OUT.

THEY rode all night, and reached Rochester the next morning a little before ten o'clock. Their supper and breakfast they had taken from the travelling-bag; but now Mrs. Toddleby said she felt the need of a cup of tea.

"A cup o' tea 'll do *you* good, too, father. And I guess Wadley better have a cup; he ain't in the habit on 't," turning to a lady whose acquaintance she had made in the car; "I never brought up none of my children to drink anything but cold water, or maybe a tumbler o' milk. But the poor boy had a dreadful hard time ridin' all night."

"I sh'd think 'twas me that had the hard time," said Mr. Toddleby, "settin' up, and holdin' that boy's head on my shoulder, while he slep' like a top."

"I'm sure I spelled ye, and hild him part of the time. Fathers never know what it is to have the care o' childern," (Mrs. Toddleby turned once more to her travelling acquaintance,) "do you think they do, ma'am? When they begin to haf to do what mothers haf to do from the time they be mothers, they think it's a terrible hardship. Poor boy, he ain't a bit stubbid! Hadn't you better go 'th yer pa, Wadley, and have a cup? jest to warm yer stomach. Then arter you git back, I'll go; for we

don't want to leave our things here, nor lose our seats."

"I don't want no cup o' tea," said Wadley; "but I do want to go and see the falls;" which he had had an exciting glimpse of as the train crossed the Genesee River.

"The' won't be no time to go sight-seein' 'bout the falls," said Mr. Toddleby, nervously.

"Why, yis; it's only a few steps back there," said Mrs. Toddleby. "It needn't take ye but a minute; and the train stops half an hour, the man said."

"Wal, we'll see how long it takes to git the cup o' tea," Mr. Toddleby replied. "I'll bring a cup to you here in the car, if I can; that'll be the best way."

The train was standing in the great depot, which was full of hack-drivers, passengers, baggage-men, and ringing and whistling locomotives running up and down, for no earthly purpose, as Mrs. Toddleby could see, unless it were for air and exercise. As her eyes followed Wadley and his father entering the noisy crowd, she called after them, "Remember which train it is! and don't forgit; it's the last car but one!"

Having watched them until they entered the door of the restaurant, she returned to her seat.

"Your husband has gone out too, to git a cup o' tea, hain't he?" she said to her new acquaintance.

"No; he has just run up street on business."

"Oh! What is his business, if I may ask?"

"He's in the hide and leather business; he has a large store in Albany; he buys for the firm."

“Indeed! Want to know! Is't a good business?”

“Well, yes, pretty good.”

“I see you dress pretty well,” remarked Mrs. Toddleby. “Your business ought to be purty good to afford sich a shawl as you've got on. Though I don't know as it's any better quality than this o' mine, that I've had now nigh on to twenty year. This black lace-veil I've had thirty year this last August. They're presents from my brother, that used to go to sea. I 'xpect they'll last me my life-time, and when I die I shall give one on 'em to 'Lizbeth, and t'other to Joseph's wife, — I do'no' which, — without Wadley sh'd happen to be married. Joseph's wife I've never seen; but I 'xpect she comes from a purty nice family. They've got connections livin' here in Rochester, I believe, but I sh'd no sooner think o' lookin' on 'em up than I should o' findin' a needle in a hay-mow. My son come out West here to keep school, and married his wife in — The land!” suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Toddleby, as a train came rushing in between the one she was on and the restaurant, and stopped. “My husband 'll think that's his train, sure as the world! And if he once gits turned round a little, he's a dre'ful narvous man! I guess I'll jest step and speak to him, if you'll take charge o' my shawl, and see't nobody gits that bag under the seat, nor gits our seats.”

The lady obligingly consented; and Mrs. Toddleby, getting off the train, and climbing over the

other one, went elbowing her way through the crowd of newly-arrived passengers to the restaurant.

“Dear me! my veil! I wish I’d left that with my shawl!” she exclaimed; “for it’s about as much as a person’s life is wuth to squeeze through a jam like this ’ere!”

At last she entered the saloon, and the politest of polite waiters came bowing towards her, in a white apron, and placed a chair for her at a table.

“Sit here, if you please, ma’am,” he said, with charming suavity.

“Thank ye; I guess I won’t set down; I’m jest lookin’ for my husband and son.” And she stared all about the room. “Have you seen a man in a snuff-colored gre’t-cut, and a boy with him in a snuff-colored gre’t-cut? The land!” said she, as the waiter slammed back the chair and turned on his heel; “I thought he was a real nice man, but seems he was perlite only ’cause he ’xpected to git my money. Where under the sun can they be?”

She began to grow anxious; and approaching another waiter, also in a white apron, and also ready with his hand on the back of a chair, she said: “Have *you* seen a man in a snuff-colored gre’t-cut, and a boy with him in jest sich another snuff-colored — ”

The waiter was off, without deigning so much as a word in reply, and poor Mrs. Toddleby stood confounded.

Seeing a man getting up from one of the tables,

she began, "Have you seen —" But he did not hear her. She then rushed at a gentleman picking his teeth. "Have you seen —"

"No, ma'am, I have not seen;" and without waiting to hear the remainder of her question, he walked away.

"They must 'a' got their cup o' tea and gone to look at the falls," then said Mrs. Toddleby. And out of the depot she ran, and back along the track, looking more and more anxiously for her husband and son. There were the falls, pouring over the table of rock just below the railroad bridge; but there was no Wadley, and no Wadley's pa, looking at them.

Just then an engine came clanging and snorting down the track; and Mrs. Toddleby had no sooner got off from that on another, than a train of two cars came backing up on that; and between the two she barely escaped being run over. She was quite wild with fright by the time she reached the platform of the depot; when, seeing a train starting off, and thinking it was her own, she set off in pursuit of it, screaming, "Stop, stop! stop them cars!" and gesticulating frantically.

She ran directly in the face of a black man, staggering under the burden of an immense trunk. Down he went with it, man and trunk rolling from the platform. The excellent Mrs. Toddleby would have stopped to apologize and help him up, but the train was going, and away she darted, working her

way through the crowd in an almost miraculous manner.

“Here’s your veil, ma’am!” shouted a brakeman after her.

“Oh, thank you!” snatching it. “Won’t somebody stop the cars?”

“They ain’t going yet,” said the brakeman.

Mrs. Toddleby did not know what he could mean by that, when she could see them going; and on she ran. To her great joy, they slackened their speed, and finally stopped as if to take her on; but just as she was going to embark, they began to back down towards the depot. Not perceiving that they had run out merely to get on another track, but thinking they were going back for her, she began to beckon and scream, “Here I be! ye needn’t go a bit further, if you’ve only got my husband and Wadley aboard!”

The train did not heed her at all, but ran past her, back into the depot. Fearing it might start again immediately, she followed it in as fast as she had followed it out, and discovered, on reaching it, that it wasn’t her train. Instead of being the second from the platform, it was the third.

“Dear me! what a fright I’ve had!” she gasped out, climbing over the first train again, and looking back for her husband and son. They’re mos’ likely in the car by this time. If they be, I guess the’ won’t neither of us leave it agin till we git safe to Brockport. It’s the last car but one; I’m glad I thought o’ that.”

She did not know that the locomotive she saw backing up a couple of cars on the bridge had added a car to her train; so that her car, instead of being the last but one, was now the last but two. She accordingly pushed through the car she was looking for, and entered the next one.

“The fourth and fifth seats from the forward door, on the left-hand side,” she repeated to herself. But both those seats were occupied by strangers; and the third seat, in which she expected to find the lady holding her shawl, was vacant.

Consternation seized Mrs. Toddleby. She ran through the car to the rear, to make sure that it was next to the last one, then flew back again, and asked the strangers occupying the fourth seat if there was a travelling-bag under it. There was none; and to satisfy her, they got up and let her look.

“These don’t look like our seats, either!” she exclaimed. “This don’t look like the train.” She flew into the next car; but the obliging lady who had charge of her shawl had disappeared; and, seeing neither lady nor shawl, Mrs. Toddleby did not know where she was. “It must be the other train!” And she clambered to that she had been chasing.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WITH THE CUP OF TEA.

IN the mean time Mr. Toddleby and young Toddleby had entered the saloon where the polite waiters were; and one of them had set chairs for them, in his most magnificently civil manner, inclining his ear for their orders; and Mr. Toddleby, delighted at the respect shown him, had said, "A cup of tea, sir, if you please."

"What else?"

"Wal, nothin', I guess. My son here thinks he don't care for none; if he does, I can give him a sip o' mine."

"You can't get a cup of tea here," said the waiter, his suavity changing to ice.

"Dear me! Why, I thought — Can't git a cup o' tea?" stammered Mr. Toddleby, amazed by the transformation, getting up so suddenly that he knocked his chair over and stepped in his hat, which he had placed on the floor. "Where — where can I —"

"Go out of that door, down to the end of the depot, and you'll find a place where you can stand and get a cup of tea."

And back went the chairs to their places, while Mr. Toddleby, stunned and mortified, feeling that he had committed some monstrous breach of decorum, marched away, pressing his hat into shape, and fol-

lowed by the younger Toddleby. They had but just gone out, when Mrs. Toddleby came in, as we have seen, in search of them.

Down at the end of the depot they found not only a good cup of tea, but a young waitress of genuine politeness, who, seeing what an honest old gentleman her customer was, readily consented to let him carry a cup of tea to his wife in the cars.

And now, while Mrs. Toddleby was in frantic pursuit of him, behold him also in pursuit of her, with a cup and saucer in his hand. As she had foreseen, he got upon the train nearest the platform, jostled by embarking and disembarking passengers, and spilling the tea. Then, as she had anticipated, not finding her, he became alarmed.

"This ain't the car, pa," said Wadley.

"No, I believe 't ain't! But what's become on't? Where's the car we come in?" he called out excitedly. "'Twas the last but one."

"They've been taking off or putting on cars since we came in," said a gentleman. "You'd better walk through the train, if you want to find a particular one; and hurry, for it'll be starting in a few minutes."

So Mr. Toddleby hurried, striding through the cars in his snuff-colored great-coat, carrying his cup of tea at arm's length, and followed by young Toddleby in his snuff-colored great-coat; his mind distracted between the anxious pursuit of Mrs. Toddleby and the fear of losing Master Toddleby in the

crowd, not to speak of the constant care required to keep the cup in the saucer and the tea in the cup.

Having thus passed from end to end of the train without finding the slate-colored bonnet, the Toddleby brain was in a state of panic. He strode up and down, brandishing the tea, dragging Wadley after him, and demanding, in furious excitement, "Has anybody seen my wife? Do, somebody, for massy sake, tell me where I be and which is my car?"

"Where do you wish to go?" asked some one. Toddleby told him. "You are in the wrong train, sir. This is the Buffalo train."

"Which *is* my train?"

"I don't know; you'll have to inquire."

Toddleby did inquire, but nobody heeded his questions, or could answer them, until a lady called out, in passing him: "That is your train, Mr. Toddleby; the Niagara Falls train."

He was too much excited to thank or even recognize her, but rushed on with Wadley and the tea, and went from end to end of that train also, without finding Mrs. Toddleby. Arrived at the end of the rear car, and seeing a disconnected car farther down the track, he had just wit enough left to remember that somebody had said something about taking off cars from some train; and thinking that must be the one he was in search of, he made a desperate plunge for it, preceded by the cup of tea and followed by Wadley. He entered it, and found

nobody in it but a coatless individual, turning over seats and sweeping.

“Look here, you!” cried Toddleby, rushing forward in the cloud of dust, and thrusting the teacup in the man’s face, “do you know anything about these ’ere cars?”

“Wal, I reckon I do!” replied the coatless individual, leaning on his broom. “What cars do you want to know about?”

“The car that my wife’s in, going to Brockport, on the Lockport and Niagry Falls Road.”

“Wal!” said the man, moving to the door, and pointing to the train which father and son had just left, “them’s all the Lockport and Niagry Falls cars I know anything about, and there won’t be no more till twelve o’clock.”

“But she ain’t on them!” groaned Toddleby. “Ain’t there no other Brockport cars?”

“Nary one.”

“Oh!” suddenly screamed Wadley, “there’s ma, now!”

It was the maternal Toddleby indeed, but in what a situation! Whilst exploring the train she had previously been chasing, she discovered it to be in motion, and ran out on a platform. “Wait! wait!” she shrieked, “let me git off!” And Toddleby, seeing her borne helplessly past him, raised his voice also, “Hold on! hold on! you’re carrying off my wife!”

As the train did not hold on, and as Mrs. Toddleby could not jump, Mr. Toddleby ran after her; and it

was an affecting sight to see her extending imploring hands to him from the car platform, and him extending imploring hands to her (cup and saucer in one of them) from the ground, commanding the train to stop in one breath, and in the next ordering her to jump, he would catch her. At last with his disengaged hand he seized one of hers; then she ventured, — and Mr. Toddleby, Mrs. Toddleby, and cup and saucer, with what was left of their contents, went to the ground together.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. TODDLEBY'S EXPLOIT.

FORTUNATELY nobody was hurt; not even the crockery was broken; and the pair, gathering themselves up, looked at each other.

"See, ma!" said Wadley; "the train was only backin' down, to hitch on to them other cars! Ye needn't 'a' been scaret."

Mrs. Toddleby did not seem to appreciate the consolatory nature of this information, but looked eagerly at her husband.

"Where've you been all this time?"

"I've been hunting for you, with this 'ere cup o' tea I've spilt over everything! Where've *you* been?"

"I've been hunting for *you*. And now I'm looking for our train."

"That's our train, they all tell me; and what under heavens you ever left it for, I can't con-saive!"

"The land! you sure? Then we've been robbed!"

"Robbed!" ejaculated Toddleby; "how so?"

"Why, I'd no sooner stepped out of our car, jest to say to you the train that come in last wa'n't our'n, than that dre'ful desaitful woman —"

"What dre'ful desaitful woman?"

"Her we got acquainted with. I left my shawl

in her charge, and now she and shawl and bag's gone together!"

"Can't be!" said Toddleby, as they climbed up on the right train at last; and only on making an examination could he be convinced. "Strange you would trust your property in the hands of sich an entire stranger!"

"But who'd have thought!" exclaimed Mrs. Toddleby. "I was sorry one while I didn't leave my veil with her too; but I'm glad enough now I didn't."

"Where *is* your veil?"

Mrs. Toddleby felt for it on her bonnet.

"I declare! if I hain't lost that too! I never see the beat on't! But I ain't goin' to give up so! I'll find either the veil, or that woman with my shawl and bag, or both. Have you seen, any of you,"—addressing the passengers,—“that woman in the Injy shawl, with a cream-colored middle and a deep figgered border—”

"The woman, or the shawl?" asked one.

"She had a rooster's wing in her bunnet, or a duck's wing, or a goose's wing, or some kind o' wing," pursued Mrs. Toddleby, without heeding the interruption; "and a monstrous big waterfall."

"I've seen a monstrous big waterfall."

"Where? which way did it go?"

"Back here below the railroad bridge; and it seemed to be going down stream," replied the cruel trifier.

"He means the Genesee Falls," grinned Wadley.

"You may as well give her up," said Toddleby; "you never 'll see woman or shawl agin."

"Why, pa," said Wadley, "that was the woman that spoke to you and told you which our train was."

"Be ye sure?"

"Yes; anyhow she was the one set behind us and ma talked to so much, and that had the rooster's wing on her bonnet."

"Which way did she go? I'll find her!" said Mrs. Toddleby. "Come, sonny, and show me."

"No, no! we shall lose Wadley next," cried the boy's father. "Wadley, you set here, and don't you move from this 'ere seat on no account, till we come back. Do you hear?"

"Yeas," said Wadley, laying hold of the arm of the seat to anchor himself securely against the tides of fate.

"How long 'fore the train starts?" Toddleby asked of a man passing the bell-cord through the rings into the next car.

"In five minutes."

"Bless me! I sha'n't have time to carry back this cup 'n' sasser!"

"Yis, ye will; be spry, and I'll be looking for that woman. Which way did she go?"

"She was goin' along the platform when she spoke to me. I remember now, it must have been her, for she called me Mr. Toddleby."

"And didn't ye see my shawl on her arm? nor the bag in her hand?"

“No, I wa’n’t noticin’. I’ll carry the cup ’n’ sasser, and we’ll meet here. Don’t be late and git left now, woman or no woman.”

So saying, Toddleby — known everywhere by this time as “the man with the cup o’ tea” — hurried to the refreshment stand, and paid for the fluid he had had the satisfaction of carrying about with him so long, and finally spilling; while Mrs. Toddleby went hunting up and down where she had run before, asking everybody, “Has anybody seen a black lace veil? or has anybody seen a woman in a Injy shawl with a cream-colored middle and a deep figgered border, and a rooster’s wing stuck in her bunnet, and carrying a red cashmere long-shawl, with a pa’m-leaf border and a big pa’m-leaf in the corner, and a patent-leather carpet-bag in her hands?”

Nobody confessed to having seen such a phenome-non; but suddenly Mrs. Toddleby herself saw something which paid her well for her trouble. It was a lady’s arm disappearing from a car-window, after dropping out a penny to an apple-boy. It was the arm of the woman in the Injy shawl with the cream-colored middle, and the other things. Mrs. Toddleby ran to the window; it was shut before she reached it; but she could see, behind the pane, the rooster’s wing and the bonnet, and a section of the monstrous big waterfall.

She did not stop to parley at the window, but ran back to the end of the car, and got on. The train was starting at the instant; and it was the Buffalo

train. Mrs. Toddleby saw the danger of being carried off, but she had learned by experience that cars did not always go when they started; and moreover, if her shawl and bag were going on that train, she preferred to go with them, and trust to Providence to get back again, rather than suffer the thief to escape with her plunder. She shrieked to "somebody" to stop the train just one minute. She shrieked to her husband, who stood on the platform looking for her in every direction except the right one. She thought if she could only let him know what she was doing, he would be consoled for her absence and wait for her return. Evidently he heard her voice, for he started, and looked harder and harder in every direction but the right one. At last, seeing her efforts were in vain, and fearing lest the lady thief might take advantage of the delay to elude her, Mrs. Toddleby darted through the car till she came to the India shawl, and laid her hand on the cream-colored middle.

"Why, Mrs. Toddleby!" said the lady. "I was looking for you, to bid you good-bye. Are you going to Buffalo too?"

"No, I ain't," cried Mrs. Toddleby, looking for her property; "and I didn't know you was when I give you my shawl to hold! Where is it?" breathlessly. "Ye never spoke of goin' to Buffalo, but said you was goin' to Niagry Falls, ever so fast!"

"Yes, for I had never seen the Falls, and my husband had promised to take me that way. But as

soon as you had stepped out of the car, he came hurrying back, and said he'd got a despatch which told him to go straight on to Buffalo, and we must change cars."

"And my shawl? and the bag? What have you done with them?"

"The bag was under the seat; and as I didn't know what to do with the shawl, I laid it on the bag, where you couldn't help finding it. My husband said nobody would steal them. They're there now."

"No, they ain't there, ma'am!" cried the old lady, in great agitation. "You're desavin' me. They ain't under the seat of next the last car, for I looked."

"Another car was just hitching on," remarked the lady's husband. "Did you look under the seat in the last car but two?"

"No; for I didn't know that was the car." And now Mrs. Toddleby appeared quite broken, so great was her confusion and distress.

"Well, that was the car, and there your shawl and bag are now."

"But my husband, he won't know! He don't even know where I be! And here they're carryin' me away like a whirlwind; and my husband and little boy, and bag and shawl, back there in the car arter all!"

And Mrs. Toddleby, losing strength and spirit, sank down upon the nearest vacant seat in something very like a swoon.

CHAPTER V.

MASTER WADLEY TODDLEBY'S EXPLOIT.

MR. TODDLEBY waited for his wife in an agony of anxiety, until he saw that their own train was starting, and that a moment later he would lose it. What had become of Mrs. Toddleby? He would have remained to search for her; but then what would become of Wadley? It would never do to leave him to go alone to Brockport; for that exemplary and obedient youth, having been told to keep his seat until his father returned, would think he must do so, though the car should carry him to the Pacific Ocean.

"Oh, that woman!" groaned Mr. Toddleby. "I vow, I never'll go on a journey with her agin, as long as I live!" He hung on the steps of the car, looking back for her, until the depot was out of sight. "Thank heaven, I hain't lost Wadley!" he said. "I'm glad I told him to stay in the car." And now he went to find the boy, and tell him of his mother's mysterious disappearance.

But here arose another still more terrible mystery. Wadley was not in the seat in which he had so resolutely anchored himself! He was not in the car! He was not on the train! The tides of fate had proved too strong for him. And now, while his distracted parent is flying to and fro, making frantic

inquiries for the lost boy, which nobody can answer, let us see how he had been swept away.

His father had scarcely left him, when he saw from the car-window, which he amused himself by looking out of, a man passing on the other side of the depot with a patent-leather travelling-bag in his hand. It was precisely such a bag as his mother had lost, and, to the mind of Wadley, who had a limited experience in such matters, it was no other than the same. He ran to the car-platform to tell his father; but his father was at that moment settling for the tea he had spilled, at the refreshment stand. Wadley remembered well the injunction not to leave his seat; but what else could he do?—let the thief walk off in that deliberate manner with his booty?

“Pa! pa!” screamed the youthful lungs, “there’s a man with our bag!”

“Why don’t you catch him?” said somebody.

“I will!” cried Wadley.

The man was just then going out of the depot; and before Wadley reached the corner he had disappeared around it.

The boy was just in time to see a hackman shut him in his hack, mount the seat, and drive off. Away rattled the wheels, and away ran Toddleby, junior, screaming after them. Up the long street, amid carriages and carts, he flew, keeping the vehicle in sight, reckless of arriving and departing trains, and intent only on recovering the stolen property.

Excitement lent him speed, and at last he ran shrieking and gesticulating alongside the hack.

“What you want?” said the driver, pulling up his horses.

“That man! he’s got our bag!”

So saying, Wadley wrenched open the carriage-door, and seeing the bag, and hearing a train whistle,—knowing that he had not a moment to spare in altercation,—seized the property, and ran back down the street with it as fast as he could go.

And now, instead of chasing a supposed thief, it was his turn to be chased. The man jumped from the carriage and ran after him, shouting, “Stop thief!” The hackman turned about and drove after the man; others joined in the pursuit; and before Wadley reached the depot, he could hear a wild crowd howling at his heels, “Stop thief! stop thief!”

A stone in the pavement stopped him. He stumbled over it, and in an instant his pursuers, among whom was a policeman, were upon him. In vain he protested, “It’s our bag! it’s our’n!” The owner of the property was ready with a key to open it and swear to its contents before seeing them; and Wadley Toddleby, after violent struggles and outcries, was walked off to a police-station, with an officer’s hand on his collar.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW WADLEY CAME TO SEE THE FALLS.

THE climax of the day's misfortunes was reached when the elder Toddleby, arriving disconsolate at his son's house in Brockport, found that Joseph and his wife and their three children had gone from home, and would not return for two days.

"So much for not payin' the postage on a letter!" Toddleby sank upon a chair. He had relied upon his son Joseph's experience and sagacity to help him out of his troubles; and now he had only a stranger, and that stranger a servant-girl, to confide them to. "I've met with the strangest misfortin! I've lost my wife!"

The sympathizing girl inquired when she died.

"I don't know as she's dead, but there's no knowin' 't I shall ever see her agin alive. I've lost my son Wadley too, and that's the strangest sarcumstance! I don't know the fust thing what to do. Whereabouts has Joseph's folks gone to?"

"They went to Rochester this morning."

"To Rochester! Why, 'twas to Rochester we stopped and got scattered! He's to his wife's relations, I s'pose. Why didn't we know on 't?"

Whilst Toddleby was groaning over his misfortunes, a telegram was handed in. "For me?" he said; and opened it, and read:

“Come back to Rochester. Wadley’s in trouble. We are here.
JOSEPH P. TODDLEBY.”

“It’s from my son! Wadley is in trouble! My hat!” ejaculated Mr. Toddleby, starting to go.

On being told that there was no train until four o’clock (it was not yet twelve), he thought he should surely die of anxiety and impatience before that time; and how, with his nervous temperament, he managed to live through the fearful interval, he could never afterwards explain.

But he did live through it, and in due time reached Rochester.

The first person he saw, on stepping from the train, was his long-absent son Joseph coming towards him. To the joy of that meeting was added the relief of seeing also his son Wadley, alive and well and smiling, standing beside his brother.

“Where have you been, boy? What trouble have you got into?”

Wadley related how he chased a supposed thief, and got caught for a thief himself, adding, “When I told ’em my name was Wadley Toddleby, one of the men said he knowed Joseph Toddleby, and had seen him in town to-day. ‘That’s my brother!’ says I. So they sent and found him, but the officers wouldn’t let me go till you come and swore to suthin’, I d’n’ know what; so Joseph tallygrafted to you; but, finally, I told so straight a story, they concluded to let me off, without waitin’ for you to swear.”

“But where’s yer mother?”

“Ma! ain’t she with you?” said Wadley. “I hain’t seen her!”

“Ain’t she at my house in Brockport?” cried Joseph.

While they were talking, the Buffalo train, which unites with the Niagara Falls train at Rochester, going east, came rolling into the depot; and one of the first persons to step from the cars was an excited old lady in a slate-colored drawn-silk bonnet, black cloth cloak, and pongee dress.

“Father! Wadley! here I be! — Joseph! the land! is it you?” And in an instant she had joined our little group.

Great was the joy of all. She told the story of her adventure, saying in conclusion: “And do you think, the woman in the Injy shawl and her husband in the hide and leather business was real nice folks, arter all? They made the conductor give me a ticket to come back with, ’cause he’d carried me off; and took me to a tavern with ’em in Buffalo —”

“What! have you been to Buffalo?”

“Yes, ’cause there wa’n’t no train back till this train, and I could come jest as quick. And they give me a real nice dinner; and the man he tally-grafted to Niagry for the railroad to bring back my shawl and patent-leather bag; only, ’stid o’ havin’ on ’em left to Brockport, he made a mistake and said for ’em to take ’em to Rochester.”

“Then they’re probably on this train father came in,” said Joseph; and, disappearing for a moment, he returned, laughing, with the bag and shawl.

“Wal, wal, I declare!” said Mrs. Toddleby. “And only think, father, I found my black lace veil!”

“Why, how happened that?”

“Ye see, I was so beat arter I found I’d left my bag and shawl and run arter a woman that hadn’t got ’em, I jest give right up, and didn’t know much of anything for one spell, till somebody spilt some brandy on my lips, and I went to take my handkercher out o’ my cloak-pocket, and what did I pull out but that veil! Then I remembered when it come off ’m my bunnet in the crowd, and a man handed it to me; he was a real obligin’ feller, and I’d like to thank him, but as for the rest, I never did see folks act so in all my born days; when he gi’ me my veil back, I was afraid o’ partin’ with it agin, and so what did I do with it in my hurry but stuff it in my pocket! And there it was when I went to wipe off the pesky brandy; for if I hate anything in this world, it’s any kind o’ sperits about my mouth, sick or well.”

“Wal, wal, things might ’a’ turned out wus,” said the elder Toddleby. “Now if that letter ’d only been paid, so ’s ’t Joseph’s folks ’u’d be to hum —”

“But that’s all right too,” said Joseph. “Don’t you see? Otherwise I shouldn’t have been here to help Wadley out of his scrape. And besides, we’re having a great birthday party at my wife’s uncle’s; all her relations are there, and it only wanted some of mine to make up the company. You shall stay over to-morrow, and get rested, and see the folks,

and have a good time, and to-morrow night we'll go home with you to my house in Brockport."

"Why, do ye think we'd better stay?" said both Mr. and Mrs. Toddleby at once; "guess we better not;" although they were delighted at the prospect of seeing his wife's relations, and only needed a little urging to accept the proposal. "Wal, I don't know, if you say so, Joseph —" "You know best." "It happens jest right about the bag," added Mrs. Toddleby; "for I shouldn't have a clean cap, and you and Wadley wouldn't have a dickey, father, to put on, if 't wa'n't for that. Mistakes du happen all for the best sometimes, don't they, Joseph?"

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Wadley, seeing it was decided they were to stay; "now I can see the falls!"

So the Toddlebys remained at Rochester, and had a grand entertainment; then they went to Brockport, and had a long and delightful visit there; and in due time returned to Worcester County, where they found house and farm and produce and stock in the very best condition, and learned moreover from the blushing 'Lizbeth that she and John Blake had made arrangements for a little gathering of friends and relatives at home, to take place, with her parents' consent, at about Christmas, and so complete the round of festivities for the season.

THE LEATHER SPECTACLES.

EARLY one March morning a very extraordinary sound proceeded from the interior of Fair Hill Academy. Some of the young gentlemen of Professor Bazin's class heard it as they were passing; and by the time the janitor arrived, not less than thirty students were on the ground.

"What's the matter, young gentlemen?" cried the old man, making his way to the door. "You're early, and chipper, too! What are you all snickerin' at, so like a parcel of ninnies?"

"Hark, Mr. Dibdin!" said one.

The old man was a little deaf. But as he listened, poising his keys before unlocking the door, a strange expression stole over his wrinkled and puckered old face.

"*Ba-a-a-a-ah!*" came a long-drawn, dismal, hollow, mysterious moaning call from the depths of the empty building.

The boys in waiting burst into wild guffaws of laughter.

"Hey? what?" cried the old man, growing excited. "Which of you young rascals —"

Angrily shaking his keys, he looked round on the merry group.

“*Ba-a-a-ah!*” once more resounded the mysterious moan, more prolonged and dreary, if possible, than before.

The boys yelled with merriment; and more students, great and small, came rushing to the spot.

Old Dibdin thrust his key into the lock, and as the door opened, an eager crowd pressed and jostled into the entry, pell-mell, after him.

Nothing was found in the lower rooms, and there was a momentary pause as the old man turned back upon the following throng. Just then the same hoarse, dismal sound, only louder than before, came from the room overhead.

“Up stairs! to the Professor’s room!” was the cry of the students.

And in two streams, up the staircases at each side of the entry, they went tumbling and screaming. When the rheumatic old janitor reached the upper room, a singular scene met his eyes.

The boys were in convulsions of laughter; while, looking down upon them solemnly through a pair of huge leather spectacles, from the Professor’s desk, was a white-faced yearling calf, just on the point of uttering his plaintive “*Ba-a-a-ah!*”

“The Professor shall see that! Keep away, boys!” said old Dibdin, working his way to the front, through the crowd that obstructed the passage. “Who will go and tell Professor Bazin he is wanted in the schoolroom?”

Two or three of the younger pupils started off in high glee to bring the Professor; and it was not long before a hush fell upon the merry throng of boys, as he was heard, in his thick boots, with his heavy cane, stumping up the stairs.

They made way for him. He advanced and stood before the desk. The Professor in silver-bowed glasses looked up; the calf in leather spectacles looked down. The Professor frowned; the calf extended his jaws.

“Young gentlemen —” began the Professor.

“*Ba-a-a-ah!*” broke in the hungry and lonesome quadruped.

The timely effort at seriousness on the part of the pupils proved an utter failure; and even the old janitor's lank sides shook with laughter. Professor Bazin was intensely angry, or his own sense of humor must have given way before the staring, stupid, leather-spectacled burlesque of himself in the desk.

“Leave the room, every one of you!” he said, sternly. “Somebody will suffer for this! Mr. Dibdin, whose beast is that?”

“Giles Tinkham's, it looks like,” replied the old man, as he labored to untie the knots in the rope by which the calf was fastened.

“Cut it!” cried the wrathful Professor, as he himself pulled off the leather spectacles.

“It may be Tinkham's rope, too; I'd rather not cut it,” said the cautious janitor. “I'll have him loose in a minute, — there!”

“Away with him now!” exclaimed the Professor, impatiently.

“That’s easy said, but not so easy did,” said the old man, dragging the calf towards one of the stairways.

The dumb victim of the students’ fooling did not know he was in the hands of friends. He held back.

“I’ll help,” said the Professor; and he pushed vigorously behind, while old Dibdin tugged at the rope around the calf’s neck. It was lucky for the Professor’s dignity that the boys were not there to see.

At last the calf was got to the head of the stairs. But he was a stupid calf! He did not know that the way into the room was the way out of it — that as he had come up so he must go down. He pulled back, threw up his head, and in his fright gave a prolonged and very emphatic “*Ba-a-a-a-ah!*”

A peal of boyish laughter echoed from the yard below.

“Now, once more!” said the Professor. Again they pushed and pulled, and the heavy cane was brought into service. The calf was not only obstinate, he was vindictive. And once when his heels were hit, he hit back.

The Professor dropped his cane and rubbed his shin, with an exclamation as near profanity as any he was ever provoked to utter.

“Confound the critter!”

It is surprising how a serious and cultivated



THE CALF IN THE PROFESSOR'S ROOM. Page 158.

man will sometimes, in moments of excitement, fall back upon the idioms of his youth !

The old janitor stopped pulling, and said :

“How the rogues ever got a critter like that up these crooked stairs is a wonder to me ! We never can get him down !”

“Stay here, while I go and send help,” said the Professor, picking up his cane.

The boys below scattered when they heard him stumping down the stairs again. At the door he called two of them back.

“Kimball ! Brigham ! Make haste and tell Giles Tinkham that a calf supposed to belong to him is in my schoolroom, and he will oblige me by taking him away.”

Brigham was the smallest boy at Fair Hill. Kimball was the tallest ; “Cobbler Kim,” he was sometimes called. They set off together ; and while they are delivering their message, and the Professor is consulting his assistant teachers regarding the outrage against the dignity of the institution, we will take occasion to say a word of Kimball’s history, and explain how he came by his nickname.

Daniel Kimball was the son of a shoemaker who had died a little more than a year before, leaving his family but very slender means of support. Daniel was the oldest child ; there were three girls and a boy younger than he.

Daniel was a tall, awkward, homely boy, but with an honest, kindly face, and an earnest good-will be-

hind it, which made everybody like him who knew him. When his father died, the terrible question came up, "What is Dan going to do, to help support himself and the family?" — terrible to Dan and his poor mother, to whom it caused many an anxious day and sleepless hour at night.

Daniel had worked at his father's trade at odd spells, since he was old enough to drive a peg and draw a waxed-end. But he was fond of play, like other boys, and he had no love for the shoemaker's bench. He had never cared much for school, either.

But the great change in the family prospects caused by the death of his father set Daniel to thinking seriously of his future; and one day he surprised his mother by saying:

"I'd like to go to the Academy next winter."

"You, Daniel!" she replied, dropping her work, and regarding him affectionately. "What's your notion?"

"Well, mother," said he, "I suppose I've got about all the learning I ever shall get in our common district school. It will be the same thing over again if I go there this winter. At the Academy I can study book-keeping, algebra, composition, and some other things I'd like to understand. Perhaps I sha'n't be a shoemaker all my days; and I wish to prepare myself to be a good business man, at any rate."

The mother's eyes glistened with pride and pleasure.

"But how can you pay your way at the Academy?" she asked. "You know I can't help you much."

"I don't want you to help me at all," Daniel replied. "I've an idea. The Academy has a fund left to it by old Judge Adams, for just such cases as mine. It will pay for my tuition, if I can only get in; and I'm going to study hard all summer to prepare myself."

"But how will you pay your board? For, Daniel, it is ten miles to the Academy, and you can't live at home."

"I know that, mother. And this is my plan: The students, you know, have sometimes sent all the way to this place to have father tap their shoes for them; they say there is no good cobbler near the Academy. Now, I'll take over my bench and some stock and tools, and find a room where I can work to support myself while I study, and I am sure I can keep up with my class. I have thought it all over, and I believe I can do it. I know I can, mother, if you will only let me."

Mrs. Kimball had great faith in her son. Of course she gave her consent; and at the beginning of the fall term he was admitted to the school.

He did not make haste to advertise for work; but the tall boy might have been seen looking down, thoughtfully, at the feet of his fellow-pupils, for a day or two after he was settled in his new quarters.

One afternoon, as they were coming away from

the Academy, he accosted little Brigham, — another poor boy whose tuition fee was paid out of the Adams fund.

“Your shoes want mending,” Daniel said.

“I know it,” said Brigham. “But I can’t get ’em mended. I’ve no money.”

“Bring ’em to me. I’ll mend ’em for nothing,” said Kimball.

“You!” said little Brigham. “How? Where?”

“In my room,” said Daniel; “where I board. I’ve a bench there, and lasts, and everything.”

“You’ll spoil my shoes!” Brigham objected, staring incredulously at the young shoemaker.

“If I do, I’ll give you a new pair,” Daniel promised.

Brigham at last agreed to risk his shoes. But he had only one pair, and it was necessary that Daniel should do the work overnight. The little fellow left them in the evening, after dark, and ran home barefoot.

Returning early the next morning, he was delighted to find his old shoes neatly half-soled and heeled.

He put them on, and stamped his feet proudly.

“But I must pay you some day,” he said.

“Well, if you wish to, you can do so without its costing you anything,” replied Daniel. “Just look around among the boys, and when you see any with shoes that need mending, show them yours, and tell them I cobbled ’em for you. I’ll do my work cheap, and I’ll do it well.”

This was the beginning, and it was not long before Daniel had about all the work he cared to do out of study hours. Not only the students gave him their shoes to mend, but first one of the teachers and then another tried his skill with a pair of boots. He was liked, while he was laughed at; and he laughed good-naturedly in return when the boys began to nickname him "Cobbler Kim."

"They may call me *cobbler*, if they like," he said to his mother, when he went home to visit her one Saturday night; "but nobody shall say that I don't do my cobbling well."

Tears of love and hope sprang to the mother's eyes. While he showed such a spirit as that, she felt that her son must certainly succeed.

One day Charley Percival came to Cobbler Kim's room. He was the son of Hon. Charles Percival, a member of Congress, and a man of wealth and social influence.

Charley was a wild boy; but Prof. Bazin was proud of having the son of a member of Congress in his school, and he would often overlook, I am sorry to say, faults of behavior in the boy which would have been punished in another pupil.

"Son of Hon. Charles Percival," the Professor was sometimes heard to whisper to visitors at the Academy; and then all eyes would turn upon the handsome curly-haired Charley.

He used to blush at first on being thus pointed out, but he learned to smile and look interesting after

a while, as if he expected and rather enjoyed the distinction.

Percival belonged to a clique of aristocratic boys who had very little to do with Cobbler Kim, except to give him their boots to mend. They never came to his room, except on business. It was that which brought Charley there now.

"Look here, Kim," said the young gentleman, seating himself in Daniel's only chair, while Daniel occupied his bench, "I want you to do a little job, and keep mum about it."

"What is it?" Daniel asked.

"Promise just to keep the thing a secret," Percival said; and Daniel promised.

Then the visitor took a piece of newspaper from his pocket, cut in a curious pattern.

"You see what it is?" said he, as he unfolded and held it up.

"It looks something like a pair of spectacles," replied Daniel, laughing.

"That's just what it is;" and Percival peeped through the enormous eyeholes held before his nose. "Now I want the same thing in good stiff sole-leather. We're going to have a little fun, you know. When can you do it?"

"Now," said Daniel.

He took the pattern, marked the shape on a piece of leather, sharpened his knife, and proceeded to cut out the spectacles. It was scarcely more than two or three minutes' work.

Then he made holes in the ends for strings, and handed it to his visitor.

Charley was delighted.

"What's to pay?" he asked, fumbling in his pocket.

"Oh, nothing for a trifle like that," replied Kim, carelessly. "You're one of my customers."

"Well, you'll have a chance to see the fun," said Percival, taking his hand out of his pocket empty. "And remember, whatever happens, mum's the word."

"Oh, yes, I understand," said Cobbler Kim.

It was one or two mornings after this that the excitement over the calf in the Professor's desk occurred, and Kimball and Brigham were sent with a message requesting Giles Tinkham to take his animal away.

"Old Prof is awful mad," said little Brigham. "Somebody'll have to catch it if he finds out! Do you know, Kim?"

"Know what?"

"Who got the calf up into the Academy?"

"Whoever it was," said Kimball, "they must have stolen either the janitor's or the Professor's keys. It was a foolish piece of business." And he laughed again when he recalled the ludicrous picture of the Professor and the calf confronting each other.

Brigham lowered his voice, and spoke in a friendly, confidential whisper:

"Do you know, when I saw those leather spectacles, I thought you must have had a hand in it!"

“I!” exclaimed Kimball, the laugh dying out of his voice and features. It had already occurred to him that the spectacles might connect him with the affair, and now Brigham’s suspicion caused him a good deal of uneasy thought on the subject.

Giles was warned, and the unwelcome quadruped was removed from the building. Then, at the usual hour, the Fair Hill pupils assembled in the recitation-room, where it was the custom to open the exercises of the day with prayer.

There was a good deal of suppressed hilarity on the occasion, I am sorry to say. But the Professor performed his duty as if nothing had happened, except that his manner was perhaps a little more grave and determined than usual.

The prayer ended, he addressed the school, speaking in terms of stern condemnation of the outrage, and calling upon any one who could give information as to the authors of it, to do so at once.

The whole school remained silent. Kimball glanced his eye around. There was not a more innocent-looking face in the room than Charles Percival’s.

The Professor resumed: “If any person connected in any way with this insult hopes for mercy at my hands, now is his time to speak. Let him make confession, and ask for pardon.”

No one spoke.

“All silent? Then this is what will happen!” exclaimed the Professor, in a voice of thunder. “This matter is going to be probed to the bottom, and the

guilty ones — no matter who they are — will receive the severest punishment which the institution can inflict. I'll winnow this school of such wrong-doers, if not a dozen pupils are left. Now, young gentlemen, to your lessons!"

As he ended, he fixed his eyes on Kimball.

The poor fellow tried to maintain an air of innocence, but he knew that he turned pale; and in spite of his best resolution, he went to his morning's recitations with a sinking heart.

In the evening of that day, when the excitement caused by the calf in leather spectacles had had time to cool a little, the janitor called on Professor Bazin in his study.

The old man had been quietly investigating the affair; and now there was a look of triumph in the puckered and wrinkled face.

That did not seem to please the Professor as much as one might have expected. The good man was less angry than he had been in the morning. He was beginning to think he might have made too severe and sweeping a threat, and to hope that, if certain favorite pupils were the culprits, they might not be found out.

"Any news, Mr. Dibdin?" he inquired, with an anxious look.

The old man nodded with satisfaction.

"I've got on the right track," he said, taking a small package from his pocket.

Mr. Bazin grew pale. He saw in imagination a

row of rich men's sons brought up before him for sentence; and he trembled to think of the punishment already announced. Expulsion from the Academy!—nothing less than that. He would have given anything, just then, if his threat of the morning had not been uttered.

“What have you there?” he asked, in a troubled tone of voice.

The old man undid the package, and took out some scraps of sole-leather. Bazin breathed more easily.

“Where did you get these?” he inquired.

“In Cobbler Kim's room,” replied the old man, with a self-complacent grin. “I s'pected the feller; so I went there when he was out, and pretended to set down and wait for him, but watched my chance to overhaul his waste-box. I found these. Now let's see how they fit.”

The Professor opened a drawer in his secretary, and took out the leather spectacles. They were placed on the table, and the scraps of leather adjusted to them.

They fitted. Particularly, two round leather wheels which the old man had brought were found to be exactly the size of the eye-holes.

Each had a perforation in the centre, evidently punched by the awl, round which the leather was made to revolve when the circular piece was cut out by a knife stuck in the bench.

“That's a neat job; it shows the hand of a workman,” observed the old man. “Kim himself must have done it.”

“No doubt,” said the Professor. “I felt pretty sure he had a hand in the business. But” — hesitating — “no one or two or three boys could have got that calf up those stairs.”

“Of course he had accomplices,” said Dibdin; “and I’m on the track of one of ’em. One you’ll be sorry to hear named.”

“Then don’t name him, I beg of you!” exclaimed the Professor. “That is, unless the proof is so clear and open that it can’t be kept back.”

“As for that, it’s only a clew,” said the old man. “One of the young gentlemen was in Kim’s room a couple of days ago, when the two together had a great laugh over something.

“He didn’t bring, and he didn’t carry away, any shoes; and he’s one that wouldn’t be apt to visit a poor cobbler, unless there was either business or mischief on foot. The son of a rich man and a member of —”

Bazin put up his hand nervously. He was terrified at the thought of losing the pupil of whom the Academy was most proud; sick at heart, as he remembered how often he had pointed out “the son of the Honorable Charles Percival” to admiring visitors. Now it seemed to him that the disgrace of the distinguished pupil would be the disgrace of the Academy itself.

“We must use policy in this matter,” he said. “No doubt an example must be made; but we must be careful, and not go too far. Kimball is unques-

tionably guilty, and the institution can well enough spare him."

"To be sure!" chimed in the janitor. "One whose tuition is paid out of the fund; there'll be enough to fill his place. But it'll be hard if the blame all falls on him."

"Yes—hard—no doubt," replied the Professor, with a twinge of conscience, let us hope; "and I should be glad to pass over the affair in silence. But you and I, Mr. Dibdin, must have the good of the institution in view in all we do. Don't forget that. Perhaps some open and palpable proof implicating others will come to light; if not, we had better deal only with the one we know to be guilty."

"To be sure!" said the old man. And the conference ended.

Meanwhile, Cobbler Kim felt no little anxiety as to his connection with the affair, and the part he was still to act.

He tried to get a chance to speak with Percival. But Percival avoided him.

"He thinks we'd better not be seen talking together," Kim thought; "and maybe it *is* better for him. I wish I could carry *my* head high, and feel no more misgivings than he seems to! I should certainly think he was innocent, if I didn't know."

Know what? Kim reflected again.

"I don't really *know* that he had any more to do with the calf than I had. Maybe he only got the spectacles made for somebody else."

It was that air of innocence in the young scapegrace which puzzled honest Kim.

He felt sure the matter would be brought up again before the school, and he thought long and intently of the course he ought to take.

Two points were clear in his mind.

"I can't lie about it; and I can't break my promise to Percival."

The very next morning Professor Bazin brought up the subject again before the whole school. But his manner was not so menacing, and his frown was less terrible, than the day before.

"I will give the perpetrators of the outrage one more chance to make reparation by confessing their fault," he said, almost pleadingly, in the hope that they would thus make it easy for him to retract his threat and grant mercy.

But no one spoke. Then he turned upon Cobbler Kim.

"Kimball," he said, sternly, "do you know the guilty parties? Stand up!"

Kimball rose to his feet, drawing a long breath. The eyes of the teachers and of the whole school were fixed upon him. He was pale; but the glance of his eye was clear and honest.

"I do not know," he answered, with a slight emphasis on the last word.

The Professor produced from his desk the leather spectacles and the accompanying scraps.

"This was found on the calf," he said, holding up

the spectacles. "And these pieces were yesterday found in your room. Anybody can see how they fit. Now will you deny your knowledge of the affair?"

Great sensation in the school! The innocent surprise in Charley Percival's face was wonderful to behold.

Kimball drew another long breath, and answered, in a firmer tone than before:

"I can say, what I have already said, that I don't *know* who put the leather spectacles on the calf and the calf in your desk. *I* certainly did not. I had nothing to do with it."

"How dare you say that, after this proof against you?" Bazin demanded.

"I dare speak the truth," Kim replied, growing bold as he was pressed. "It may be *proved* that I cobbled the boots and shoes of all the fellows who carried the calf up-stairs,—and there must have been a good many of them,—but that wouldn't make me responsible for what they did."

"You acknowledge, then, that this thing" — again the Professor held up the leather spectacles — "was made in your room?"

"As for that," Kimball answered, "it was not only made in my room; *I made it.*"

"Why didn't you say that when I asked you?"

"You didn't ask me. If you had asked me if I knew anything about the leather spectacles, I should have told you I did know something, though it isn't much."

“How much? Tell all you know,” said the Professor. And yet it is safe to say that he hoped Kimball would not tell.

“I made them, just as I would have tapped a pair of shoes — because I had the tools and the stock, and was asked to do it,” said Kimball. “I didn’t know what the thing was for; and I never saw the calf before I saw him here in this room.”

At that moment Percival might have been seen to wink knowingly to another young gentleman. That wink meant, “Kim understands himself; he is all right.”

“One thing more,” said the Professor, “and that will lead to an exposure of the whole affair.”

He laid a peculiar stress upon these words, — perhaps to put Kimball on his guard.

“If you are as innocent as you pretend, prove it now by naming the person or persons who got you to cut the leather.”

Kimball was silent. Percival picked his teeth, looking as unconcerned as possible.

The Professor assumed a sterner air.

“Twice,” he said, “you heard me call upon the school for information that would lead to the detection of the guilty parties. Now I call upon you again. You have information to give. Keep it back at your peril.”

“I can’t tell you who got me to make the spectacles,” said Kimball. “If I could, I would have done it before.”

Another wink of satisfaction from Percival.

“Why can't you?” Bazin demanded.

“Because,” said Kimball, “I promised I wouldn't tell.”

The Professor felt that the crisis had come. His face was pallid with agitation. He knew that he was going to commit an act of injustice, but felt that the interests of the Academy required it. How many a weak and unwise man has thus done evil that good might come!

Fearing developments that might bring in the names of favorite pupils, Bazin made haste to bring the painful business to a close.

“Kimball,” he said, “the duty which devolves upon me is a very painful one. By your own confession, you are implicated in the outrage. You know very well that you would not have been asked to give such a promise if this leather had been intended for any proper purpose. Are you required not to tell what boys you mend shoes for?”

Kimball began to stammer some reply to this sharp argument, but Bazin did not heed him.

“Whether you helped pull the calf up from above, or pushed him from below,—whether you assisted in that part of the business or not,—you are an accomplice. And because you have withheld information you might give, to aid in detecting the offenders, and still stubbornly withhold it, I must apply the severest discipline to your case.

“Daniel Kimball, you have forfeited the advan-

tages you derive from this institution, and I declare you expelled from it."

Kimball made no reply. He stood as if stunned. Then he cast a bewildered look around the room. It was a curiously-puzzled, imploring look, and it seemed to say, "Can those who are really guilty let me suffer in their place?" Evidently Cobbler Kim could not understand that.

At last he turned and fixed his troubled gaze once more on the Principal.

"Is that all?" he asked, with simple pathos.

"That's all," Bazin replied, gently, with I know not what heavy sense of guilt in his own heart.

"Am I to go?" Kim inquired, as if he could not yet quite realize the situation.

"You are to go," said the Professor. He tried to add some word of kind advice, but his lips failed him.

Kimball gathered up his books and went out, amid the silence of the whole school.

Percival smiled and nodded, in a way which said, "Plucky fellow!" and sharpened his toothpick before returning it to his pocket. The school drew a long breath, and a rustle of relief from the intense excitement ran round the room.

"To your lessons, young gentlemen!" said the Principal. And the routine of the morning's work began.

In a few minutes nobody would have known that any such unusual scene had just occurred. Were

the consciences of Charles Percival and his accomplices as clear and serene as their faces seemed to show ?

Kimball walked aimlessly about the Academy grounds a little while, winking his eyes in a dazed and painful sort of way, as if he were as yet hardly awake. Then he gave his head a rude shake, compressed his lips, and struck his hands sharply together.

“No use of wasting time,” he said ; “I can think it over while I’m at work.”

He returned to his room, and set himself to tapping a pair of shoes for one of the neighboring farmers. He found solace in his task ; and while he worked and thought, he was happy.

The boys who had caused the trouble and escaped punishment, and Professor Bazin, who had made an “example” of him for the sake of the school, might have envied poor Cobbler Kim the peace that entered into his soul, now that he had thought the thing all over. So much better it is to suffer wrong with a noble and patient spirit than to do evil and triumph !

That evening Professor Bazin sent word to Kimball that he would like to see him. The boy went accordingly, and was shown into the study.

“It was a very sad duty I had to perform this morning,” remarked the Professor. “You have been a good boy, Kimball ; and I don’t think you were so much to blame in the matter as some others.”

"I've been thinking about it," Kimball replied, with modest, manly simplicity, "and I can't see that I was very much to blame, any way. So I am satisfied, if you and the others are. I'd a great deal rather be in my place than in theirs. I can suffer for them, if necessary; but I could never let anybody suffer so for me."

This speech went to the Professor's heart. He had to clear his voice before he could speak.

"You are right, Kimball," he said at length. "What are you going to do now?"

"Work and study," replied the boy. "I think I can go right on cobbling shoes, and keep up with my class, out of the Academy. I suppose there will be no objection to that?"

"None whatever," said the Professor; "on the contrary, if I can help you in any way, — privately, you understand, — I shall be glad to do so. You can bring your problems to me."

"Thank you," replied Kimball. "I don't think I shall do that. But when I tell my mother, as I shall have to, and that is the hardest part," — his voice faltered for the first time as he spoke of her, — "it will be some comfort for her to know that you have made the offer."

So saying, he returned to his room and to his books.

He carried out his plan, cobbling such shoes as were brought to him, and studying out of school. He soon found that he had more friends than ever.

More than one pupil was glad to show him what the class was doing, and explain what he did not understand about the lessons.

He sometimes met Percival, who was inclined to treat him in a friendly way; but Cobbler Kim felt that he had little to say to the politician's son. He answered his greetings civilly, but that was about all.

Meanwhile, that young gentleman did not carry about with him so serene a conscience as those who knew him supposed. And one day—it was near the close of the term—he came to Kimball's room.

"Well, my boy," said he, taking the chair Kim offered him, "how are you getting along?"

"Very well," replied the young cobbler, without losing a stroke at the pegs he was driving.

"I was awfully sorry for what happened," said Percival, with red cheeks and suffused eyes.

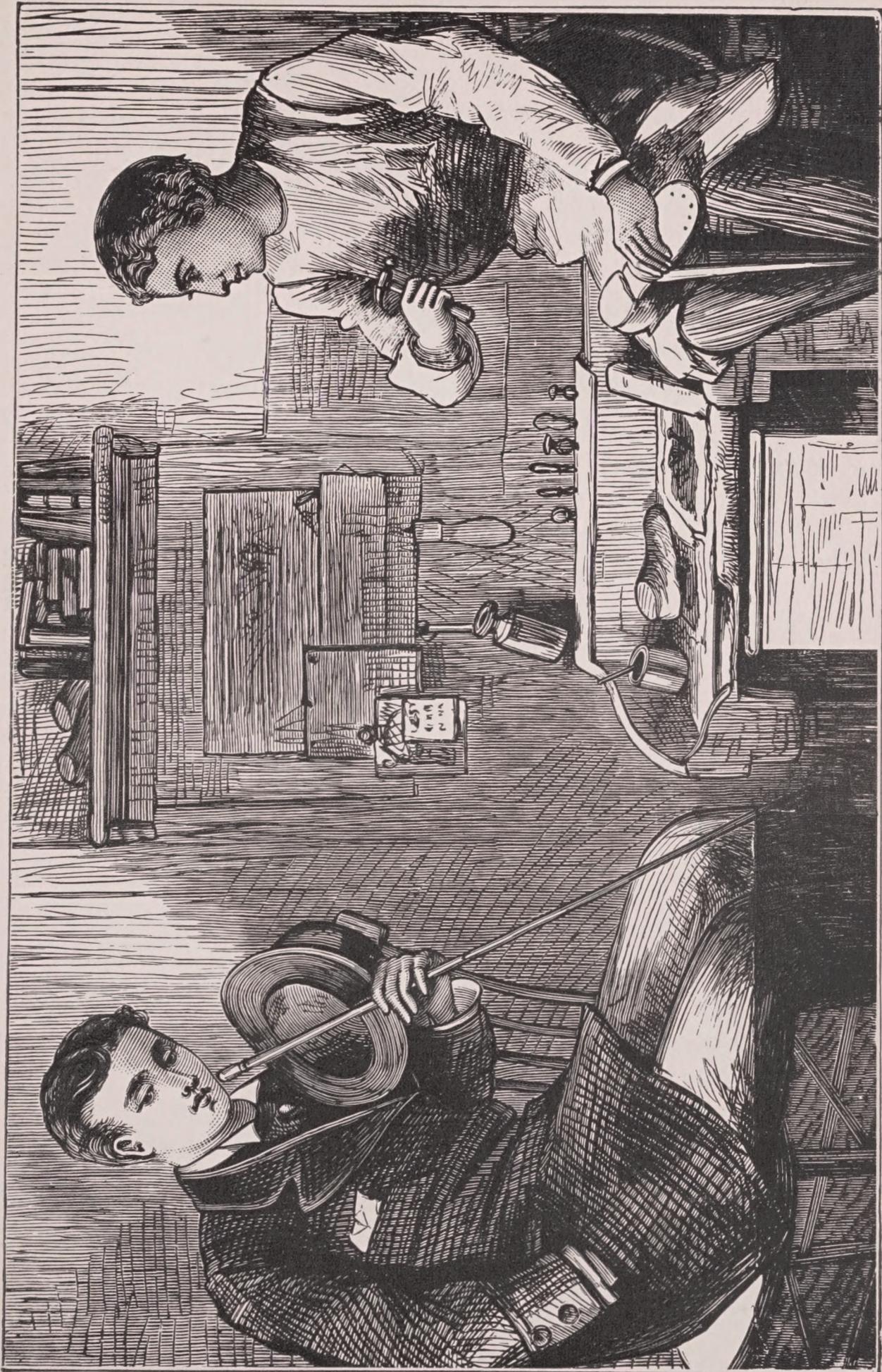
"Oh, never mind about that," Kim answered, coldly. And *tap! tap!* went the hammer, first on the awl-handle and then on the peg.

Percival looked very much embarrassed.

"I did an awfully mean thing,— I and the other fellows," he confessed.

"I'm glad you think so," said Cobbler Kim. *Tap! tap!*

"But I had no idea how it would turn out,— of course I hadn't!" Percival went on. "Then when I saw how it was, I was a coward; that's just the truth about it. I wasn't so much afraid of old Prof as I was of my father. I ought to have got



PERCIVAL'S INTERVIEW WITH COBBLER KIM. Page 178.

up and cleared you, — and I've wished a thousand times I had; but I didn't dare."

"I'm sorry for you," said Kim. *Tap! tap! tap!*

"And I — I — want you to forgive me," said Percival, flushed and choking.

"Oh, I forgive you." Kimball poised his hammer, and looked frankly into the young aristocrat's face.

"You haven't done me a very great injury. I've paid my way, and kept up with the class; and I feel as if the struggle had been good for me."

"I'm glad to know it!" Percival exclaimed, with tears in his eyes.

"I've learned a thing or two besides," Kimball went on. "I find it's worth a great deal more to a fellow to feel that he is honest, and can pay his own way, and take hard knocks without grumbling, than it is to be rich and petted."

Tap! tap! went the hammer again.

When Kim came to that school, he felt that he must be very deferential to such sons of fortune as Charles Percival. It was as if they belonged to a superior race of beings. But he had got bravely over that. And now, if you had looked at them, you would have said that if there was superiority anywhere, it was not in the handsome, curly-haired young aristocrat, who sat idly twirling his gloves, but in the plain, honest, cheerful boy-cobbler driving his awl and pegs.

"Now, what are you going at when the term closes?" Percival asked, after a pause.

“ I’m going to work and study, and do what I can for my folks,” Kimball replied. “ I’d like to get into some sort of good paying business ; but until I can — ”

Tap ! tap ! the light hammer finished the sentence.

“ Would you object to going West ? ”

“ No ; not if I thought it was the best thing to do. Why do you ask ? ”

“ Because,” said Percival, “ I’ve an uncle in Iowa, who has a great deal to do with city lots in two or three places. To tell the truth, — and this is what I came to say, — I’ve written to him all about you, and you are just the chap he wants.

“ Here’s his letter. You can read it over, and think about it, and then either tell me, or write to him what you will do.”

Poor Kim was so astonished that he didn’t know what to say. He glanced over the letter, and then, with tears in his eyes, grasped Percival’s extended hand.

“ It’s just the kind of business I would like ! ” he exclaimed ; “ and of course I’ll go, if my mother will let me, and I’m sure she will. And I thank you, Percival, with all my heart. You are a great deal better fellow than I thought ! ”

Percival smiled at this frankness, and the two parted the best of friends.

Mrs. Kimball gave her consent, and her son set off in a few weeks for Iowa. There he found plenty of work, but it was work that he liked ; and it was

not long before he had his mother and brother and sisters with him in his new Western home.

If you should visit him there, you might hear him tell the story of his prosperity, which he usually winds up with the phrase, — uttered with a humorous twinkle of his honest gray eyes, —

“ A man may make a fortune, you see, out of a pair of leather spectacles ! ”

A BOY'S ADVENTURE AT NIAGARA FALLS.



AS I was walking one day with my friend G—— along the edge of the cliff below the American Fall, he told the following story of his first visit to Niagara.

“It was fifteen years ago,” said he. “I was a mere boy then. My father had died the spring before, and I was thrown upon my own resources. With my mother’s blessing, and twenty-three dollars in my pocket, I walked from our little home on Tonawanda Creek, in the town of Batavia, to Buffalo, where I hoped to get into business, make money enough to buy a house, take my mother to live with me, and educate my younger brother and sisters. I was full of ambition. But I didn’t succeed immediately in finding employment; and at the end of a week, having spent three dollars out of my precious little store, — for I knew that my mother had given almost her last penny for my journey, — I began to grow homesick and discouraged. At last I found a situation in a hardware store. I was to be boarded and clothed for my services, the first year; to re-

ceive, in addition, fifty dollars in money, the second year ; one hundred, the third year ; and so on.

“I engaged the place on Wednesday. I was to enter upon my duties the next Monday ; and during the four intervening days I determined to treat myself to a view of the Falls.

“In order to save as much as possible of my mother's money to send back to her, I made the journey on foot. I was all day Thursday about it. I slept at a tavern, and thought myself fortunate the next morning in making the acquaintance of a very polite young man, who said he knew the place, and would show me around.

“Ah ! what a wonderful summer day it was ! How the mist went up from the cataract ! how the sun made rainbows in it, which brightened and vanished as the vapory cloud gathered, and the wind blew it away ! how the birds sang in the woods on Goat Island ! how our little ferry-boat tossed on the foaming eddies below the Falls ! how grand and glorious it all was, and what a glad child was I !

“My new acquaintance proved a very pleasant companion, although he was so very polished and self-possessed that he made me, a green country lad, feel sometimes very painfully my inferiority. He abounded in fine sentiments, one of which I had occasion to remember : ‘ Confidence is the flower of friendship and the ornament of life.’ This he was accustomed to say with a persuasive smile and a sweet inflection of the voice which were quite cap-

tivating. He had a bow, and a flourish, and an apt word, for every occasion. He was genteelly dressed; although I remember that his coat was a trifle threadbare, and that he wore it buttoned across his genteel bosom, warm as the day was. Once or twice I had a glimpse of soiled linen under it; but his politeness quite made me forget for the time the trifling circumstance.

“‘You must certainly cross the ferry,’ he said, ‘if only to be able to tell your mother that you have been in Canada. Your excellent mother,—how I should delight to see her, and say, “I had the honor of visiting Canada with your son!” Besides, you get the best view of the Horseshoe Fall as you cross the river below. I am sure,’ he added, ‘you will show your confidence in my friendship by taking my advice.’

“I told him I could not well afford the expense of crossing; and related the history of my twenty dollars. Tears came into his eyes as he grasped my hand.

“‘I honor your motives!’ he exclaimed. ‘You shall make this trip at *my* expense.’ He led me down the ferry stairs, and insisted on paying my fare in the boat. ‘Not a word! not a word!’ he said, waving me off, and counting out change to the boatman. ‘Confidence is the flower of friendship and the ornament of life.’

“So we crossed the ferry; and, having spent an hour in rambling about on the other side, he advised

me not to return without having first walked under the sheet of water.

“‘It is a most astonishing thing!’ he said. ‘You descend a staircase. You follow a path beneath the overhanging cliff. The thundering cataract is before you. You pass beneath it, along a narrow shelf of rock between it and the precipice. You are under Niagara! The shelf grows narrower as you proceed, until, by the guide’s directions, you put your finger in a hole in the rock, which he tells you is the farthest point to which mortal man has ever gone. It is an experience no enterprising young American should be contented to live without.’

“‘Is there no danger?’ I asked.

“‘None whatever. It is exciting, but not dangerous. All that is needed is a little confidence. Confidence is the — but you know what I think of confidence. Here is the house where you obtain clothes and a guide for the excursion. Let me suggest only one thing. You have a watch with you?’

“‘Yes, one that was my father’s. It is very dear to me on that account.’

“‘How very affecting!’ said he. ‘Treasure it as you would the jewel of your integrity. You will not wish to get it wet; and you will be drenched to the skin in the spray of the cataract.’

“‘I can leave it, with my money, where I leave my clothes,’ I said.

“‘In the hands of strangers?’ he replied. ‘Your clothes will be safe with them; but money? and

your watch? Very well, very well. I suppose they will be safe, although I was about to suggest — but no matter. I shall not go under the sheet to-day.'

“‘Indeed! why not?’

“‘I've been under it a hundred times already. When I say a hundred times, I speak figuratively. I have been under it three times, in the course of my eventful life. Perhaps, after you have been, I will go, provided you will take charge of my pocket-book, and a valuable gold watch I carry, which was not exactly my father's, but which was presented to me by a very dear uncle, — and which, really, I am unwilling to trust in any hands but yours.’

“This proof of confidence touched me deeply. ‘Then,’ said I, ‘if you stay here, you shall take charge of *my* watch and money.’

“‘As you please,’ said he. And I delivered my treasures into his obliging hands. ‘How beautiful!’ he said, with the same persuasive smile and sweet inflection. ‘Confidence is, indeed, the flower of friendship and the ornament of life.’

“Now I had all the time a strong feeling that I ought not to go under the fall. It seemed as if something wrong would happen if I did. But this polite and friendly young man had gained such a complete influence over me that I had no longer a will of my own. Having permitted him to pay for my crossing the ferry, I felt bound to please him by accepting his advice in everything. He now added to my obligations by paying at the counter for the

clothes and guide I was to make the trip with. This he did much against my will, but I could not prevent him.

"While he was making change, an old gentleman, whose acquaintance I had made at the tavern the night before, touched my arm and drew me aside. 'You look like an honest boy,' he said; 'and from our talk last evening I became interested in you. But I'm afraid you are getting into bad company. Do you know that fellow?'

"'He?' I said. 'Oh, yes, very well; I've been with him all day. Why?'

"'Because,' said the old gentleman, 'I don't like the looks of him. I believe he is a rogue.'

"'You are very much mistaken,' I replied. 'He is one of the politest, one of the most generous men!'

"'Well, well; perhaps,' said the old gentleman, smiling doubtfully. 'All I have to say is, look out for him. You haven't seen as much of the world as I have.' And he patted my shoulder.

"Just then the young man came with the bundle of clothes I was to put on, and led me away to the dressing-room. He said the guide was waiting, and talked so fast, and hurried me so, that I had no time to think, until he took leave of me at the top of the staircase.

"'I will walk about here until you come back,' he said, in such a very friendly way that I was indignant at the old gentleman who had slandered him.

"However, the minute he was out of my sight, I

became troubled in my mind about him. Then I reflected that I had all along felt secret doubts of his character, which his persuasive manners and fine sentiments had for the time kept concealed almost from myself,—just as the tossing white torrent of foam, below the Falls yonder, hides the boiling eddies under it. I remembered, with increasing uneasiness, the old gentleman's kind warning; and blushed at my foolish remark — that I knew a perfect stranger very well, having been with him all day! As yet I had not even learned my friend's name. There *was* something false about his politeness, I could not help thinking; and as to his generosity, what difference did it make which pocket-book paid my expenses, his or mine, if he finally ran away with both!

“These thoughts flashed through my mind, notwithstanding the excitement of the adventure; and, having stood a minute under the cataract, and put my finger in the crevice the guide showed me, I was anxious to return to the upper world. But now an accident happened, well calculated to favor the rogue, if he was a rogue, or to prove his friendship, if he was a friend.

“As I was passing from under the sheet, two or three small fragments of rock — loosened, I suppose, by the jar of the cataract — broke from the overhanging wall and fell on the path between me and the guide.

“‘Quick! quick!’ he exclaimed, pulling me to

wards him. But before I had passed the spot, a larger mass of fragments came down, almost burying me beneath them. I just remember the guide calling for help amid the roar of the Falls, and pulling at my shoulder, which was already dislocated by the tumbling rocks. Then I swooned away.

“When I came to myself, I was in the same room where my friend had hired for me my guide and clothes. I was in great pain, and groaning at every breath. I was carried into an adjoining room, and laid upon a bed; and there a surgeon visited me, and set my bones.

“Upon that bed I lay three weeks; and almost every day I could hear people come into the public room, the door of which was sometimes open, and inquire with regard to the danger of going under the Falls.

“‘There is not the least danger,’ was the invariable reply. ‘No accident was ever known to happen to any person going with a guide.’ And there I, the victim of a terrible accident, lay and listened to these lies, while I was too weak even to cry out and expose them.

“A lonely and anxious month that was; for after I had recovered from my injuries so that I could sit up, it was still a week before I was able to travel. I wrote to my mother. I also wrote to the proprietor of the hardware store to whom I had engaged my services. He did not reply, and I could not help thinking I had lost the situation.

“I received the best of care at the hands of the

strangers in whose house I was. It was not altogether disinterested care, however. The business of furnishing guides and clothes to visitors going under the fall was very profitable; and it was in my power to injure it materially by publishing my accident. My case never got into the newspapers; and as I was convinced that the danger of going behind the sheet was after all trifling, I took no pains to warn anybody against it.

“ My expenses, during that long, lonesome month, were cheerfully borne by my kind host; fortunately for me, for I had not a cent in the world. I did not write that fact to my mother, for I still hoped to hear from my watch and pocket-book.

“ On making inquiries for my polite friend, after my accident, all I had been able to learn was, that a person who professed great interest in me had charged the proprietor of the house to have everything done for me that could be done, and had left his address on going away, with a message that, if I wanted anything, I had only to apply to him. As I did want my watch and pocket-book, I determined to hunt him up. Luckily, his address was Buffalo, where I was going.

“ Well, I had enough of Niagara Falls that time; and glad was I when the surgeon pronounced me able to travel. My host paid my fare to Buffalo, and gave me two dollars besides.

“ On reaching the city, I hastened first to the hardware store where I had hired out. The pro-

prietor looked at me grimly. 'Oh, you are the boy that took the situation, and then ran away! Well, we don't want any such boys as you. Besides, the place is filled.' He would listen to no excuses, and I went away with a heavy heart.

"I next went to find my friend. The address took me to a large warehouse on Buffalo Creek, over the entrance to which I saw, with a thrill of interest, the very name that was on the card.

"'Is Mr. Keplow in?' I eagerly asked; and was shown to the counting-room.

"I entered, and met face to face, not the polite young man to whom I had intrusted my watch and money, but the plain old gentleman who had warned me against him. 'Ah!' said he, 'you have got along; I've been expecting you. Sit down.'

"'Are you Mr. Keplow?'

"'That's my name.'

"'And he — that young man you warned me against — who had my watch and pocket-book —' I stammered.

"'I know nothing about him; and if he had your property, I could have told you beforehand that you would never see it again.'

"'I have lost them then, and my situation too!' I exclaimed, and burst into tears.

"'Well, well,' said he, in a comforting tone, 'there is no great loss without some small gain. You have gained a useful experience, and perhaps you will gain something else.'

When I told him about the situation I had forfeited, he laughed, and said it was no great loss, as that man could never keep a boy longer than a few months, he was so hard with his help. He then said he had a place for me in his store, if I would like the flour and grain business; and before I left his counting-room I sat down at the desk and wrote to my mother that I had hired out for five years to my new friend.

"I remained eight years with Mr. Keplow, and before the end of that time I had my sisters and my younger brother going to school at my expense. Finally our firm wished to establish a branch house in Chicago, and I was placed at the head of it. There I have been ever since, and there I am now, doing about as large a business, buying and shipping grain, as is done by any house on the lakes.

"One morning, a year ago last winter, a gentleman entered my office, who said he wished to speak to me on personal and private business. The door being closed, he seated himself, took from his pocket a bundle of letters, and said: 'Mr. G——, I have been induced to call on you, knowing that you are a liberal and high-minded man, and an influential member of the church of which I am a humble, but, I trust, faithful officiating minister. It is the same church, although you reside here in Chicago, and the field of my labors is in the distant State of Maine. My name is Loddy. I am a younger brother of the distinguished Dr. Loddy of New York. I produce

these letters to show you that I am what I profess to be.'

"I glanced at the letters, and asked how I could serve him.

"'I was so unfortunate, on getting off the train in a crowd last night, as to have my pocket picked. At this distance from my family and friends, I find myself suddenly without a dollar in money, either to pay my hotel expenses or to prosecute my journey. What I wish is a loan of fifty dollars, which shall be returned to you as soon as I get home. I regret exceedingly the necessity I am under of making this call upon your generosity, or I should rather say confidence; but confidence is a beautiful virtue which we do not perhaps sufficiently cultivate,—it is the flower of friendship and the ornament of life.'

"I was already trying hard to remember where I had seen that man; and every moment his plausible manners and persuasive smile were growing more and more familiar to me, when that favorite sentiment concerning confidence lighted up my memory as by an electric flash. I arose, and stood with my back against the door.

"'Mr. Loddy,' said I, 'do you remember a fatherless boy you robbed of a watch and twenty dollars, at Niagara Falls, thirteen years ago? I am that fatherless boy, and I am very glad to see you.'

"He blandly denied all knowledge of the circumstance.

“ ‘ Mr. Loddy, or whatever your name may be, you are an impostor ; these letters are forgeries ; and it is in my power to send you to prison. Your only chance for yourself is to make a frank confession, and promise better things.’

“ When he saw that I was in earnest, he said : ‘ I *do* begin to remember a little adventure with a boy at Niagara Falls a few years ago ; but I should never have suspected you of being that boy. How whiskers have changed you, to be sure !’

“ ‘ Confess,’ said I, ‘ that you are a sharper and a blackleg by trade.’

“ ‘ That is unfortunately the truth,’ he said, more seriously ; ‘ and I can say from experience that a very poor trade it is.’

“ ‘ You do not look as if you had prospered at it,’ I said.

“ ‘ I *haven't* prospered at it !’ he exclaimed, his false smiles fading, and a genuine emotion coming into his face. ‘ It’s a trade that don’t pay. If I had given half the time and energy to some honest calling, which I have employed in trying to get a living without work, I might now be a man of property and reputation like you, instead of the homeless wretch I am !’

“ He told me his history, saying in conclusion, ‘ I have been twice in state prison ; and I have made acquaintance with all sorts of miseries in my life ; *but I tell you my worst punishment is in being what I am.*’

“He spoke sincerely ; and I was never so forcibly struck with the truth, that the robber robs only himself. The wrong he had done to me, and to hundreds of others, was but trifling and temporary ; but the wrong he had done to his own manhood was deep and everlasting.

“I could not but pity the wretch, and having burned his forged papers, to prevent him from doing more mischief with them, I let him go. I have never heard from him since.”

A STORM ON THE PRAIRIES.

ONE afternoon in midwinter, many years ago, I accompanied a little party of sleigh-riders on an excursion to the mound-famous town of Joliet, in Illinois.

We were six in number — merry boys and girls in our teens. Our starting-place was a residence on the East Branch of Du Page River, distant — if I remember well — some fifteen miles from Joliet. Our object was, not to visit the celebrated ancient mound, but to enjoy a good sleigh-ride, get some refreshments at a hotel, and return home by the light of the moon.

Of the first half of our expedition, and the entertainment for man and beast, — or rather for boys and girls, and the two gray ponies, at the Joliet tavern, — I have no distinct recollection. It is only the return journey which I remember with any vividness now.

Our party occupied a single sleigh, in the old-fashioned style of sleigh-riding. There was one high seat, a place for the driver, where he could sit

up in sight of his horses. The rest of us bestowed ourselves upon the luxurious lining of hay, and blankets, and buffalo-robcs, with which the sleigh was furnished; covered ourselves well, sat close, and relied upon health, and mirth, and sympathetic contact to keep up a summer glow in our blood, under the cold sky of a winter night.

Our homeward course lay towards the north. Our return had been hastened by dubious appearances of the weather, which promised a snow-storm in place of the anticipated moonlight. It was not yet four o'clock when we set out. The ordinary track of travel was for a time easily followed over the white prairies. But fast the gray sky thickened over us; the wind arose, blowing keenly in our faces; the snow began to fall and drift and fill the air; and suddenly the winter night closed around us with tempest and gloom.

Nobody was alarmed, however, until a quick "whoa!" from the driver, and an abrupt pulling in of the gray ponies, brought us to a halt.

"What is the trouble, Charley?"

"I want to let the boys breathe a minute," replied Charley, alluding, not to his companions, but to the horses.

Jest, and song, and laughter, ceased in an instant. The pretence of affording the ponies a breathing spell was too absurd to be accepted. We put our faces out of the buffalo-robcs, — felt the sharp north wind, and the driving volleys of snow bite and sting

us, — looked out upon the desolation and gloom of the scene, — saw only storm and gray-streaked darkness ahead, — and realized with a sudden shock the dangers of our situation.

“ We have lost our way ! ” cried the terrified girls.

“ Nonsense ! ” said Charley. “ We are only a little off the track. I can strike it again in a minute. ”

He started up the ponies ; slowly at first, then faster and faster, until he was driving at the same confident trot as before.

“ Has he found the track ? ” the girls eagerly inquired.

“ We'll risk Charley ! ” cried the boys, to quiet them ; “ he'll find the track, or make one. ”

At the same time we were aware of a solemn fact. Charley had not only lost the track, but he had already abandoned all hopes of finding it, or of following it when found, in a storm which had so completely obliterated all traces of it on exposed places within the short time we had been upon the road. He was indeed making a new track, which the fury of the storm almost immediately closed up behind us, — like a wake on a white sea, — so that it would have been as difficult to retrace our way as to proceed. But trusting partly to his own sagacity, and partly to the instinct of the horses, he whipped boldly on, in the hope that we should meet some traveller, or find some landmark, or strike some settlement, before the night was much advanced.

The reader will of course understand that the

prairies were then unfenced, and that the roads were simply wagon-paths laid out as chance or convenience directed. Human habitations were rare: one might indeed ride all night, in almost any direction, without discovering one. There were no woods, except here and there, at wide intervals, along the borders of the few streams. But all was prairie — prairie beyond prairie — in seemingly endless undulations, treeless and shrubless, and ever barren but for the luxurious growths of summer grass and flowers.

The moon was hidden in thick snow-clouds, and soon all the light we had was from the white earth, dimly reflecting the filtered starlight and moonbeams. But even had the sky been clear, it would have been impossible to see far, in the tempestuous drifting. We seemed to be upon a limitless desert of white sand, which the wind lifted, and whirled in clouds and columns and spectral forms, like swift-running racers with pale streaming manes, — enveloping us, and blinding our eyes. Now a vast body of mingled drift-snow from the prairies and clouds went stalking by like the ghost of some old-world Titan, loosely holding his vague and immense shroud wrapped about his phantom limbs. Then the ground all about the sleigh seemed alive with milky serpents, gliding with erect crests, — darting, coiling, hissing, — chased by the wind. And now we came upon deep drifts in hollows, and again passed over the almost naked summit of some tempest-swept hill, where only a

thin crust of snow imbedded itself about the roots of the dead, drooping grass.

"How does it look, Charley?" was a frequent question.

"Fine weather — bright moonlight — hope you are having a good time!" came back the usually good-humored answer, in snatches, through the storm.

"Do you want either of us to drive?"

"No! it's fun!"

"Where are we?"

"Sleigh-riding!"

"Does your mother know?"

"No!" echoed Charley.

With such nonsense, and appearance of light-heartedness, we endeavored to dispel the fears of the young ladies, and keep up our own spirits. But it was terrible! and all the time we knew how Charley suffered, facing the fierce gale. And the ponies too; — they had slackened their pace: would they be able much longer to keep on?

I climbed up from my comfortable couch in the sleigh, and spoke to Charley.

"Have you any idea where we are?"

"No more than as if we were on the ocean!"

"What do you think?"

"Don't tell the girls," said Charley. "We have travelled as much as fifteen miles already. We should have struck the East Branch long ago. Can you see anything ahead?"

"Nothing but clouds of snow!"

“Neither can I! I’ve thought twenty times I’ve seen woods, but ’twas nothing but snow flying. Don’t it come thick!”

“What will you do?” I anxiously inquired.

“Keep on.”

“But the ponies?”

“They’ll travel till they drop. Get back there, and keep warm. I shall want you to drive by-and-by. But not now.” So I crept back to my place.

“What discoveries?”

“There’s some appearance of a storm,” said I.

“I am dreadfully frightened!” gasped one of the girls, half stifled by the wind and snow into which she ventured to look out for a moment. “We shall never get home! We are going farther and farther off on the prairie!”

I was startled by a singular movement on the part of Charley. He left his seat, and tumbled down amongst us in the sleigh. I felt him; he was cold as a polar-bear.

“Give me room here! it’s my turn now!” he cried, hilariously, but with a voice that betrayed his numbness and suffering.

“Have you left the ponies?” asked the girls.

“They will travel just as well without a driver. I have fastened the reins. Keep a look-out, boys, for timber. I’ll be up again as soon as I thaw my eyelids apart.”

I got up in his place, took the reins, and now for the first time experienced the full violence of the

storm. It smote me in the teeth, it sucked my breath, it beat my brow and eyes, it seemed to laugh and leap upon me, and endeavor to hurl me from the seat with its buffeting arms.

My driving had an unfortunate beginning; for we had gone but a little way after I took the reins before the ponies plunged into a snowbank, which engulfed them almost to their backs. They struggled, floundered, nearly upsetting the sleigh and greatly terrifying the girls,—but finally took us through. They appeared now completely jaded, and it was scarcely possible to urge them into a trot. It was plain that to travel many miles farther was out of the question.

“What *shall* we do? what *shall* we do?” the girls kept asking.

“Encamp!” said Charley, who never once lost his courage or good-humor.

“How encamp?”

“Dig a hole in the snow. Turn the sleigh-box over it for a roof. Use the blankets and buffalo-ropes for beds. Do it comfortably, can't we, boys?”

“But the ponies?”

“Turn them out to grass! Look out for a good snow-bank, driver!”

“Here we are!” said I.

“What?”

“Brought up in the biggest drift yet! The ponies are buried! They never'll get through this!” We had, in fact, come to a dead halt.

“Just as I expected!” said Charley. “Now, let’s see! Different from what it was when we took that ride last summer, isn’t it, boys?”

Different, indeed! — the balmy summer evening, the gorgeous sunset, the green, waving grass of the prairies oversprinkled with the fire and gold of flowers, the cool breeze, the prairie-hens flying up from under our horses’ hoofs and whirring away, the sand-hill cranes alighting in the hollows, the large dim stars melting through the twilight sky, the whippoorwill’s note in the grove, and our own glad singing as we rode leisurely and late homewards, — how strange to think of all this in the darkness and danger and enveloping snow of this wild winter night!

“We may as well do it, first as last,” said Charley. “We can blanket the ponies, and give them a shelter behind our camp. What do you say?”

“Let’s see what discoveries we can make first,” I said, leaping into the drifts before us. I wallowed through them, and reached the horses’ heads. There was no hill beyond. What, then, had caused these drifts? I struggled forward still further; I struck out with my arms; I uttered a scream of joy.

“A fence! a fence, boys!”

Charley came wallowing to my side.

“This is luck! You are the driver for my money! It’s all right, girls!”

“But a fence is not a house!”

“It is a sign of houses,” said Charley. “Or it

will help us build our camp, if we can't do any better."

I left him to extricate the sleigh and ponies from the drift, and set out to make discoveries. I first went straight forward beyond the fence, in hopes to find a habitation. Meeting with no success, I returned, and followed the course of the fence, keeping on the inside of the field, while Charley drove around it. I soon came to a corner. Not far to the windward of that was a pair of bars. Once more I struck into the field, — discerned not far before me a dim object looming up in the snow, — pushed towards it, — and discovered it to be a house.

I found the door, rapped vigorously, and shouted ; but all was silent and dark within.

"What is it?" cried Charley, following me.

"A house, — don't you see? Don't you hear me pound?"

"The best luck yet! We are safe!"

"But if there is nobody here?"

"No matter. We will break the door in. It'll answer for a bedroom for us, and a stable for the ponies."

And Charley pounded. Then we both pounded together, for the growling of a dog within convinced us that the place was not without inhabitants. At last a light was struck, glimmering through the snow-crueted panes.

"What do you want?" cried a gruff voice.

"Open! open!" we shouted.

“No you don’t!” said the voice. “Go away!”

“Let us in!” stormed Charley.

“Clear out, or I’ll shoot you!” retorted the voice, with a snarling accompaniment from the dog.

I called a parley, told our story, and appealed to the humanity of the man to admit us, or guide us on our way.

“It may be all a trick!” said he.

“How a trick?”

“Maybe you are the sheriff come to take me; but”—with an oath—“you’ll find it’s a tough job!”

The sheriff! what an absurdity! But we had no time to laugh at it.

“We are no more the sheriff than we are the man in the moon! Do you think a sheriff would come for you such a night?”

“He’d come when he would be most likely to catch me. But I’ve got my gun!”

“And would he bring a load of girls with him?”

“How do I know you have got a load of girls?”

“Won’t you take our word for it?”

“No!”

“But if we will bring them to the door, where you can hear their voices, will you let us in?”

“No!”

“What will you do?”

“Stand back from the door, and I’ll open it. Look out for the muzzle of my gun!”

The door opened, and, in the dim light of a candle, a stout man, half dressed, stood on the threshold,

with a levelled gun in his hands, and a big dog by his side.

“There! you can hear the girls in the sleigh!”

“It’s a very bad night, strangers,” said he, “and I reckon you’ve told about the truth. You are welcome to come in; or if you’ll tell me whar ye want to go, mabby I can direct ye.”

“We have driven from Joliet, and we want to find the East Du Page settlement.”

“Joliet! East Du Page! How did you ever get here?” exclaimed the astonished squatter. “You’ve come about three miles too fur.”

“Three miles! is that all?”

“East Du Page is right through the woods off here,” — pointing with his gun.

“And the Nine Oaks?”

“I can show you the woods; follow along the edge of them — you’ll be under shelter — bimeby you’ll come to Wheeler’s barn —”

“I know the barn! and I know you now, Mr. Groffy,” said Charley. “People say you do steal horses, but I’ll call you an honest fellow the longest day I live, if you’ll show us to the woods.”

Accordingly Mr. Groffy returned his gun to its place, put on his coat and hat, and went with his dog to guide us to the woods. This service done, we offered him money, which he refused, — for some men would rather steal than accept anything that appears like alms, or even well-earned wages. So we thanked him, and bade him good-night. And

now cheerily under the shelter of the woods we drove, until Nine Oaks was reached, where a warm stable awaited the ponies; and a glowing fire and comfortable beds and rejoicing friends stayed for us, escaping with thankful hearts from the terrors of a winter night on the prairies.

THE LOAD OF WOOD.

THE boys were talking about the kind of business they would choose, when Uncle Asa came into the room. As Uncle Asa had tried several kinds, and been prosperous in all, they appealed to him for advice.

“What I want to know is this,” said Charley, in the course of the discussion which followed; “you have bought and sold a good many things, but what has turned out to be the most profitable?”

Uncle Asa considered a moment, while a curious smile passed over his pleasant, rosy face.

“Well, if I were to name any one thing which I have handled, and which has in the long run proved most to my advantage, — well,” said the old gentleman, nodding decidedly, “I think I must say, a load of wood.”

“A load of wood!” chorused the boys. They had expected he would say wool, or wheat, or hardware, or indigo; and they couldn’t believe his reply was quite serious.

“But it is!” said Uncle Asa. “A load of wood, and not a large load, either; not nearly so large as it

looked. It was really the beginning of my fortunes, and I am sure I owe more to it than to anything else I ever dealt in.

“Tell you about it? Of course I will, if you wish it; and perhaps it will help to start you in the right direction.

“It was when I was a boy, — about your age, Charley; I think I was sixteen that fall. The summer work was well over; the winter school had not yet begun; and my cousin Medad and I were considering how we should earn a little pocket-money. My father heard us talking over some boyish schemes, and said to us:

“‘I can give you an idea better than that. There’s the oak that blew over last spring, in the mill-pasture. You may cut it up, and have all you can make out of it.’

“‘But there’s work in that,’ I said.

“‘Yes; so there is in almost any honest job people are willing to pay money for. But it isn’t so hard as you think,’ said my father. ‘One stroke at a time; so many strokes an hour; so many hours a day. That’s the way great things are accomplished. It isn’t much of a tree; you’ll wish there was more of it before you get through.’

“Well,” Uncle Asa continued, “we undertook the job, and we did wish there was more of it. With a cross-cut saw and beetle and wedges, then with a hand-saw and an axe, we reduced that tree to stove-wood in a very short time, — and had fun out

of it too. Boys have only to be interested in their work, you know, to find it pleasant.

“We saw profit in every stick, and had as much talk about the way we would dispose of the wood, and what we would do with the money, as if we had been young millionaires discussing some great project.

“‘There’s a good deal in the way you pile wood, to sell it,’ Medad said. ‘There’s Jake Meeker,— he says he can take nine cords of wood and pile it over and make ten of it, easy as nothing.’

“‘Yes,’ I replied; ‘and my father says he can throw his hat through some of Jake’s wood-piles— such great holes! He don’t really make ten cords of it that way.’

“‘Yes, he does,’ Medad insisted. ‘There’s holes through every wood-pile; and you measure so much for a cord, whether they’re big or little.’

“‘But that’s cord-wood,’ I said. ‘You can’t pile stove-wood so as to make so much more of it.’

“‘We’ll see about that,’ Medad replied, with a laugh. ‘We’re going to make the most of our job, ain’t we?’

“‘Of course,’ I said; and waited with a good deal of curiosity to see how he would manage.

“He showed me in a day or two. We had an old one-horse wagon; we harnessed Dolly to it, and backed it up to our wood-pile. Then we began to lay the sticks loosely in the box, so as to make them take up as much room as possible.

“ But they did not fill up so fast as we had expected ; for we knew that if we piled them too loosely, they would be apt to shake down together on the way to the village, and so cause our load to shrink before we sold it.

“ Medad looked at the wood in the box when it was half filled, and then at that which remained on the ground, and shook his head dubiously. ‘ ’Twon’t do ! ’ he said. ‘ We ought to make three loads of it ; but at this rate we sha’n’t make two. I’ve an idea ! ’

“ ‘ What ? ’ I said, wondering how he would get out of the difficulty.

“ ‘ Throw it all out again ; I’ll show ye ! ’

“ I didn’t like that notion ; but he insisted, and the wood was all unloaded but a few sticks in the bottom of the wagon-box. With these he began to ‘ build ’ the load, as he aptly termed it. Instead of laying the sticks together all one way, he placed a few on the bottom far apart, and others crosswise on those, also very far apart, cob-house fashion. Then he called upon me for more wood.

“ ‘ But, Mede, ’ I objected, ‘ this will never do. ’

“ ‘ Why won’t it do ? ’ he demanded.

“ ‘ It’s cheating, isn’t it ? ’

“ ‘ It’s no more cheating than the way Jake Meeker piles his wood is cheating ! Other folks do so ; only we make our pile a little more hollow than common. ’

“ I couldn’t deny the truth of this argument. And if others made the most of their wood by their skill in piling it, why shouldn’t we do the same ?

“ Still I hesitated. A man might perhaps be excused for cheating a little ; but we were preparing to cheat a good deal.

“ ‘ The principle is the same,’ Medad said, when I mentioned my scruples (pretty fellows we were to talk of principles !). ‘ It ain’t cheating exactly ; but even if it is, it’s what everybody does in the way of business. Ye can’t get along without it ; mabby ye can in the next world, but ye can’t in this. Who tells the bad points in anything he wants to sell ? Don’t everybody cover them up, and show the good points, and make the most of ’em ? Of course they do. Hand me more sticks !’

“ I wasn’t convinced in my heart and conscience by this plausible speech. But my cousin, who was a year older than I, had a great influence over me, and I must confess that I was a little too anxious to get rich out of that wood. So I merely said, ‘ Don’t make the hollows too large, Mede,’ and handed him more sticks.

“ ‘ I’ll look out for that,’ he said. ‘ Now you’ll see.’

“ After about half a load had been built hollow, he put our crookedest and meanest sticks over it, and then covered the whole with nice wood closely packed, filling the wagon, so that, to all appearances, we had on a fine, compact load.

“ My father came out and looked at it as we drove out through the yard, and praised us for our industry. ‘ Well, well, boys,’ said he, ‘ you’ve got a handsome load of wood, I must say. I’d buy it of you,

but I suppose it will be just as well for you to take it to town and see what you can get for it.'

" 'I think it will be better,' said Mede, with a sly wink at me. 'What is such a load as that worth?'

" 'Stove-wood like that — white-oak — solid load right through,' said my father, running his eye over the wagon-box, 'ought to bring at least two dollars.'

" 'We're going to get three for it,' said my cousin.

" 'That's too much,' said my father. 'Never, boys, try to get more for a thing than it is really worth.'

" I knew that he always acted upon this principle himself; and I felt some pangs of conscience as I thought of the empty spaces hidden in that load.

" 'But I'll tell you what you may do,' he said. 'Drive to Deacon Finch's store, and get him to look at your load. He knows better than I do what wood like that is worth in the village, and if he says three dollars is about right for it, why,' my father added, with a shrewd twinkle, 'get it if you can!'

" He knew very well that Deacon Finch wouldn't say any such thing. And as we drove out into the road, my cousin laughingly said that the deacon was the last man he would ask to examine that load.

" But as we were driving into the village we met Deacon Finch in his chaise; and the temptation to play a sharp game on him was too much for my cousin. For my own part, I was feeling pretty sick of the idea of selling the load in its present shape to anybody; and I strongly objected to the proposed attempt on so sagacious a man as the deacon.

“‘It happens just right; don’t you see?’ Medad insisted. ‘He won’t get out of his chaise; and it’s a splendid-looking load, as you look *down* on it. If he buys it, he will tell us to drive it to his house; and of course he won’t go to see us unload it.’

“So he drove up on the roadside, and stopped the deacon as he was passing. ‘Mr. Finch,’ he said, ‘wouldn’t you like to buy a load of first-rate white-oak wood? Just look at it, if you please.’

“‘I’ve wood enough,’ said the deacon. ‘But it’s a nice-looking load you’ve got, and I guess you won’t have any trouble in disposing of it.’

“‘What is such a load as that worth, delivered in town?’ asked Medad. ‘We cut it ourselves.’

“‘How much is there?’

“‘I don’t know; haven’t measured it; just call it a load,’ said Medad.

“‘Good as that all the way through?’ queried the deacon.

“‘About the same,’ said Medad.

“‘Well, from a dollar-seventy-five to two-and-a-quarter; somewhere along there,’ replied the deacon.

“‘Will you give us two-and-a-quarter for it?’ Medad was quick to inquire.

“‘I told you I had wood enough. But I like to encourage boys; I’ll look at your load.’ And to the terror of *one* of us, very sure, Deacon Finch slowly and deliberately got out of his chaise.

“I don’t suppose anything in our looks caused him to suspect our honesty; for my cousin did the talk-

ing, and I must say I could not but envy the cool and candid manner with which he carried on his part of the interview.

“‘You are Mr. Prank’s boys, ain’t you?’ said the deacon, going to the hind end of the wagon.

“‘I am Mr. Prank’s son,’ Medad replied, promptly. ‘This is my cousin.’

“‘Good wood; well split; pretty smart boys!’ said the deacon, tumbling over a few sticks on top. ‘Guess I’ll take it.’

“‘Shall we deliver it at your house?’ Medad asked, almost too eagerly.

“‘Wait a minute! What’s here?’ cried the deacon, thrusting down his hand and pulling up one of the hidden crooks. ‘Is there much like that?’ And he began to dig down straight into one of our choice hollows.

“‘See here, if you please!’ said Medad, alarmed, ‘you needn’t take the wood if you don’t like it, but don’t spoil our load!’

“‘Spoil your load!’ echoed the deacon, with indignant scorn, thrusting in his arm up to his shoulder. ‘You wouldn’t be afraid of my spoiling an honest load; but what sort of a load is this? It’s a perfect cheat, and you are a couple of rascals!’

“‘You needn’t take it if you don’t want it!’ Medad repeated, more angry than ashamed, I am sorry to say. ‘We just put it that way to make a handsome load of it; but we don’t expect anybody to pay for it till they’ve seen it thrown off.’

“The deacon did not, evidently, put much faith in this falsehood, for he reprimanded us again sharply as he climbed back into his chaise.

“‘I guess he was about right, Mede,’ I said, as we watched him drive away. ‘We are a couple of rascals!’

“‘Pshaw! who cares? It’s what everybody does,’ said Mede, blusteringly; ‘what he does himself, every time he sells goods out of his store. It takes a rogue to catch a rogue. We’ll look out next time.’

“He laughed scornfully when I begged him to drive home and re-load the wood in honest fashion. But he was shy of making the sale where the deacon would be likely to hear of it.

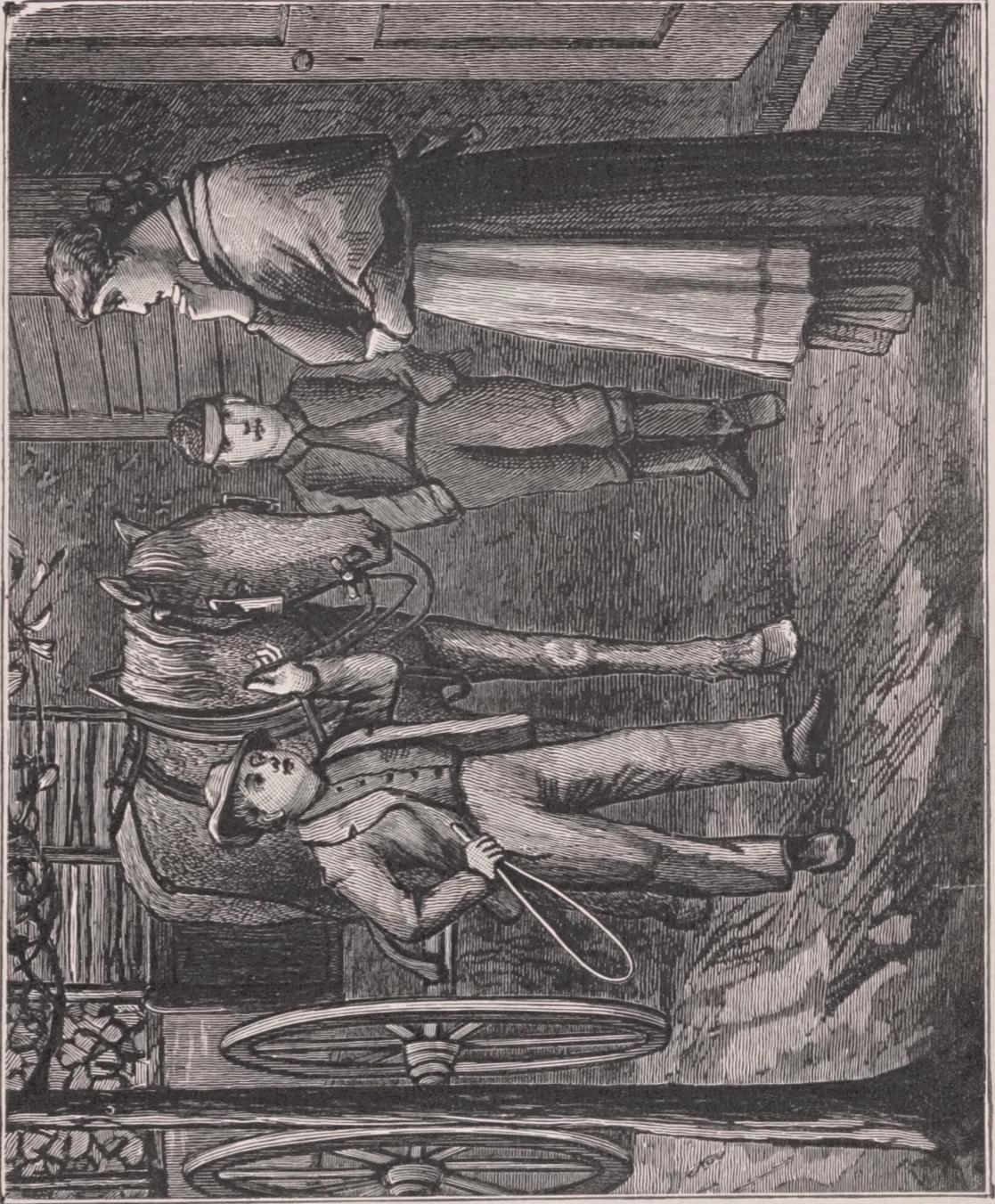
“‘We’ll go over to the East Village,’ he said. ‘It’ll be dusk when we get there; nobody will know us; and by that time nobody can look into our load.’

“This plan was carried out in spite of my too feeble objections. I drove the horse, while Medad went from door to door in the East Village, offering the wood ‘dog cheap,’ he said, because it was so near night and we wanted ‘to sell out and go home.’

“His idea of ‘dog cheap’ was two dollars, although he tried hard to get three. At last we found a woman who confessed that she was out of wood, and must get some soon, but said she was too poor to buy cord-wood, and then hire a man to cut it.

“Medad convinced her that it would be much better for her to buy ours already cut.

“‘But I haven’t got three dollars in the world!’



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she said. 'I'm really poor, dreffle poor! If you'll throw off half your load into my shed, I'll give you a dollar and a half.'

"'Can't do that, nohow,' said Mede; 'for nobody then will want to buy the other half. I should think not!' he said to me, aside, with a comical grimace.

"'Will you *trust* me for the other dollar and a half?' she asked. 'I am Mrs. Ober — Widow Ober; everybody knows me.'

"That didn't suit my cousin's views, either.

"'Tell ye what,' he said; 'give me two-and-a-quarter now, and you shall have the load. It's too little, but we've got to get home.'

"Two dollars and twenty cents was all she had, and Mede consented to take that. The poor woman paid down the money with a heavy sigh, and we threw the wood into her shed.

"She offered to hold a lantern for us; but we were glad enough to dispense with that luxury. I don't know when she discovered what a small pile the wood made, which looked so large in our wagon, — certainly not until after we were gone; for she came to the door as we backed around, said she was very much obliged to us, and bid us good-night.

"'That's the way to do it!' said my cousin, on the way home. 'We'll sell the other two loads just at dusk.'

"I didn't say much. I was feeling sick. And when he gave me my share of the 'plunder,' as he called it, — and *plunder* indeed it was, — it was with

a strange sense of loathing that I put it into my pocket. After all my anticipations of pleasure in receiving money fairly earned, that was the miserable result. Instead of a sweet satisfaction, nothing but remorse and disgust!

"I found that my cousin did not feel just right about the transaction, either. 'If we had shaved the sharp old deacon,' he said, 'twould have been a good joke, though it *was* almost too hard on the widder.'

"He was, somehow, different from me. He hardened his heart against all compunctions, which I could not do. I didn't like to talk about our *success*, as my father called it, after we got home, and went to bed at night miserable enough.

"I did not see Medad again until the next afternoon, when he came over to talk about taking another load of wood to town.

"'If we take any more,' I said, 'it must be honestly loaded, or I'll have nothing to do with it. It was an awfully mean thing we did yesterday.'

"He laughed foolishly, and said he guessed I was right about it. 'I'm sick of the business, any way,' he said. 'Let your father take the rest, and give us what he thinks it's worth.'

"So ended our wood speculation," Uncle Asa added. "I've quite forgotten what father gave us; indeed, that was a matter of no consequence, compared with what I made out of the load we sold the widow."

"But I don't see that you made much out of that," said Charley.

“Ah, but I did, though! I made something better than the most brilliant fortune ever achieved. I’ll tell you how.

“I had it in me, you see, to be a little — or, perhaps you will say, a good deal — dishonest. And if I had begun in a different way, I might have gone on cheating more and more all my life, until I should have quite forgotten there was such a thing as conscience. But, luckily, I overdid the thing at the start.

“I can never describe the shame and misery I felt in consequence of that trick we played off on poor Mrs. Ober. The very sight of split wood sickened me long afterwards. I got no comfort out of my share of the money she paid us; I hadn’t the heart to spend it, and it was a source of bitter recollection to me while I kept it.

“Then you may be sure that it was anything but a relief to me to hear — as I did the following spring — that the poor woman was actually in want. I was at the town meeting when I accidentally heard the matter spoken of. ‘Why can’t she get along?’ one man asked another; ‘she works hard.’

“‘Yes,’ said the other; ‘and she’s saving, in her way. But she don’t know how to make a trade, and anybody can cheat her. You would think it must be somebody pretty mean that would take advantage of a poor widow with six children; but there are just such wretches in the world, I’m sorry to say.’

“I didn’t care to hear any more. I went straight

home, took out of the till of my chest the dollar and ten cents I had kept there all this time, folded the money in a letter, on which I wrote, '*From a friend,*' addressed it to Mrs. Ober, and mailed it that very night.

"After that a part of the load was taken off from my conscience. But I could find strength and peace of mind only in a resolution which I had already formed, and which was fairly burned into my soul by what I had overheard at the town meeting.

"That resolution was, never in all my life to resort to dishonesty of any kind, no matter what the seeming necessity, or the temptation.

"It is a resolution I have never broken. It hasn't kept me poor, either. I am not very rich; and yet I believe I am better off to-day than I should be if I had been dishonest. I have always enjoyed a reputation for fair-dealing; and the result has been that my worldly prosperity has been solid to the core.

"But, boys, *that* is nothing compared with the satisfaction of always feeling that my gains were fairly earned, and that I had helped others while helping myself. A few thousands, more or less, are of no importance. But, O my boys, peace of mind is all-important."

"And Medad Prank — what ever became of him?" Charley inquired.

"I can't say that Medad took the lesson so seriously to heart as I did. He has always had the reputation of being a little tricky. Life has been

a scramble with him — a scramble for riches. And it was thought at one time that he had a large fortune; but it burst like a bubble in 'seventy-three, and he has been scrambling in the old way ever since.

“I was the only one who really made anything out of that LOAD OF WOOD.”

THE GOOSE RACE.



PHIL AIKEN'S STORY.

I WAS always racing with Ned. I mean Ned Hickleby. He is my cousin, you know.

He and I were babies together, and our first race was a *creep*. The prize — a rattle-box placed on the floor — was the goal we ran for. I won it. Uncle George — who put us up to it, one Thanksgiving day — says I came out half a pinafore ahead.

“Sich tall creepin’ I never see in all my born days!” says he. “Didn’t you scramble! Jest as you, Phil, grabbed the rattle, Ned he grabbed your toe, and give it sich a bite! I knowed then ’twould be nip-and-tuck with you through life,” says my Uncle George.

Then we were always racing, as we grew up, — to see which would touch the school-house door first; to see which would coast to the foot of Grimes’s Hill first, — both starting at the foot, and drawing up our sleds; to see which would climb a tree, or come down a tree, quickest. Once Ned came down so

fast he broke his arm, and he declared he beat ; but I said he didn't, for falling wasn't fair.

Then there were races on skates. And of course we raced horses as soon as we began to ride, and many a tumble we got before we had learned to hold on well.

It was the same thing in school, which we seemed to regard as only a sort of race-course. My chief motive for studying — and I did study hard — was to get above Ned ; and I don't know that it once entered my mind that spelling had any use, except as a game to beat him at.

This honest rivalry — for we were always the best of friends through it all — served to make good runners and riders and skaters of us, — swimmers and rowers too, I may say, for many a race was on or in the water. Rowing was a good joke, since we had but one boat between us. He pulled an oar on one side, I pulled on the other, and the fun was, to see which could pull the other round. As our pulling was about equal, it generally sent the boat straight ahead ; and as we never stopped to look where we were going, once we went aground smash into the old goose-pen, where Aunt Luce was getting eggs, and scared her so she broke a whole apronful, and darted out through the slats over the top of the pen like a circus-woman through a hoop, Ned said. Another time we went over the dam, and got an awful ducking.

His folks lived in one end of the old house, and

my folks lived in the other end; and they used to find our habit of racing come handy, when there was a good stroke of boys' work to be done. They would set us at two churns, and see which would fetch the butter first. Then, of course, the one that could husk more baskets of corn in a day, or pile up more wood, than the other, was always the "best feller."

We had tried almost every imaginable style of race,— we had had dog races and cat races, and once we had an ox race; Ned rode old Brindle and I rode old Bright, and they got off the course, and ran with us into the woods, and brushed us off, and gave us such a scratching and bruising generally that we never wanted to try that sport again.

Then one day Uncle George,— who liked the fun as well as we did, and never cared who beat, for he could brag of the winner, and say, "That 'ere little nephew o' mine, he's awful smart!" no matter which of us it was,— one day he asked us why we never had a "goose race."

"What's a goose race?" says Ned.

"Didn't ye never hear of a goose race?" says Uncle George. "Wal, the' 's suthin' fer ye to larn yit, in the sportin' line. Jest see which 'll dig out fust on these 'ere rows o' puttaters; then I'll tell ye."

So Ned and I dug as if for dear life, and I got out first, though he declared I didn't dig fair, and, to prove it, went back and found patatoes in the ground I had gone over, which I offset by finding about as

many in his hills. Uncle George, who sat on a barrel at the end of the rows, and watched us, as *umpire*, — which was a good deal easier than doing the work himself, — said neither had won, and we must try again. Then, as the result was still doubtful, he said we had better take two barrels, and pick the potatoes up, and see which would get the most; “and I’ll be talkin’,” says he.

I don’t remember which beat on the potatoes, but I do remember what he told us about the goose race.

“You’ve your two flocks you’ve been raisin’,” says he. “Ned has sartin got the most geese; but Phil stands to ’t that his’n are the biggest. Now pick out, each on ye, eight or ten o’ yer smartest geese, and see which can drive acrost the pond fust.”

“In the water, Uncle George?”

“Of course, in the water, if it’s *acrost* the pond.”

“But how can we?”

“That’s the p’int I’m goin’ to explain. Fust place, harness up yer geese, each in his own way,—there’s that coarse twine we had fer tyin’ up wool, shearin’ time; ye can have that,—and see which ’ll beat makin’ the harnesses. Take, say, nine geese apiece, four span, and a leader; or drive three abreast, if you like. Then there’s that ol’ molasses-cask, we’ll saw that in two, and make ye a couple o’ tubs fer to ride in. Then, when you’ve got yer geese well harnessed and broke, some Sat’dy arternoon, when you’ve worked smart, and ’arnt a play-spell, we’ll tackle on to the tubs,—I’ll go in the boat and see

fair play, — an' the one that gits his team an' tub an' himself acrost the pond quickest, shall have my ol' six-bladed jack-knife."

The six-bladed knife had been our wonder and envy as long as we could remember. Yet the idea of the race itself was sufficiently exciting, without the offer of so splendid a prize.

We set to work at once making harnesses; and what a squawking there was in the old goose-pens, at odd spells, for about a week!

"Boys! boys! what *are* ye about?" says my father, or some one of the folks, whenever a fresh goose was caught.

"The boys are doin' well enough," says Uncle George; "jest let 'em alone; I know what they 're up to."

My way was, when I caught a goose, to harness it, all ready for the great occasion, and then let it go again, till wanted. Ned did the same; and in a few days our flocks presented the drollest appearance, — all the biggest old geese waddling about or swimming in the water, with twine harnesses on. They generally picked hard at the strings at first; and Dick — the old gander I had selected for a leader — pulled his breast-strap apart twice, before the race came off. Didn't he stretch up his long neck, and open his bill, and tell the others what he had done, with a jubilant laughing and cackling, each time!

Of course the sight of our geese harnessed attracted attention, and made a good deal of fun; and

everybody wanted to know when the race was coming off.

“Ned,” I said, “the thing’s goin’ to be pop’lar.”

“Yes; but,” says he, shaking his head, “we have all the work, and t’other fellers think they’re goin’ to see the fun for nothin’.”

We thought that wasn’t fair; so we concluded to charge a small fee for admission to the race-ground. Accordingly, one morning the following *Notice* appeared, chalked on the end of the barn, with four long and not very straight lines drawn about it, to attract attention from the street:

GREAT GOOSE RACE!
to Come Off Saturday afternoon!
9 geese on a side to be driven by
MR. EDWARD HICKLEBY and MR. PHIL AIKEN
who Will Ride in Tubs!!!
best place to See is from Aiken’s shore
which will be Reserved for The Ockasion
admission inside the Goose Fence
 2 cents! 
under 5 years old Half price
no peaking through cracks nor climin over
Publick Are Invited
NO HUMBUG

Uncle George helped us a little about the wording of this *Notice*, but the spelling and penmanship — or chalkmanship — were all our own.

Uncle George also suggested the idea of having each a couple of boys to help us at starting. For a goose is a goose, you know; and, though ours were

tame enough, we hadn't given much time to breaking them, and we expected they would prove a little unmanageable. "There's plenty o' boys that'll jump at the chance to pay their admission fee that way," says Uncle George.

We liked the idea, but were careful to select such boys as we thought had no money, in order not to diminish the proceeds of the show. As it turned out, Ned chose one, Tom Hobart, who afterwards held out, at a safe distance, in his grimy paw two coppers, which he said his grandmother had given him for the great holiday. Ned was very much disgusted, and wished to swap him off for Bob Smart, who, we were quite sure, couldn't pay; but it was too late, — Tom held us to the engagement; and we lost two cents by that unlucky choice.

Saturday afternoon came, and so did the "Publick," and we had thirty-four cents (seventeen spectators) inside the goose-fence before two o'clock. We had made Bob Smart doorkeeper. The "Publick" generally behaved very well, though there was a good deal of "peaking through cracks," and, at the crisis of the race, a grand rush over the fence and through the gate, spite of all Bob could do. Then we lost money in consequence of the show being open on the side of the pond.

"There's twelve cents in that old boat of Jones's," says Ned, — for we reckoned everybody as cash that day. Then we noticed eight cents on one raft, and six cents on another, and two cents paddling about on a log.

We had a great time getting our goose-teams ready. We had to take them across the pond, to begin with, so as to start from the other side. "It'll be easier to drive 'em towards home than from it," says Uncle George. I caught mine in the pen,— each with its separate harness on, you know,— and handed them to Sam Baker, who handed them to Link Griffin, who put them into my tub. There were slats nailed over the top of the tub, to keep them in. When they were all in, the last slat was made fast, and the tub was launched. Ned had his ready at about the same time, for he could never bear to be behind me in anything. Then we took the tubs in tow,— Uncle George and Ned and I and our "seconds," as we called the boys that helped,— and rowed over in the boat to the starting-place, across the pond.

There was a great rush of outsiders to the spot, almost before we had landed. "There's at least twenty-five cents running around loose!" says Ned, bitterly. We found some of these unpaying spectators of use, however, in helping us tackle up.

That was no small job. Link tended the tub, and handed out the geese by the necks; Sam and I tied them together; and the other fellows held them after they were tied. Ned hitched up three abreast; but I drove four span, with Dick for a leader. The slats were taken off my tub, the goose-team was fastened to it, and I got into it. There was a good deal of delay, which made the paying spectators on

the other side regret that they had not saved their money and gone over for a free sight to the shore we started from. But at last we were ready, — Ned and I afloat in our tubs, and the geese in the water, with boys in rolled-up trousers-legs on each side of the teams, trying to keep them straight, till the word was given to let go.

I should add that Ned and I had each a long, stiff switch, to drive with. We had tow-string reins, too, but they were more for show than use. I had had a little previous practice in my tub, and found what a ticklish thing it was to navigate it. If I leaned too much on one side, over it would go. To make the voyage safely, I had learned that the only way was to stand on my knees, or sit on my heels, as near the centre as I could.

At last the moment came, — the great moment! Uncle George fired off a pistol, which was the signal for starting. The boys in the rolled-up trousers-legs stepped back; and the race was begun!

I made a fine start, — my four span and leader all in a line, and drawing well. Perhaps the enthusiastic cheering and hand-clapping on the shore behind us helped to get them off. But as that noble burst of applause died away, it was taken up and echoed by the fellows on the rafts and in Jones's boat, and on our shore, and the good effect was lost. The geese had by this time found out that there was something wrong. They didn't understand pulling in harness. They tried to scatter, but were held

together by the strings. Then Dick, the leader, stopped, faced about, put up his neck, uttered a loud squawk, and finally put back towards the shore, followed by the four span. I headed him off with my long switch, and my "seconds," rushing into the water, frightened him; but this did not prevent him from doubling on his course, and trying to cross between the hindmost span and the tub! He got caught in the traces, and I reached over the side of the tub, and took him by the neck, and turned him round again. Then he gave another squawk, spread his wings, and tried to fly; all the rest following his example. For a minute I didn't know but I should be carried in the tub over the pond; but I wasn't; the flying was a failure. At last the team settled down to practical work, and did some good honest swimming.

Then I looked to see how Ned was getting along. He had made even a better start than I did; but now he was having *his* trouble. Nobody would have supposed that he had started with three abreast. Two or three geese had got over the traces; one was headed towards the tub, and looking up at him with the funniest expression of countenance; and two or three were trying to get away by diving. All I could see of them was just their tails tipped up out of the water.

At last we were all right, with Uncle George and our seconds following us in the boat. If any of our geese tried to go in the wrong direction, we just

put out our whips and stopped them. At first it was —

“Get up, Dick!”

“Go 'long, Nance!”

“Take care, Fanny!”

“Gee, gee, you goose! gee!”

At the same time we clucked and flourished reins and whip, jockey fashion. But in the ardor of the race, we soon came down a little from that high style, and the cry was “*shoo!* SHOO! SHOO!” while we lashed the water, to frighten the silly things into greater speed.

Sometimes Ned was ahead, and sometimes I was. The excitement was tremendous! There had been a good deal of betting on the result; no money was “up,” I believe; but pins, pop-guns, and several pints of peanuts were destined to “change hands” before that day’s sun went down. But there were many purely disinterested spectators, who cheered us both alike, and, at every mishap we encountered, filled the air with shrieks of laughter. One fellow on a raft laughed till he tumbled off into the water, and came near being drowned.

One of my geese broke away before I had got half across the pond. But Ned met with a worse misfortune, for one of his, in diving, got entangled in the traces, and was towed by one leg backwards the rest of the way.

The excitement reached its height when we were within about four rods of the goose-pens. Our



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teams then began to be frightened at the spectators on the shore, and we had to *shoo* and lash the water furiously to get them along. Finally the two flocks started to swim towards each other, for refuge and sympathy. Ned was struggling desperately to get his ahead, out of my reach, when suddenly I heard a great shout, and looked to see what had happened, and there was Ned in the water with his geese. He had leaned a little too much on the side of his tub, and it had capsized. I was laughing so hard at him that I quite forgot what I was about, and over I went too. Then there was a scramble for the shore,—geese and drivers and tubs. I hardly knew who beat, until I heard a general shout.

“*Phil Aiken! hurrah! HUR-R-A-A-AH!*”

I had just got my team ashore, and pulled up my tub. Ned was still in the water. Then all my friends gathered about me, and shook my wet hand, and congratulated me; and Uncle George, having decided in my favor, presented me with the six-bladed knife, on the spot. This was his speech:

“A little fun now an’ then don’t hurt nobody. We’ve all had a share o’ the fun; and my smart nephew here, he has won the prize. Here it is, Phil, here’s the knife. You done well. Ned done well too; an’ he might ‘a’ beat, if his geese hadn’t got into a tangle. Keep on, boys, keep on; never tire o’ well-doin’, and like as not some day you’ll be runnin’ fer Congress together; who knows?”

THE WIDOW'S GOLD.



PETER WESCOTT'S STORY.

THERE are a great many dull boys who would show plenty of talent, perhaps even genius, if it could be called out of them. They are stupid at their studies or their work, because the right teacher or the right thing has never yet aroused their interest.

I was something such a boy myself. At school, my lessons did not seem real to me. I recited them mechanically, without much idea of their meaning. But suddenly, when I was fourteen, my mind took a turn.

And what do you suppose first awakened *my* interest? An arithmetical puzzle in a weekly newspaper!

I showed it to my friends. They could not solve it. I took it to my teacher. He ciphered at it in vain. Still I could not give it up; and at last, by a method of my own, I worked out the answer.

Arithmetic was from that day a new thing to me;

and algebra — what a delightful world it opened to my young mind!

“I shouldn't wonder,” I said, “if there is something in grammar, too.”

And, indeed, the old rules, which I could never before understand, now appeared full of meaning.

But I never found out in what direction my peculiar talent lay until some years afterward. One person has a genius for poetry; another is a marvellous chess-player; a third has an intuitive knowledge of music or of mathematics. My peculiar gift lies in working out puzzles.

Not newspaper puzzles, like that which first roused my mental powers, but problems of human nature and life. To read faces, to follow clues so faint that they seem invisible to others, to get at human motives and to reveal secrets, often by a process which I cannot myself explain, — by a sort of intuition, — this is my *forte*, if I have any.

And how did I first discover that I possessed such faculties? That is what I am going to tell you.

I was then living with my mother in a small wooden house on Warren Street. I had one sister, whose name was Marcia. We had lost our father three years before.

We had a little property. I was at work in a hardware store. By economy and good management my mother was just able to make both ends meet.

One of the best things we owned in those days —

for it was during the war, when the premium on gold was rising — was seven hundred dollars in that precious coin. At the particular time I speak of, that seven hundred was already worth about a thousand dollars in greenbacks.

My mother was a nervous, anxious woman. She was afraid we might lose everything by the war; and nothing could induce her to let me dispose of that gold.

“Oh, no, Peter,” she would say. “Gold is the only real money, these times. Better lose the interest on it than run the risk of losing the principal itself, as we might if the war proves a failure, and paper money keeps on depreciating.”

Our gold was locked up in the safe of a friend of my father, — a man in whom we had always placed great confidence. But one day I heard startling rumors about him. He had been in some unlucky speculations; he was in great distress for money, and his honesty was suspected.

I thought his safe a very *unsafe* place for our gold, and went right over to his office that afternoon, and asked him for it.

The rumors proved to have been well founded; and yet I had no trouble in getting the gold. It was I who had left it with him; and he handed it back to me in the same little stout leather bag in which he had received it.

My mother had before told me that she thought we ought to relieve him of the care of the money,

and make a special deposit of it in some bank. This I intended to do before letting her know that it had been in danger. But it was after banking hours when I took the gold, and so I carried it home with me.

I was pretty careful not to tell her that I had it. She could never have slept a wink as long as she knew the gold was in the house.

But I knew a good place to hide it, where, as I said to my sister Marcia, nobody would ever think of looking for it, and where it would not burn up.

There was a broken place in the cellar-wall of our house, where, by removing a stone, I could thrust my arm into a deep cavity. I had found that out before. And I had often thought the gold would be safer there than anywhere else, — even in the vaults of a bank. But my mother's nervousness had prevented me from putting it there.

"The only danger now," I thought, "is that something may happen to me. If I should die suddenly, nobody would know what I had done with the gold."

And it was to guard against such a mischance that I took Marcia into my confidence.

That was Saturday night, and the gold had to stay in the house over Sunday. By Monday I had become quite accustomed to having it there, and only my unwillingness to deceive my mother in anything caused me to go that day to the bank, and see what arrangements I could make for a special deposit.

The bank consented to receive the gold, and I promised to deposit it the next morning.

I got my dinner down town, and did not go home until evening. Then — as I had done two or three times before since the gold had been there — I sauntered into the cellar, to see that my treasure was safe.

It was rather dark under the stairs, where I had hidden it; but I knew the way too well to need a lamp. I felt for the loose stone. To my amazement, there was no loose stone there! I ran my hand along the wall for the broken place, and found everything solid. From top to bottom, a complete wall!

It was an astounding mystery. For a minute, the broken place, the loose stone, the cavity behind it, and the hidden gold, all seemed to have been a dream, out of which I was just awakened.

The shock made me dizzy and faint. By the time I had regained my wits a little, my eyes had got used to the darkness, and they confirmed the discovery of my hands. It was a perfect wall, laid in mortar, smooth and clean; and it was hard to believe there had ever been a hole under the stairs.

I guessed what had happened. I went up for a lamp, in the faint hope of still finding the gold. I returned with the light, and then saw plainly, by the appearance of the stones and the cement, that the wall had been freshly patched. I searched every corner for my little leather bag, hoping that it had been taken out and cast aside; but in vain. I felt sick.

When I went up-stairs again, my mother met me with a smile.

"Have you seen what the masons did to-day?" she said, while I tried to look as unconcerned as possible.

"What masons?" I replied.

"Two men Mr. Orvis sent here."

Mr. Orvis was our landlord. My mother went on, never suspecting with what horrible doubt and anxiety I waited for her explanation.

"More than a year ago," she said, "I spoke to him about that bad place in the wall under the stairs, and he promised to have it mended. But I thought he had forgotten all about it. Why, my son," she exclaimed, reading something in my face, "what is there wrong about it?"

"I did not know," I replied, trying to speak carelessly, "that you had ever spoken to Mr. Orvis."

"Perhaps I neglected to tell you," she said, "for I didn't think it a matter of much consequence. Do you blame me?"

"Oh, no," I said. "How many men were there? How long were they about it?"

By a few such questions, I learned from my mother that there were two men: that the first came at about nine o'clock, and examined the wall; that he then went away, and the second came in about an hour, bringing tools and materials in a wheelbarrow; that he had already commenced work when the first returned; that they finished the job and went away together before noon.

"What sort of men were they?" I inquired.

"The one who came first," she said, "seemed to be an American. The other was an Irishman. But why do you ask so particularly? Have they stolen anything?"

"That I don't know," I replied. "I suppose they had a chance to steal, and it's well enough to know something about them, in case we should miss anything. Who let them in?"

"I let them in," she said, "for Bridget was busy with her washing."

"By the back way, of course."

"Yes; both came and went by the back way. After the second one came, the side-cellar door was left open, and they went in and out as they pleased. I sincerely trust," said my mother, growing alarmed, "that they have not taken anything!"

"Probably they have not," I said.

I hoped, indeed, that my treasure was safely walled up in the cavity in which it had been hidden. That might well be if the men had been careful to rebuild only the face of the wall.

But there was a terrible riddle before me to be solved, and I hardly knew how to go about it. If the money was stolen, both men might have taken it together, or either might have had a chance to secure it without the knowledge of his companion.

I determined to find out first whether the money was still in the wall. But that was no easy thing to do without disturbing my mother.

Once more I took my sister Marcia into my coun-

sel. She was at school when the masons were at the house, and I found that she knew nothing of the mischief that had been done, until I told her.

“Now,” said I, “that wall has got to come down again this evening. Mother must be away. Think of some call she has talked of making, and get her out of the house.”

We carried out that plan; and at half-past seven I had the satisfaction of seeing my mother and sister depart from the front door. I had already smuggled an iron bar into the cellar; and as soon as I was alone in the house — for Bridget was out for the evening — I took a light and went to my task.

I set my lamp on a barrel, and attacked the wall with a crowbar. I was working furiously, breaking the cement and prying out the stones, my coat off, my hair flying at every stroke, and the sweat pouring down my face, when a sudden exclamation caused me to look up.

My mother stood on the stairs, gazing at me with an expression of fright and horror I shall never forget.

She thought me insane, and no wonder. The broken wall had but just been restored, and there I was tearing it down again!

“My son, what *are* you doing?” she said.

I trembled, stared, and stammered:

“Nothing, only just breaking the wall a little.”

“Breaking the wall, my son! For mercy's sake, what for?” she said.

I thought first of telling her that I had reason to believe the cat was walled up, — that I had heard her mew. But pussy was at that moment on the stairs. Besides, I couldn't lie to my mother.

No; I had been caught in the act, and there was only one thing to do. I told her everything.

Overcome by her agitation, she sat down on the stairs and heard my story. It was a relief to her to know that I wasn't crazy. Perhaps it was that which enabled her to bear so well the possible loss of the gold.

“I went with Marcia to call on Mrs. Burns,” she exclaimed, in her turn. “She was away; so I thought we had better come home. As soon as I got into the house, I heard a strange pounding, and came down here and found you.”

There was no longer any concealment. She did not blame me for what I had done, — for she knew it was to spare her anxiety of mind; but how bitterly I regretted having hidden the gold in the cellar without her knowledge!

She now held the light for me while I finished breaking out the wall. I made a much larger hole than had been there before. I pried out stone after stone, cleared away the rubbish again and again, felt with my hand, and searched with the lamp, a dozen times or more, till at last I gave it up.

There was no gold there!

Then the masons must have taken it, — one or both of them.

This conclusion arrived at, my mother insisted on putting the matter into the hands of a lawyer we knew; and after the sad piece of business I had made by doing things in my own way, I could not oppose her.

I hastened to bring Mr. Walsh to the house, and went with him that very evening to see our landlord, and get on the track of the masons. The next morning I had to go to the store, and the lawyer was left to work up the case alone.

At noon, I got leave of absence for the rest of the day, and went home. Mr. Walsh was at the house, and I heard him make his report to my mother.

He had seen the two masons, both of whom denied all knowledge of the gold.

"The American," he said, "is a man of the name of Worth, intelligent, and apparently honest. He looked me in the face, with a perfectly simple, candid expression. He said he did not find the gold, and did not think it probable the other man did. 'He could hardly have carried off a bag like that,' said he, 'without my knowing it.'

"I found the Irishman a different sort of fellow. His name is Crowley, a rough, violent fellow. As soon as I explained to him the matter, he fell to denouncing Worth. 'I wouldn't trust him with my old pipe,' he said. 'He was at the wall first, and if he saw the gold, of course he stole it.'"

This was the lawyer's account of the two men.

"And what is your conclusion?" my mother asked, as if his word must be law and gospel.

“At first,” he said, “I thought that either Worth must be innocent, or that both men were guilty. But Crowley modified my opinion on the latter point. He would hardly have spoken of Worth as he did if they had been accomplices. He was altogether too ready to denounce his companion as a thief, and for no good reason that he could give, either.

“The result has been,” Mr. Walsh added, “that I have got out search-warrants for both men’s premises. It was necessary to treat them both alike; but it’s my opinion the Irishman took the money.”

Two skilful officers had been engaged, and they were to begin with Crowley’s house that afternoon at two o’clock. The lawyer was to accompany them, and I got permission to go, too.

I snatched a hasty luncheon, and spent the interval of time in hunting up the masons and talking with them where they were at work. They did not know me. I did not allude to the gold. But from them and their fellow-workmen I tried to find out something of the characters of the two men.

At the appointed hour, Mr. Walsh, the officers and myself, were at the Irishman’s house. Our visit was unexpected, and when we made our errand known, we were roundly abused by Crowley’s wife. She would have prevented the search if she could, and she watched jealously and scolded violently while it was going on.

It was thorough, but ineffectual. No gold was to be found. I could see that both Mr. Walsh and the

principal officer were much disappointed. They lingered, and looked again, — in the bag of meal, in the tea-kettle, in the stove, and in the bedding; then we went away, followed by good Mrs. Crowley's interjections.

As you may believe, I watched everything with the greatest interest. And in the street, I listened eagerly to hear what Mr. Walsh and the officers would say.

All inclined to the opinion that Crowley was the thief; but it was evident that we were no nearer an answer to the question, "What had he done with the money?" than we were before.

He might have hidden it elsewhere; or it might still be secreted about the premises in some nook which we had overlooked.

"At any rate," said Mr. Walsh to the officers, "Crowley must be carefully watched. He won't keep the gold buried forever; and we must allow him no chance to spend or exchange it without exposing himself. Now we will search Worth's house; though I, for one, haven't much hope of finding it there."

I stepped to the lawyer's side.

"You know best about it," I said; "but I hope the search of Worth's premises will be as thorough as if we felt sure he had the money."

"Certainly, certainly!" he replied. "But why do you speak so earnestly about it?"

"Because," I said, "I suspect him more than I do Crowley."

He asked my reasons, which I explained to him as we walked on.

“And why didn't you tell me this before?” demanded the lawyer.

“Because,” I answered, “I didn't want to turn your suspicions from the Irishman until his house had been searched. Now I firmly believe Worth took the gold, and that we shall find it.”

Before going further, I ought to give my reasons for thinking that Worth, the American, and not the Irishman, Crowley, carried off my mother's little treasure.

It will be remembered that he was first at the wall, which he examined, and then went away; that Crowley then arrived with a wheelbarrow-load of tools and materials, and that he had commenced work when Worth returned.

Thus it appeared that each might have had an opportunity to take the gold hidden in the cavity of the wall, without the other's knowledge.

But why had Worth gone away after making the examination?

He had in fact been sent there, not especially to make an examination, but to begin work on the wall. He began, in fact, — my mother could testify to that, for she heard the stones rattle, — but suddenly stopped, and went off. What for?

I did not think our lawyer had sufficiently considered that circumstance. He had too readily accepted

Worth's explanation, that he had just stepped out to smoke his pipe, while waiting for Crowley.

His house was not far from ours, and he might have had time to carry home the gold and return during his brief absence.

If his object had been simply to smoke his pipe, he need not have gone out of our back yard.

But this was only one circumstance against him, and a trifling one, perhaps.

Something more to the purpose I discovered in conversing with the two men's fellow-workmen.

The lawyer's suspicions had been diverted from Worth and fixed upon Crowley, as has been stated, by their manner of speaking of each other. Worth had used very temperate and even charitable language regarding Crowley; while Crowley declared that he "would not trust Worth with his old pipe," — that if Worth had a chance to steal the gold, "of course he stole it."

I thought, with Lawyer Walsh, that Crowley was *too* eager to denounce his companion as a thief. But when I learned more about them, that matter appeared in a different light.

It seemed that there had long existed a strong feeling of jealousy and dislike between the two men, and that they never missed a chance to speak ill of each other.

Crowley, then, in abusing Worth, had merely indulged in his customary language regarding him. But Worth had changed his tone, in speaking of Crowley.

If his design had been to pass for a kind, candid, innocent man, he had certainly succeeded with the lawyer.

I could not tell, as we walked along, how much weight these arguments of mine had with Mr. Walsh and the officers.

They smiled rather incredulously. That was natural enough; old heads do not like to admit that younger and less experienced ones can teach them anything at their own trade.

From Crowley's house we proceeded directly to Worth's, where we met with a different reception.

Mrs. Worth was very much a lady. She saw at once the reasonableness of the proceeding when it was explained to her; she did not wish to look at our search-warrant, but smilingly threw open her door to our little party.

I, who watched everything closely, and was perhaps foolishly suspicious, thought that she was a trifle too self-possessed and obliging. And, overflowing polite as she was, I believe I detected a certain nervousness in the muscles about her mouth.

What I observed was not inconsistent with the idea of her innocence. Yet as I looked at her, I said to myself:

“Madam, you are acting a part.”

The only other inmate of the house besides herself, at the time, was a big black dog. From the mat in the entry, where he lay, he growled savagely at us.

“Get away, Tiger!” Mrs. Worth commanded him,

sharply. And as he slunk away with an angry snarl, she said to Mr. Walsh, "Tiger is cross, but he never bites. Walk right in."

We wiped our feet as we entered. I was the last. Tiger stole back and growled at me; then, after I had passed, coiled himself up on the mat again.

We were first shown into a neat little sitting-room, where there were three or four cane-seated chairs, and one haircloth-covered rocking-chair. This she offered to Mr. Walsh, urging him in the politest manner to sit down. He declined.

"You'd *better* be seated," she insisted. "I suppose it will take some time to make a thorough search. Will you begin with the clock? Or the book-case? I suppose you would like to look under the carpet; and perhaps under the floor. *You* take the easy-chair, won't you?"

She turned smilingly to me. So I sat down and made myself comfortable while the room was looked through.

Having satisfied themselves, from the collection of ancient dust about the sunken heads of the rusty carpet-tacks, that the floor of *that* room, at least, had not been recently disturbed, and examined the walls and the furniture, even turning over and thumping the seat of the rocking-chair I had been sitting in, the officers passed on to other parts of the house.

Mr. Walsh paused to apologize once more to her for the trouble we were making.

"Oh, don't speak of it!" she replied. "It's a sat-

isfaction to *us* to have everything searched. I would turn the house inside out for you, if I could. As long as a shadow of suspicion rests on my husband, I beg of you to keep on! I want *his* good name to be cleared."

She went with us, opening doors, and explaining everything.

In the cellar were barrels of ashes, which the officers thought it would be necessary to have carried out and sifted.

"Certainly," she said. "Or you can empty them right here. I think you can easily find out if there is gold in them."

She showed this obliging disposition at every turn; and that enabled us to finish the search before dark.

Although the house was larger than the Irishman's, it took us but a little longer time to go through it.

At last there seemed but one point left to be considered.

The Irishman's wife had been so dressed that it would hardly have been possible for her to have seven hundred dollars in gold concealed about her person. But Mrs. Worth wore hoops.

She did not wait for any of us to allude to this circumstance.

"You haven't searched *me*," she laughed.

"No, ma'am," said Mr. Walsh. "We thought we might have to call in the wife of one of these officers; but I don't think it necessary."

“Of course it is necessary,” she declared. “Or I will go with you to his house. Or perhaps — if you will step into the kitchen there a moment — ”

We did as she suggested. The “moment” was brief; and she stood before us in a gown that hung loosely about her limbs. Her hoopskirts lay on the floor.

She shook her clothing lightly, and showed us that there could have been no weight of gold concealed within it.

Mr. Walsh thanked her, apologized once more for the intrusion, and led the way to the entry.

“It’s of no consequence,” she replied. “I’m sorry *you* have so much trouble, and I sincerely hope the lady will find her money. If everybody was honest, what a different world it would be! Get out, Tiger!”

The dog was in our way again.

We had hardly reached the door, when I turned back.

“I’ll thank you for a glass of water,” I said, leaving Mr. Walsh and the officers to walk on, “if it is not too much trouble.”

“No trouble at all,” she replied blandly. “Will you come in and sit down?”

“Thank you,” I said; “I will wait here.”

She hesitated, and gave me a quick glance. She had been rather pale when we first entered the house; but now there was a faint flush in her cheeks.

In a moment she smiled again, and went for the water. The pump, which supplied half a dozen families, was in the yard. She was gone about a minute. When she brought the glass I took it, looked steadily in her eyes, and remarked in a quiet tone :

"Madam, I have found the gold."

Her eyes glistened with the excitement which she had so long controlled, and which she tried again to disguise with a smile as she replied :

"Found it? Indeed! Where?"

"I am standing on it."

The mat was under my feet.

In her brief absence I had examined it, in spite of the dog's uneasy growling, and satisfied myself.

"Oh, that is impossible!" she exclaimed.

It was a common-looking mat, made of braided rags; but I had discovered that it was double. Two thin mats had been recently quilted together.

We had all wiped our feet on it; and the officers had even given it a glance. Had it been single, as it appeared at first sight to be, nothing could very well have been concealed in it.

But the dog's peculiar conduct had excited my suspicions. He did not seem to be guarding the house simply, but to be especially jealous of that mat.

Had he been told to guard it? Or did his canine instinct teach him that it contained something about which his master and mistress felt unusual anxiety?

"I will show you, madam," I said; and I whipped out my knife.

Then for the first time she lost her self-possession.

"Don't cut that mat!" she cried, the excitement in her eyes flashing into an angry blaze.

"But *you* will not prevent me?" I said, inquiringly; "you, who have been so anxious that the search should be thorough!"

"Don't cut that mat!" she repeated. "If you do —!"

"What — if I do?" I said, calmly as I could, for I must own that I, too, was excited.

"I'll set the dog on you," she replied. "Tiger!"

The dog sprang to her side with a growl.

"In that case," I said, "I shall have to call back the officers, who are waiting for me on the corner."

Indeed I had whispered to Mr. Walsh, just before he went out, that I believed I had found a clue to the money, and asked him to leave me alone with the woman and wait for me a few minutes.

He had consented, simply because he was my mother's lawyer; for it was plain to be seen that he had not a particle of faith in my being able to make any discoveries.

I was only a boy; and what could I hope to do, after he and two experienced officers had been over the ground? It did seem absurd in me; but I was not to be discouraged from making the attempt.

Mrs. Worth had supposed that the officers were far away by this time, as indeed they were; though I, fortunately, did not know it. Mr. Walsh had not even thought it worth the while to wait for me a minute.

My confident proposal to call them back, however, brought the lady to her senses.

"Excuse me," she said, with something of her former sweetness of manner; "your party has already made so much litter, which I and my husband will have to clear up after you, that I couldn't think of your cutting this mat."

I was now more than ever convinced that I had found the money. But I felt some pride in wishing to secure it without the help of the lawyer and his men, after he had treated me with such contempt.

"I will not call them back," I said, "provided you will take care of your dog."

"Tiger, go and lie down!" she ordered him, and he obeyed, to my very great relief.

"Now," said I, "you will be paid full damages for everything injured by us in your house. If the gold is not in the mat, you can't object to my ripping a few stitches here and there. But first, put your fingers here, and you will confess that there is something that feels like a ten-dollar gold-piece."

She drew back. "It is very true," she replied, "there is money in that mat."

"Ah, madam!" said I, with a feeling of triumph, thinking she was about to make confession.

But I did not yet know the resources of this audacious woman.

"It has been there a long time," she added. "It is our own savings. You cannot take that from us."

I smiled as I said, "It seems a very strange sort of place to hoard money."

"Not at all," she replied. "A great many people have walked over that mat, without suspecting what was in it. No thief would think of looking for money there. I didn't consider it necessary to mention it to your officers; and you see — detectives as they are — they did not find it out."

"But you see *I* found it out," I said. "Is it gold?"

"Yes, the most of it," she replied.

"How much?" I asked.

"Something like three hundred dollars," she answered. "My husband has the exact figures. It had been accumulating in a savings-bank. But my husband thinks the war will drag on till paper money is good for nothing; so we drew out our deposit, bought gold with it, and hid it here — for safety," she added, with a smile.

I asked her the name of the savings-bank, and she gave one, after some hesitation.

"This story may be verified — or it may not," I said, as I took down the name in my note-book. "But I think we are going to settle this matter between ourselves, madam. That will be better than to call in the officers again."

"What do you mean?" she asked, with an uneasiness she could not conceal.

"You are very ingenious," I replied; "but your story about the savings-bank was an after-thought, and an unlucky one. You never drew out so large a

sum. This gold is my mother's. It isn't all here, as you say; *but I know where the rest is!*"

The flush had gone out of her face again. She was white and trembling. Without waiting for an answer, I went on, speaking earnestly:

"Mrs. Worth, you don't wish to have your husband arrested, tried, convicted and sent to prison. My mother doesn't wish it; she would be extremely sorry for you. We know that the temptation was great, and we pity him and you."

Her eyes filled with tears. I saw that I had touched the right chord. I continued, — kneeling on the mat, and looking up, through my own gathering tears, into her pale and frightened face:

"You have it in your power to save him. Quietly give up my mother's money, and I promise you that nothing more shall be said. But if we have to try the law, — why, then, the law must take its course. Don't you see how much better it will be to do as I ask you to, for your own sake, Mrs. Worth?"

At this appeal she broke down completely.

"I don't wish to keep the money," she said, "but I didn't want you to consider my husband a thief. He never stole anything in his life. And he didn't mean to steal this; but when he found the bag of gold, he thought it had been left there by somebody who once lived in the house, and who might have been dead for years. How could he think it was your mother's, when she herself showed him the place in the wall, and let him go to work?"

"But why did he carry it off?" I inquired.

"Because he was afraid somebody — either your folks or the landlord — might lay claim to money found in the house, even though they had no right to it. Then, after we got it, of course we didn't like to own that he had found money in that way and planned to keep it."

"He brought it right home to you?" I said.

"Yes," she confessed; "and I took care of it while he went back to work. That night I sewed thirty pieces into the mat, while he" — she looked at me keenly. "Do you really know where the rest is?"

"I think," said I, "that it is in the bottom of the chair you were so anxious to have some of us sit in."

"You are mighty good at guessing," she replied, with a wan smile.

When I reached home an hour later, it was evening. I found Lawyer Walsh with my mother, to whom he had just been giving an account of the bad success of the search.

She was very much dejected. He scarcely noticed my entrance; but she looked up at me and said:

"Well, what did *you* discover, my son?"

"What I was looking for!" I cried, with triumph.

"Not — the gold?" said the lawyer, with a start.

"Yes, the gold!"

And, to the utter amazement of both, I began emptying my pockets of the seventy golden eagles,

which made gay music as they jingled on the table, I assure you.

Then I told my story.

“ Well ! ” exclaimed the lawyer, “ you have beat us at our own game ! Now, Mrs. Wescott, ” he added, looking at the glittering pile by the light of the lamp on the table, “ I think you had better invest this in Government bonds. ”

It was good advice, and my mother followed it.

With our seven hundred dollars in gold, we soon after bought a thousand-dollar bond (registered), and had money enough left to pay the costs of the search, and of the second rebuilding of the wall. I ought to add that Lawyer Walsh brought in but a very small bill for *his* services.

I must add, too, the most important part to me of the whole business.

A few weeks later I was sent for by Mr. Walsh, and very much astonished by the respect he showed me and the proposal he made.

A client of his was involved in what soon after became known as the “ Tenant House Affair ; ” and he wished me to take lodgings in the building, get acquainted with its inmates, and learn, if possible, certain facts which had so far baffled the police.

I readily agreed, got my mother's consent, and undertook the case. How well I succeeded the newspapers of those days will tell you.

This led to my being engaged in other cases ; and thus was opened to me an unexpected career. I



became a detective, and was employed in some extremely difficult and delicate matters while I was yet not much more than a boy.

The fates and fortunes of many men have been in my hands; but this I will say for myself, — that in dealing with crime I have never yet stooped to a meanness or accepted a bribe.

BOYS IN THE CITY.



TALKS WITH AN OLD MERCHANT.

FIRST EVENING.

ADAM Starworthy, a Boston merchant retired from business, sat one evening writing a letter in his comfortable library, when a bright but bashful boy of about sixteen years was shown in.

The gentleman laid down his pen, turned in his easy-chair, and looked curiously but kindly at the visitor from under his shaggy gray eyebrows.

The gaslight shed its warm radiance upon the two — the lad of sixteen standing, hat in hand, blushing and hesitating, and the white-haired merchant smiling encouragement and welcome. A fire of soft coal blazing in the grate — for it was autumn weather — added cheeriness to the picture.

“Luther Emmons,” said the old man, repeating the name by which the servant had announced the visitor. “Sit down, my young friend, and tell me what I can do for you.” Such was Adam Star-

worthy's life-long habit of proceeding straight to business.

"You do not remember the name, I suppose," Luther replied, gaining confidence, and taking the chair that was offered him. "It was my father's. Perhaps you do not even remember him; but he had good reason to remember you for your kindness and —"

Here Luther's rather labored speech, which he had studied a little before entering the presence of the great man (as he regarded Mr. Starworthy), was suddenly broken by an impulse of the heart; and he added, with a throb of emotion in his voice, "My father was very grateful to you, sir, and my mother made me promise I would come and see you."

"Luther Emmons — I do remember!" the old man exclaimed; and for a moment a rush of memories made his eyes misty.

Luther Emmons, the father, had once been a clerk in Starworthy & Co.'s employment; a social, impulsive youth, who had fallen into temptation, and been on the verge of ruin, when the senior partner, who kept a fatherly watch over his young men, discovered his guilty secret at a critical moment, and instead of disgracing him, as most employers would have done, restored him to virtue and self-respect by kind words and counsels.

"He used to come and see me when he was in town, but I haven't heard from him now for some time."

“My father is dead,” said Luther, in a low voice.

There was a painful hush for a moment, during which the old man watched, with a look full of pain and sympathetic emotion, the quivering lip and downcast eyes of the boy.

“He was a good man,” said old Adam, as soon as he could speak cheerfully. “Luther was an honest man of business, a true friend, and a good husband and father, I know. And I hope, I feel sure, he has left a worthy son and namesake to fill his place. Your mother — you still have your mother left you?”

A nod — for Luther could not command his voice to speak — gave assent.

“I am glad for your sake, Luther. A mother — a good mother — is often a boy’s salvation. The love of a mother in his heart may be the pole-star of his safety. So she wished you to come and see me, did she?”

“My father left us a little property,” said Luther, coming back to what he had prepared himself to say. “But it is necessary for me to do something for myself. Some of my father’s friends have got me a place in Howarth & Hogan’s dry-goods store. I have just begun. I am a stranger in the city, and my mother — she is naturally very anxious about me.”

“And well she may be,” said the merchant, as Luther once more hesitated. “I am glad she sent you to me. I know — nobody knows better than

I — how much there is for a young man in the city, especially if he is a stranger, to learn and to avoid. I can give you — I shall be very glad to give you — some hints with regard to the life you have entered upon, its advantages and its dangers, if you care to learn by an old man's experience."

"That is just what I wished, — just what my mother hoped," said Luther, earnestly. "Only don't let me take up too much of your time."

"My dear boy, I am never so grateful for the blessing of having time at my command as when I can bestow it upon the young and inexperienced. You are now just beginning a life that I have lived through. I look back to the time when I was a lad, commencing at the lowest rounds of the business ladder, but full of hope, like you.

"Well, here I am, at the top of the ladder, so to speak. I have met with what is called success. But my real success — if I have ever achieved any — is not what the world sees. It is nothing that I saw very clearly when I was a boy of your age.

"It takes a lifetime to learn the true value of things. Riches are good. Prize them, acquire them, my boy, if you honestly can; but they are not the end; they are only a means. The true end is formation of character; it is integrity of heart; it is happiness for yourself, and the blessed power of doing good to others.

"*That* is the end always to be kept in view; and

—remember! — it may be reached without wealth, while it can never be attained through wealth unfairly won. You may barter away your own conscience and manhood for riches, and heap them up, heap them up, while you are really growing poorer every day. Nobody so poor as a hollow-hearted, selfish, scheming, unscrupulous millionaire. You won't quite understand this now, but it is no sentimental talk, it is solid truth, as you will find some day."

The old man smiled, and changed the subject.

"How much do you get at Howorth & Hogan's?"

"One hundred dollars the first year," Luther replied.

"Can you live on that?"

"Oh no. Mother will clothe me and pay something towards my board. She is very indulgent. She will give me a little spending-money besides."

"Spending-money?" said the old man. "What's that?"

"She thinks I ought to have a little pleasure and recreation. She doesn't believe in keeping boys too close."

"Well, she is right; yes, she is right," the old man repeated, yet with a doubtful look. "It isn't well to keep the young too close; and yet, Luther, do you know, if I were asked what is one great source of danger to boys, especially country boys beginning life in town, I should say it is that little matter of spending-money."

Luther changed countenance, and said, "How so?"

"Because it leads to habits of self-indulgence; because it is a little key that may open the door to great vices. A boy has a little spending-money; that means something that he is to spend upon *himself*, as the fancy takes him.

"The trifles he buys with it may be of no importance in themselves; his amusements may be perfectly innocent; and yet, unless he is a very high-minded, good-hearted boy, there is danger that he will give altogether too much thought to his own gratifications, and never know that beautiful virtue, that mother of many virtues, *self-denial*.

"I once knew a boy," the old man continued, "who had parents as indulgent as your own mother, I suppose; but they were poor; and he saw what a struggle it was for them to bring up, feed, clothe, and educate a family of children, of whom he was the third.

"He was a thoughtful boy, though only twelve years old; and one day, hearing his mother say what a serious expense the single item of butter was in the family, he made up his mind to eat no more butter, just to save his parents so much labor and care in providing for him.

"He did not say anything about his resolution, but from that time until he left home he ate his bread without butter, and soon found that bread had never tasted so sweet to him. Not that he really relished it better unbuttered, but the sense of self-

denial for a noble motive sweetened everything in life to him.

“At thirteen years of age, still further to relieve his parents, he got a place in a store. He was too young. It would have been well if he could have been kept at school four or five years longer; yet, with the habits of self-denial and of self-help which he had already formed, he was destined to acquire a practical knowledge of affairs which *self-indulgent* boys, with all the advantages of life, never gain.

“He had a little money which he could have spent upon himself if he had chosen; but when he thought of his hard-working, careworn parents, he had never any desire for petty gratifications. It was far sweeter for him to save it for their sakes.

“Now that boy was better off, and infinitely happier, with that motive in his soul and that love in his heart, than if he had had his pockets full of money to spend as he pleased every day of his life. And that boy, amid a city full of danger, was safe. His purity of purpose, and his habit of self-denial, armed him against temptation.”

Old Adam Starworthy did not say that that boy was himself, though from an earnest tremor in his voice, and a very grateful, tender look in his eyes, Luther suspected the truth.

“But I am not going to preach to you now so much that you won't care to come and see me again,” the merchant resumed, after a pause. “I want you to come again soon, when I will tell you more about

that little matter of spending-money, and some of the wretchedness and ruin I have known it to lead to.

“Now we will talk of something else — after I have finished my letter. Meanwhile you may be looking over my library, and see if there are any books you would like to read.”

SECOND EVENING.

“I hope you didn't infer from anything I said the other night,” remarked old Adam Starworthy, when next his young friend, Luther Emmons, called to see him, “that I would have a young man save his money in any mean way, or for any mean purpose.”

“Oh no!” replied Luther, frankly. “I didn't think that. It was the habit of self-indulgence you objected to. I have thought about it since, and have been wishing *I* could learn to practise self-denial, like the boy you told of who didn't eat butter.”

“That was an extreme case,” said the old man, with a smile. “You will probably never feel obliged to make any such sacrifice as that. But every person is called to make some sort of sacrifice in life, and it is well to begin with small things, — with the ‘spending-money,’ for instance, which we talked about the other night.

“Don't hoard for the sake of hoarding. But learn to value money for its highest use. That highest use is not in spending a sixpence here, a sixpence

there, a dollar to-day, and a dollar to-morrow, in the frivolous pleasures of appetite and fancy. Learn to postpone petty present indulgences for future good, — for books, for culture, for starting in business, for helping others, which the truly wise and generous man finds, after all, the sweetest pleasure in life.

“I once knew a boy, about your own age, who came to the city, and, like you, found a place in a store. He was one of the most promising lads I ever knew, — bright, talented, generous.

“Unfortunately he had a little spending-money. He seemed to think it mean not to spend it. It was now a glass of soda, now a dish of oysters in the evening; then ninepins and billiards, and something stronger to drink; for this habit of spending had soon brought him acquainted with a class of companions who did not stop at soda and small beer.

“The theatre, of course, came in for its share of patronage; and plays, balls, late hours, and midnight carousals, at last absorbed so much of his mind and energy that he had little left for his business.

“The store, in which he had at first felt a lively interest, became irksome to him. Work, which had been a pleasure, became drudgery; and he lived only for the unhealthy excitements, which seemed at last as necessary to his existence as rum is to the drunkard.

“But as the drunkard will not pretend that drink is a real good, so this young man would have been the last to claim that such a life as he was leading

ever was, or ever could be, happy. Happiness is something very different, — so pure, so tranquil, so deep! But he had formed habits of indulgence from which it is not easy to break away.

“And what was the result? The money he was spending was of comparatively little importance, — though that was a serious matter to a young man of his prospects. I have forgotten how much sixpence a day saved, and put at interest, will amount to in forty years; but it is a small fortune, — enough to pay the debts of many a bankrupt who is left penniless in his old age solely in consequence of this habit of foolish expenditure. Fortune comes by happy accident to but few; while frugality is the plain, sure, easy road to competence, open to all.

“But our young friend lost more than the money he spent. He was losing his steadiness of mind, the opportunities of youth, the chances of ever becoming a thorough man of business.

“For it was not long before the spending-money which was rightfully his proved insufficient for his pleasures. He must dress. He must always be as generous as his most lavish companions, — as if generosity consisted in treating, high living, and making a show! He must take his female acquaintances — some of whom, I am sorry to say, were not what they should be — to places of amusement. He must make them presents. And where was all the money needed for this to come from?”

“I shouldn't think such a clerk could keep his place in any store long,” said Luther.

“You are right. A sagacious employer knows by the looks of his young men, when they go to their business in the morning, whether all is well with them.

“The prompt, bright, cheerful, energetic clerk is not suspected. His voice, his eye, his manner, towards employer and customer, all attest his good habits and devotion to business. But one comes in with languid looks, yawning, rubbing his eyes; he is nervous, irritable, absent-minded; evidently there is something wrong with him.

“The wise employer will not neglect his own interest and that of his clerk a single day after he begins to note such symptoms.

“The youth I speak of received an abrupt dismissal, one morning, by his employer, who said, angrily, that he didn't want any gaping, lazy clerks around.

“A young man of engaging manners and some experience could easily find employment in those days. He soon got another situation, at an increased salary. His habits of dissipation were not cured. He lost his second place, his employers having discovered that he was in debt. They judged rightly that a single man, with a fair salary, who could not pay his tailor's bills, board-bills, even his bills for washing and ironing, must be in a bad way. That is not the kind of clerk we like to trust.

“‘Oh, but Rob is such a generous, good-hearted fellow!’ his friends said.

“Yes; but generous with other people's money.

He was spending upon himself and his associates what really belonged, not to him at all, but to his landlady and washerwoman. What sort of generosity is that? But it is the sort which you will find your good fellow is most commonly noted for.

“When Rob went to a new place he was always liked at first, he was so intelligent, affable, and charming. He formed good resolutions, I suppose, which kept him steady for a while. But gradually the old habits would steal back, and the new broom didn't sweep quite so clean. A man can't lead a life of dissipation and be a good business man at the same time. He went from place to place, from boarding-house to boarding-house, his debts following him, like an ever-increasing pack of wolves at his heels.

“Suddenly he disappeared. I next heard from him in California, where, by a lucky chance, he made a fortune in a few months. But no man of his habits can keep a fortune. It was spent almost as quickly as it was got.

“A friend of mine afterwards saw him, ragged and penniless, in the streets of San Francisco, looking in vain for something to do. I have never heard of him since.

“Now don't think this an extreme case. It is a very common case. I have known so many young men to begin life with just such brilliant prospects, and fail soon or late in much the way Rob did, from a similar cause. A little spending-money was at the bottom of it.”

“You spoke of the theatre,” said Luther, seriously impressed by this sad picture. “Would you have a young man never go to see a play?”

“I don’t say that,” Adam Starworthy replied. “A play is — or may be — like many other things, innocent and good in itself. If it ‘holds the mirror up to Nature,’ which Shakspeare says is the real purpose of playing; if it is true to human life, and is written with wit and wisdom, it may be well worth seeing, it may be well worth studying.

“But we all know what weak, trashy, immoral stuff often holds possession of the stage, and what dangerous associations surround such places of amusement. Good plays and good acting may instruct; but sensational plays, immodest acting, and the very atmosphere which pervades the theatre where they are popular, dissipate the mind, and sap the moral character of the youth who becomes fascinated by them.

“Shakspeare — you see I am not bigoted, for I venerate and study Shakspeare, whose works are full of marvellous beauty and wisdom — Shakspeare says that men catch manners, as they do diseases, one of another.

“We do more than this. We insensibly absorb the atmosphere of the persons with whom we associate. And if you frequent the theatre where immoral plays and immodest acting are sure to attract a fitting class of spectators, and if you find companionship among these spectators, as you will be very

likely to, your tone of character will certainly be lowered before you are aware.

“Then all I have said of the pernicious habit of self-indulgence applies here. How much better to attend reading-rooms, lecture-rooms, concert-rooms, and spend your spare time and money there. Spend it in the cultivation of your mind and tastes, for self-improvement is not self-indulgence, but its very opposite.”

THIRD EVENING.

“I am not sorry that you are a little bashful,” Mr. Starworthy said to the young clerk the next time they met in the comfortable library. “You were a little ashamed of your blushes, the other night, when I introduced you to my nieces; but you needn’t have been. No sensible person will think less of you on account of them.

“You will soon get over any foolish diffidence you may have; but the gentleness of heart, the respect for others, the sensitiveness to the presence of beautiful and virtuous young women, — these are traits which such diffidence generally indicates, and which I hope you will never get over.

“It is the self-confident youth, without deference and without imagination, who is never troubled with diffidence.

“ ‘Fools will rush in where angels fear to tread.’ ”

“Keep that virgin bloom of your spirit always, my dear boy,” the old man went on. “Avoid those associations which tend to wear it off, leaving the young man hard, headstrong, brazen. Avoid, above all things, that female society in which modest blushes are unknown. It has its snares spread for every youth. It finds him out even in the store where he waits upon customers. It meets him in the gas-lighted street. It flatters him to his destruction, if he is one to be so flattered.

“Once abandoned to such influences, a young man loses soon all the finer qualities of his nature, and that beautiful homage for pure womanhood which he owes to his mother and to his future wife. Many a young man sacrifices to this painted temptation both his spiritual and worldly prosperity.

“Keep your purity of soul, Luther, and this temptation of grosser natures will be no temptation to you. Engrave this golden sentence on your heart:

“‘Who is the happy husband? He
 Who, scanning his unwedded life,
 Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,
’Twas faithful to his future wife.’”

The old man copied the words from a page of Patmore’s poems, and gave them to Luther, saying:

“They contain all I would say to you on this subject. And now for other associates.

“Don’t have much to do with the so-called ‘good fellows,’ who smoke, and take a glass, and play cards and billiards, and spend in amusement — even in

innocent amusement — the time which should be given to self-improvement.

“Not that I object to pleasant social games. It is what they frequently lead to, and the associations too often surrounding them, which are dangerous. Billiards, for example, is, in itself, an unobjectionable game, and a fine exercise for mind and muscle, eye and nerve. Enjoyed at the right time, and in the right place, it is well enough. But when you enter a common billiard-saloon, you enter an atmosphere of smoking, drinking, betting, and maybe of worse things. You find the companionship you cannot afford to keep.

“For remember that you have a business to learn, a future which prudence bids you prepare for now. You have no time, no powers to fritter away. Keep up useful studies at home, and do not slight your work.

“That is one of the great temptations which you will be liable to fall into in the store. Young men who begin on a small salary are apt to think, ‘I won’t give any more labor for such low wages than I am obliged to; by-and-by, when I get a large salary, it will be time enough to commence in earnest.’”

“I find,” said Luther, “that young fellows are apt to reason in that way. They have no heart, they say, to work for one or two dollars a week when they think they are earning five.”

“Fatal mistake!” exclaimed the veteran merchant. “I sometimes think that the English system, by

which a boy entering a bank or store, instead of receiving wages, has to pay for the privilege of serving and learning the business, is even better than our own. For there he knows what he is paying for, and has a motive to apply himself, if only to get back his money's worth. To learn the business, and acquire business connections, — that is what he pays for. Our clerk apprentices forget that it is for precisely the same thing that they give, not time and money, as the English apprentice does, but time for a very small return of money."

"I see that as I did not before," said Luther. "We are really working, not only for our employers, but for ourselves."

"And you are working for yourselves in more ways than one. You are establishing your characters. You are forming habits of faithfulness, or of unfaithfulness, which will follow you through life.

"I am not speaking particularly of store-boys now: but this, like nearly all I have been saying to you, applies equally to other young men. The great temptation which I see the youth of our country falling into everywhere is that of slighting their tasks.

"How few do we find, in any trade or occupation, who, at the age of twenty-one, really know their business? It is this early shirking of duties which fills the world with botchers and pretenders.

"A thorough master of a good trade can always find employment, — except, perhaps, in times of uni-

versal business depression, — and his work satisfies his customers. But the poor workman exasperates you by undertaking to do what he has never thoroughly learned to do; he is constantly changing places, getting out of employment, and suffering from chronic ‘hard times.’

“So I say, whatever your work, whatever your wages, be faithful. Even in the matter of money, it pays well in the long run. But in the matter of habit and character, it pays instantly, — a far more precious reward!

“Faithfulness includes honesty. The young man who loves his duty can never be tempted to wrong another out of a penny. He will not steal the time which belongs to his employer; and he will not steal his employer’s money.

“The unfaithful clerk reasons: ‘I am working for small wages; the firm are making large profits; a small share belongs to me, and I will get it if I can.’

“He begins with some little thing; if not money, then any trifle he can lay his hands on without fear of detection. He tries to reconcile the theft to his conscience, — if he has a conscience, — and thus makes larger thefts easier in the future.

“If he is an ingenious fellow he probably, before long, devises some regular system of fraud, by which a little stream of the great current of capital can be diverted into his own private channels. He takes every precaution against exposure; he grows bold, from experience; but in the end, as sure as there is

a God above us, and divine laws that enclose us like the sky, in the end it is ruin,— outward ruin and disgrace, in the majority of cases, and inward, secret ruin in all.

“ But I believe that vanity is oftener than avarice the cause of the young man’s going wrong, — the desire to appear as generous as his companions, to make a show, and to ‘ please the ladies.’ I once knew a young man, who was very steady at his boarding-house and in his business, until temptation came to him over the counter.”

“ How could that be ? ” Luther asked with some surprise.

“ Very naturally. A young fellow has the misfortune to be handsome, and to know that he is. Chatty young girls come in to trade, or perhaps to spend a gossiping hour or two among the clerks. There are plenty of such girls. They pretend to trade, of course.

“ They smile sweet encouragement on the handsome clerk, and soon make his acquaintance. He begins to spruce up when he sees them come into the store, smooths down his shirt-bosom, gives a slight quirk to his ear-locks, and puts on his finest airs.

“ This was the way it began with young Lorton. Soon the girls invited him to call and see them. They were respectable girls, in the eyes of society, only a trifle too gay to be very profitable acquaintances for anybody. Then of course Lorton must dress a little better. He must show his apprecia-

tion of the young ladies' attentions by inviting them to places of amusement. So he entered upon a life of social gayety, quite different from that of Rob, whom I told you about the other night, but tending to the same disastrous end.

"Lorton also found himself living beyond his means. To keep out of debt he at first *borrowed* a little, secretly, from the money-drawer, meaning to return it at some convenient time.

"He had no thought of stealing; but somehow he always found it more convenient to borrow money than to repay it; and a pretty regular system was established of transferring a little every week from the drawer to his own pocket. Finally he became engaged to one of the young ladies, and the wedding-day was set. Everything seemed to prosper with him, until, on the very morning when he was to lead his bride to the altar, he was summoned to a private interview with his employers, charged with the robbery of the till, and forced to confess.

"On the very day when he was to have been married, he was locked up in jail, the indignant father-in-law refusing even to offer bail for him. The case was never prosecuted, and Lorton was finally released without a trial; but his reputation and prospects were ruined. The lady who had been, in one sense, the innocent cause of his disgrace, proudly refused to see him again, and he soon disappeared. I never knew what became of him."

FOURTH EVENING.

Luther Emmons had another appointment with old Adam Starworthy, and when they were both seated before the bright coal fire, the veteran merchant said :

“ In our previous talks I have dwelt mostly upon the dangers of a city life which young men and boys should avoid. Now it is time to say something more of the things they should cultivate, of the habits and principles which lead to success in life.

“ In the first place — fairness in dealing.”

But here Luther interrupted him.

“ I'm glad you are coming to that, for I have been troubled by some talk among the young fellows at our boarding-house, who think that a man cannot succeed in business if he is strictly honest. They say merchants expect their clerks to be a little dishonest with customers. One told a story of a clerk who was discharged for showing a defect in a piece of cloth to a purchaser, and so losing the sale of it.”

“ I've no doubt but there are employers capable of doing so foolish a thing,” Mr. Starworthy replied. “ But if a merchant teaches his clerks to be dishonest with customers, how can he expect them to be honest with him ? If you get a man's money by misrepresenting or concealing the quality of goods you sell him, you are as much committing a robbery as when you turn about and transfer from your employer's

drawer a portion of his ill-gotten gains to your own pocket.

“ Can't succeed in business with honesty? Then let success go; give up business; do anything else; dig, saw wood, drive a horse-car — and keep your integrity of soul.

“ But, my dear boy, don't believe a word of such nonsense. For I, who know, tell you that fairness in dealing is the first element of true success.

“ If you expect to have but one chance at a customer, it may, perhaps, — as far as an immediate return of dollars and cents is concerned, — pay to cheat him. But you are taking the surest way to prevent his ever entering your store again; and you are sending out a warning far and wide to all his acquaintances, that if they deal with you, they must look out for a sharper.

“ Why, my boy, as a mere matter of policy, — which is certainly a *low* motive, — the first thing I taught my clerks was always to point out to buyers any defect in the goods they were selling them, and never to urge one to purchase. And in the long run — I may even say in the *short* run — I found it paid.

“ Once convince a man of your fairness, — which quality, I am sorry to say, is none too common in trade, — and you secure not only his custom, but draw in also that of his friends and of their friends. They may be tempted now and then to go elsewhere, and make what seems to be a better bargain

than you can afford, but which most likely turns out to be a bad bargain; but they are sure to come back to you after every such mistake.

“The next thing is courtesy,—perfect courtesy shown to every customer. I don’t mean merely outside politeness, hollow at heart; but gentle manners, inspired by genuine good-will and kind intention.

“I am tempted,” the old man added, with a smile, “to tell you a little story of my own first experience in carrying these two principles into practice.”

“I should be delighted to hear it!” said Luther; and Mr. Starworthy resumed.

“I was then a boy about your own age,—not quite seventeen, I believe. I stood behind the counter in a large retail store, where, I regret to say, those principles were not acted up to very strictly.

“The employers sometimes lost their temper with customers, and of course the clerks did the same. And the general opinion seemed to prevail that to sell a piece of inferior goods for a superior price showed praiseworthy smartness in the salesman. It was certainly something that pleased our employers.

“Now we all like to please our employers; and I ought to have spoken of this as one of the dangers of the store,—a temptation to gain favor by making *smart* sales of the kind I have mentioned.

“I was troubled a good deal by this thing. I studied the subject a good deal, and, I am not ashamed to say, prayed over it, and at last reached a conclusion.

“ ‘I will be perfectly fair and perfectly polite at all times, and to all customers. If I cannot by these means please my employers, and get on in my business, then I’ll quit it, and turn to something else.’ It was with this good resolution buttoned under my jacket, that, bright and early one Monday morning, I took my place in the store.

“ There was little doing, and finally, one of the last persons any of us ever wished to see, came in.

“ There is in every place, large or small, I presume, a class of purchasers who give salesmen a vast deal of trouble. They are now called *pickers*; but when I was a boy in Boston the cant term for them was *Beelzebubs*. Rather a profane, and certainly an inappropriate name, to be applied to a class of *females*; but the boys wanted as strong a word as they could get, to express their detestation of them, I suppose.

“ The *Beelzebubs* were women whose great delight was in shopping; going from store to store, making clerks overhaul and hand down goods, finding fault, beating down prices, and occasionally purchasing, after having gone the rounds of the city.

“ They did shopping for themselves and all their friends, among whom they were noted for their happy faculty of making great bargains. They really knew a good deal about goods, and bought a good many in the course of the year; but every clerk knew them by sight, and whispered his disgust whenever one of them entered a store, ‘There’s a *Beelzebub*!’

“ Well, that morning one of the most persistent of

those women — one, in fact, who had earned the memorable title of the *Queen of the Beelzebubs* — came scowling into the store. She was accustomed to rude treatment from clerks, and went prepared for it.

“Suddenly our head clerk had business at the desk. The second salesman found it necessary to arrange some boxes on one of the upper shelves. The third turned his back to her, and grinned right and left. I alone stepped forward, with a polite bow, and, ‘What can I show you, madam?’

“She looked at me with agreeable surprise. The scowl vanished. She was not used to such treatment.

“‘I wish to look at your black bombazines.’

“I politely showed her the best we had, and said, ‘We have poorer qualities, but I know that you always look for first-class goods, and are an excellent judge of them;’ which was in fact the case.

“She examined the piece carefully, picked it, scowled at it, and asked the price.

“‘To you, madam, I shall say one dollar and a quarter a yard.’

“‘Why to *me*?’ she said, sharply.

“‘Because,’ I replied, ‘I know that you are in a way of purchasing many goods, and we can afford to favor such customers. You will find that the asking price for that bombazine is a dollar and seventy-five and two dollars everywhere.’

“She then began to cheapen it, and finally offered

a dollar and twenty cents. The other clerks, meantime, looked on, ready to burst with laughter, and waiting to see what would come of all this extraordinary politeness shown to a *Beelzebub*.

“ ‘Madam,’ I said, ‘knowing that you are an experienced purchaser, and wishing to save you trouble, I have shown you the best we have, and named the very lowest price at which it can be sold.’

“Then she wanted to look at other qualities. I showed them to her, named lower prices, and at the same time pointed out all the defects in them which I was aware of myself.

“ ‘Probably,’ I said, ‘you know more of these goods than I do. If there is anything else about them which I haven’t mentioned, I shall be very much obliged to you if you will tell me.’

“That interested her, and she really did give me a good deal of useful information about our own goods. She then wished to look at black silks. I immediately showed her our best, and, as before, named the lowest price. Again she tried to beat me down.

“ ‘Madam,’ said I, ‘in dealing with you, I shall always show you our best goods, and name the very lowest price at the outset. If you were to take the whole piece, I couldn’t sell it for a cent less on a yard.’

“Even after that, she tried to beat me down on both silks and bombazines; but I was as firm as I was truthful and polite; and she finally went out of the store without making a single purchase.

“What I expected, followed — a roar of laughter from my fellow-clerks at my expense. My cheeks tingled; but I wasn't shaken in my conviction that fairness and courtesy were still the best policy. My lady had carefully taken samples of the goods she preferred, and in the afternoon she came again.

“She passed by the other clerks, and came straight to me. I treated her with the same politeness and patience while she overhauled the silks and bombazines again, and again tried to beat down prices.

“At last she said, ‘You are a very polite and a very honest young man. I'll take two patterns of that bombazine, seventeen yards each.’

“I was electrified, but I kept my gravity. The bombazine was measured off and cut.

“‘Now,’ said she, ‘I want two patterns of this silk.’ And before she left the store I sold her one hundred and sixty dollars' worth of goods. The laugh was on my side then.

“Better than that, this woman became one of our best customers, and she always traded with me. The great staple of her conversation everywhere, I imagine, was her bargains in goods; and soon I found her acquaintances coming to me to trade.

“I pursued this system of fairness and courtesy, and in two years I had the largest connection, as it is called, of any person in that store.

“A clerk, you know, is valuable to his employers according to his connection; that is, the number of special customers who find their interest or pleasure

in trading with him; who will pass other stores and other salesmen, and go to him, wherever he may be. So when you finish your apprenticeship, you may be worth five hundred or five thousand dollars a year to your employers, just as your personal influence is weak or strong with purchasers.

“For my own part, I have always found *fairness* and *courtesy* the very best capital in business. Those who have tried it and failed to succeed, have failed from some other cause,—poor judgment, too much credit, or a want of proper enterprise.

“As you get along in business, I shall have a great deal more to say to you, Luther,” the old man concluded. “Come and see me often; and when you write to your mother, thank her for sending you to me, for it is one of my greatest pleasures now to make my own experience useful to the young.”

THE END.

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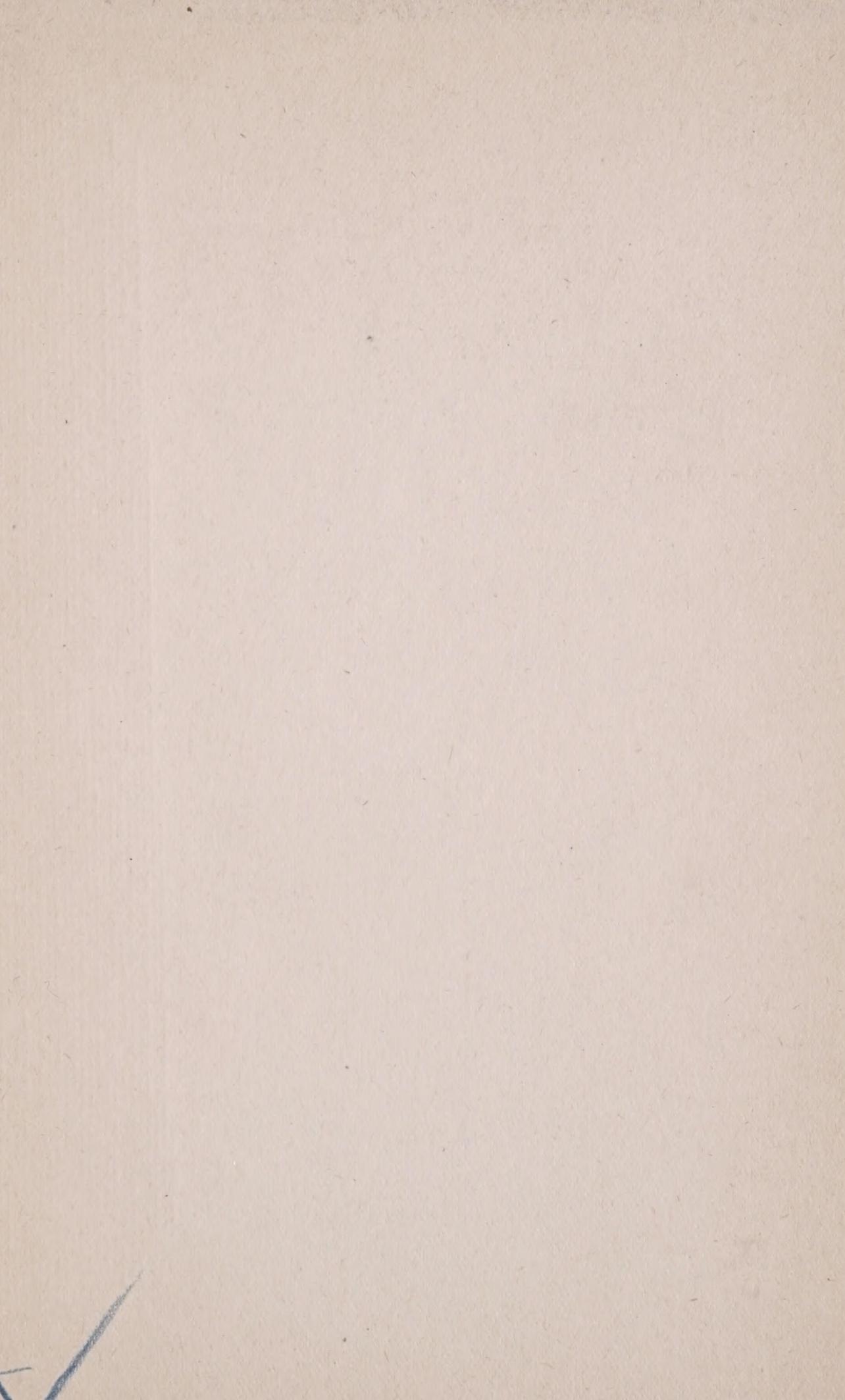
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