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WHOLE No. 435.

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER V.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

"WHAT do you mean?" faltered Dash, anxious for an explanation of the unexpected announcement that he whom he had regarded as his father was not so in fact, and that his grandfather did not know what his name was.

"I mean just what I have said, Dash," replied Mr. Dykeman tenderly. "I do not know your name, but Dykeman is as rightfully yours as any under the circumstances."

"Grandfather, do you mean to say you do not know the name of my mother before she married your son?" asked Dash in wonderment.

"That is it exactly, Dash."

"Why, how could that be?"

"Easy enough, Dashwood," began Mr. Dykeman; "and when you have heard my explanation of my ignorance you will understand how such a curious fact came about."

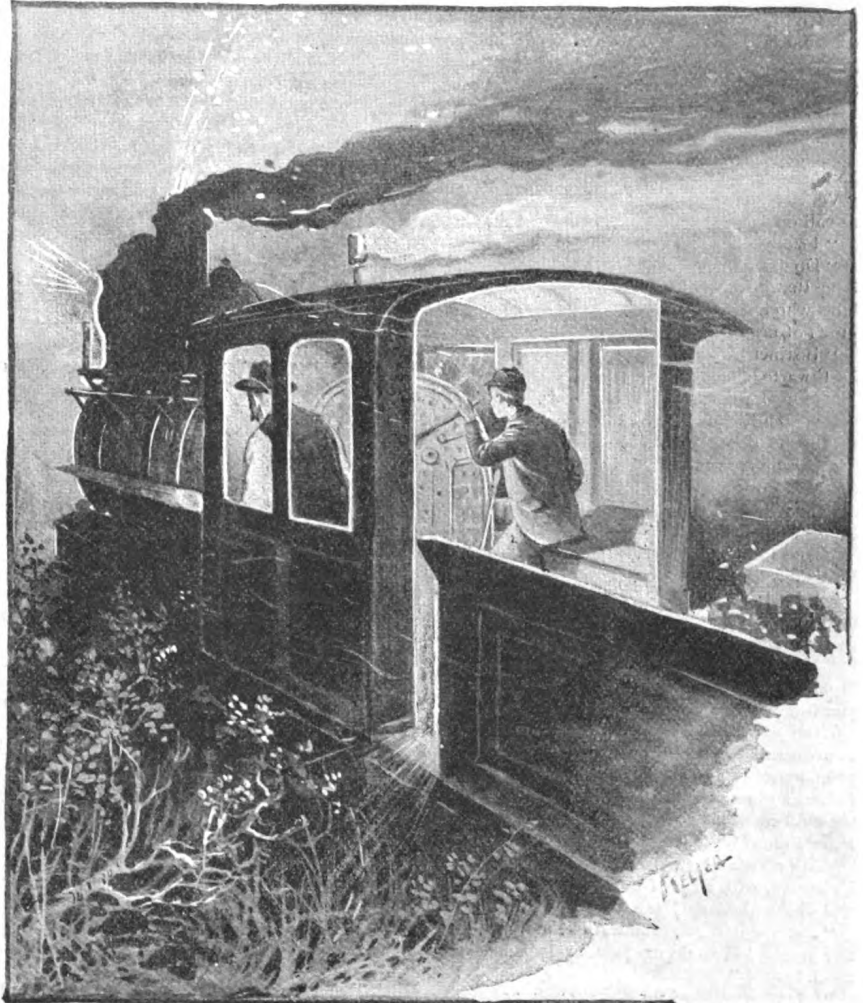
"When my son was twenty four years of age, and eight years before that, we had living with us an orphan girl, Lily Woodbridge by name, whose father dying, had left her in my charge, with an inheritance barely more than enough to provide for her sustenance. We very soon came to regard her with as much affection as if she had been our own, and it was with much pride we witnessed her remarkably rapid advancement in her studies. When she graduated from the high school, we were much gratified to notice that our son began to take a keen interest in all that concerned Lily. He devoted himself assiduously to her for some time, and finally announced their engagement. This result had been the secret desire of our hearts, and we rejoiced accordingly.

"Their marriage had been postponed until my son should establish a business for himself, and finally, when he was twenty four years old, he went to Michigan to look after some lumber matters there. He bade Lily and us an affectionate farewell, and I had noticed nothing that would indicate any change in his purpose of marrying her.

"Well, weeks, months, and finally a year, passed, and nothing was heard from my son by either ourselves or Lily. The poor girl was dreadfully grieved at such neglect, for she loved him devotedly; and notwithstanding our anxiety as to our boy's where-

abouts, and the cause of such a protracted silence, we were much incensed against him. Finally a letter came, pleading as an excuse for his negligence that he had been off in the pine woods hundreds of miles from a settlement, where he had been very busy, and had been 'jill for several months.'

"Lily brightened up a little after that, and I wrote him a pretty sharp letter about the way he had treated us. He never replied to that letter, and we heard nothing from him for another year. Lily almost pined away to a shadow, worrying and waiting, and we hardly knew whether to be angry or mourn him as dead. Finally we received a letter from him dated at St. Louis, in which he made no mention of Lily at all, and deliberately stated he was about to marry a widow with one child barely two years old.



*Began in THE ARGOSY of last week.

IT WAS A RARE EXCITEMENT TO DASH AND THE DOCTOR, THIS RIDE ON THE ENGINE.

"We were dumfounded at the announcement, and filled with shame and indignation at such conduct from our own son. His heartless neglect of Lily, and his perfidious behavior towards one who then held the supreme place in our affections, almost killed the parental love we had for him. I wrote him I never wanted to see him or his wife."

"Surely he mentioned the widow's name in his letter to you," interrupted Dash eagerly.

"No, my boy, he did not," continued the old gentleman; "and to convince you that such was the case, even after the lapse of over sixteen years, I think you will find that same letter among some old papers in the garret. Well, finally Lily died, and doubly bitter was the thought that our own son had undoubtedly hastened her death. For several years he was not mentioned by us; but as the event receded in the past, and time softened our resentment, we would talk of that period before he went out West. We began to have an indefinable longing to see him again before we died. But we never saw or heard of him for nearly ten years, and then it was only to read of his death in that railroad wreck at Lonewood Station on the Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, which you remember so vividly.

"We did not see the account of that terribly fatal accident until several days after it occurred, and then it was too late for us to claim the remains of our son and his wife before they were buried. Though I was the most unrelenting of the two toward him, and had declared I never would forgive him, or have anything to do with any one connected with his wife, I was the first to remember my son's statement that that wife had a child when he married her. I immediately instituted inquiries concerning him, the result of which you know."

"And for which ultimate result I am deeply grateful," added Dash, with much feeling. "And now that I know you have done so much for me, when you knew I was not of your own flesh and blood, I feel that I can never repay you."

"You mustn't feel that way, Dash. I am sure we would not have loved you more if you had been really our son's child."

"Thank you, grandfather; and I am equally certain I could not have had a grandfather I loved more," responded Dash fervently. "When I am in a position to help you, I hope you will never hesitate to call on me should the necessity arise."

"I shall not, Dashwood."

"Do you know," continued the boy, after a pause, "I never did have that affection for Mr. Dykeman, your son, that I noticed in other boys who had fathers. I always supposed it was because I thought so much of my mother; but now the reason is plain."

"Instinct and nature are curious things, Dash, and cannot always be thwarted."

"No. I respected him, but I could not love him even though my mother endeavored to make me do so. I do not see why she never told me of the true relationship."

"She probably thought you were too young then, and no doubt intended to do so when you were older."

"That must be so," added Dash, feeling that she had fully intended doing so at the proper time.

"And there is another thing made clear," he continued, as he raised in his fingers a small locket attached to his watch chain and pressed it open by the spring. "This miniature beside my mother, which I could never fully believe was that of my stepfather, must then be my own father."

"Yes, it must be, for it is not that of my son," corroborated Mr. Dykeman, as he inspected the small photograph. "I knew that when you first showed it to us five years ago."

Dash gazed at the miniature with increased interest. As he once more noted the large, clear cut and handsome features, brought into prominence by the jet black mustache, and realized that it was his own father, a glow of pride suffused him, which was quickly succeeded by the chill conviction that the original was dead, and that he could never know him as he lived.

With a sigh of regret, he closed the locket, and, looking up at Mr. Dykeman, with a face from which had disappeared all signs of trouble and disappointment, he said seriously:

"But he is dead, grandfather, and you and gra'ma are all I have, any way. I shall do my part, and shall not be an expense to you very much longer."

"There is no need for haste, Dash, as I have said before. Take your time; you are always welcome to what we have, and we shall always regard you as our own."

"Thank you, grandfather; it will take a little time to look about and make my plans. Good night."

Dash warmly pressed Mr. Dykeman's hand, having a feeling of sympathy and manhood he had never felt before, and ascended to his room, which was in the third story, front.

The old fashioned furniture, and the familiar trifles and ornaments that a boy naturally gathers together, appeared strange as he looked about the apartment at them. They seemed to remind him more forcibly of the happy, tranquil days he had passed in their company, and bring more distinctly to his mind the fact that he must soon bid them and his quiet life good by, perhaps forever.

Dash seated himself at the small, modest writing desk between the two front windows, and resting his elbows on the lid, with his face between his hands, thought of all he had just heard.

He had to confess that he felt some satisfaction in knowing Mr. Dykeman the younger was not his own father after all; and the more so, when he considered his grandfather's story of his conduct. But the knowledge that his mother had married a second time was a sort of disappointment, he knew not why. It was only natural, after all, in a boy who had loved his mother as he had, to be dissatisfied with the idea that any one had shared her affections but his own father. He regretted to learn his grandfather was not his blood relative, but he felt, as he had said, he could not have loved and respected him more had he been his own. He deplored the unfilial and perfidious conduct of his stepfather, and as he thought of all that had been done for himself by the latter's parents, his heart warmed toward them with renewed devotion, and he was filled with an ambition to show them his gratitude.

He then thought what an odd thing it was that he did not know the name of his own father, and, with the idea that it might shed further light on the matter, he decided he would go up in the garret and make a search for the letter his grandfather had mentioned as having been written by his son from St. Louis so many years before.

After ascending a ladder-like stair, and removing the covering to the scuttle that led to the roof to give light, Dash glanced about the attic. It had, no doubt, not been invaded for many years. Everything was white with dust, and cobwebs hung in festoons from joist and rafter. A collection of broken furniture, several barrels and two trunks were scattered about the apartment.

In one of the latter Dash found a number of letters and old papers. Most of them were business letters and old receipts, but some were loving epistles from Lily Woodbridge when she had been away from home. Dash reverently laid them aside, for they seemed to breathe of a tragedy to him.

Finally he came to the letter he sought. It was rather short, and, as Mr. Dykeman had said, made no mention of the widow's name. But Dash noted one thing his grandfather had failed to mention and had no doubt forgotten. At the bottom of the letter was the address, "No. 19 1-2 Morgan Street, St. Louis, Mo." As the writer had previously mentioned in the letter that he was stopping at a boarding house, where the widow was also staying, No. 19 1-2 Morgan Street was undoubtedly the place.

Was it probable, after the lapse of so many years, Dash asked himself, that any information could be obtained as to his mother's name at the address given? It was very doubtful indeed. But even if he desired to make inquiry there, he did not know any one at that address to whom he could write. And more than likely the occupants of the house had changed many times since then.

However, he determined he would make personal inquiry there if ever fortune led him to St. Louis, or furnished him with the means to reach that city.

Putting the letter in his pocket, he closed the garret and descended to his room. He then set himself seriously to the consideration of the question of what he was to do to earn his own living.

He had said there must be work somewhere for him to do. Was there?

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST EXPERIENCES.

DASH lost no time in making an effort to find employment the wages of which would at least pay his board. Though his stepfather had been a railroad man, and he himself had been more or less brought into contact with railroad men as far back as he could remember before he came to his grandfather's to live, he did not

even think of making an application for work in any department of the railroad service.

This seemed strange, too, in view of the fact that he had always taken a deep interest in everything that pertained to "a life on the rail," having in his earlier years most assiduously "played cars" with the genuine toy article, and their rude substitutes in the way of blocks of wood, old books, etc., and later, studied Forney's "Catechism of the Locomotive" so thoroughly that Mr. Dykeman said he believed he knew more about a railroad engine than a great many engineers.

Perhaps it was because he did not know exactly what part of the service he was best fitted for, and thought only a practically experienced hand would stand any chance for an engagement. At any rate, the possibility of getting employment on a railroad did not occur to him till it was forced upon him.

The next morning after the momentous interview with his grandfather which had so suddenly changed the current of his life, and told him he did not even know his own name, Dash closely scanned the "Help Wanted" columns of the *Ledger* and other papers, and made a list of the "wants" that he thought promised a chance of employment.

We do not propose to follow him in his weary round. It was the same old story that has so often been told. Hundreds of applicants for each place, and that filled before his turn came for an interview; small, pitiful wages, and sometimes a request that he work months, or a year, without compensation; lack of experience in special lines, and finally, he was either too large or too small, too young or too old.

Each day for a week the programme was repeated, with variations, and Dash began to have grave doubts if there was really work for him to do; that is, work for which there was remuneration, for he felt he never could work harder than he had, tramping about seeking a situation.

Finally, in glancing over the morning papers, as had been his habit for the last six days, he came to a notice that the Congressman of the district in which he lived had at his disposal a cadetship in the Naval Academy at Annapolis, for which a competitive examination would be held on a certain date.

As the examination was to take place in the city where he lived, Dash resolved, with his grandfather's permission, to make an effort to secure the appointment. Mr. Dykeman, having some knowledge of the method and scope of such examinations, was able to give Dash valuable advice as to the necessary preparation.

The boy brought forth his books again, and brushed up on those branches in which he felt he had grown rusty. When the day came he was well equipped for the ordeal, and distanced all competitors by at least half a dozen marks.

Having passed the preliminary examination and gained the appointment, he went to Annapolis to undergo the final tests, mentally and physically. To be brief, he passed well in the former, and met all the requirements in the latter, with the exception of a slight defect in vision; but this was sufficient to debar him.

It was with keen disappointment indeed that Dash returned home and announced his rejection. He subsequently learned that the boy who ranked next to him in the competitive examination succeeded in entering the Academy.

We mention this unsuccessful effort to enter the Navy in order to show by what a combination of unfortunate circumstances Dash was compelled to take up a business which he followed for several years.

This second avenue to a profession being thus closed to him, he once more resumed his search for employment in the city, though with no hopes of success. One day his quest led him over into the western part of the town and far out to the suburbs, near where some large buildings were being erected in preparation for a coming exposition. His long journey was fruitless, and, with the idea that he would inspect the exposition buildings while he was out there, he walked over toward them.

A railroad company had put in several tracks at the grounds and a large station building for the accommodation of visitors from its lines and the city. It was to be a sort of relay depot, where all trains going to or from the city would stop, and would, of course, be an important telegraph station. The building had just been finished, and the lines were running wires to the new telegraph office.

Dash watched with interest the clambering about on the lofty poles of the linemen, with their sharp "climbers," or steel spikes, strapped to their feet. He followed one of them into the building where the lines were to be run, and found a number of other men busy straight-

ening out and adjusting what seemed an inextricably mixed mass of wires above and under a long table.

A young man, apparently about twenty one or two, seemed to be superintending the work, and, as Dash heard him giving directions, it seemed to him that there was something familiar in the voice. As he stepped further into the room to get a nearer view, the young man turned toward him with an inquiring look.

"Mr. Tickmore!" cried Dash, in tones of astonishment and pleasure, at the same time extending his hand.

"I'm your man!" responded the young gentleman, with a mystified smile, as he not very cordially took the proffered hand; "but I must confess you've got the advantage of me."

"Don't you know me—Dash Dykeman?" said Dash, with a slight feeling of disappointment, forgetting that, though Tickmore had not changed much in five years, he himself had altered a great deal.

"The collision at Lonewood," murmured Tickmore—that dreadful tragedy first recalled by the mention of the other's name. "Are you really that poor little chap who was left alone in the world so suddenly?" he continued, as he gave the hand he held a hearty pressure, and gazed earnestly at Dash, who was now somewhat taller than himself. "Well, well, I am truly glad to see you again; but really, you have grown prodigiously, and out of all semblance to yourself of five years ago. How do you happen to be here?"

"If you mean how I came to be out here at the exposition grounds," smiled Dash, "I came to see a man who advertised for an assistant in the office of a lumber yard; but, as usual, I got there too late."

"No; I mean how is it you are a thousand miles from where I saw you last?" interposed Tickmore.

"Oh, I have been here nearly ever since that time."

"How is that?"

Dash briefly narrated how he had been found and taken care of by his grandfather, not volunteering any information as to the change in his prospects within the last few weeks.

"But why are you looking for a situation, Dash?" asked the operator, as the story was concluded.

"A case of necessity, Mr. Tickmore," was the reply; and, feeling drawn toward one who had been with him in his hour of affliction and need, Dash told of his recent change of fortune and disappointments. He felt that the facts concerning his real name, or his ignorance of it, were too personal and private to be shared with any one.

"I'm truly sorry you've had to give up so much, Dash, and have met with such poor success in striking out for yourself," said Mr. Tickmore, in sympathetic tones, which imparted a new stimulus to Dash's confidence and courage.

"Why don't you try to get into the railroad service?"

"I never thought of it before; besides, what is there I can do without previous experience?"

"Oh, lots of things, my boy. I'm sure you must be a good penman and well up in mathematics. They need bright, industrious young fellows in the accounting, ticket and freight departments. But what's the matter with your learning to be an operator? You know you were very anxious to do this five years ago."

"Nothing," responded Dash, slowly and doubtfully, "except, perhaps, it will take me a long time to master the business and take a paying position. I don't want to be an expense to my grandfather any longer than I can possibly help it."

"That's so," mused the operator thoughtfully; "but possibly I can manage it so you can earn something to pay expenses while you are learning."

"How?" asked Dash eagerly.

"I don't like to suggest the position for a young fellow of your intelligence, and probably the pay would be too small to be of much assistance."

"You must leave me to judge of that, Mr. Tickmore. What is it?" smiled Dash.

"When this office is opened we shall need a messenger, and as I am to be the chief I will have the hiring of him," explained Tickmore.

"Well, I'm sure I don't feel above such a position; in fact, anything honest will be acceptable."

"But it will only pay you five dollars a week; possibly not quite so much," continued the operator.

"That's rather small," said Dash slowly, as he rapidly considered the proposition, "but not nearly so much so as some of the offers I have had lately."

Though the sum would have been hardly adequate for his needs had

he been without a home and compelled to live in a boarding house. Dash felt that it would at least pay his grandfather for his meals and lodging. Besides, he would be learning a business which would perhaps very soon increase his salary. On the whole, he decided to accept the situation if he could get it.

"I will take the position, Mr. Tickmore, if you give it to me," he added after a pause.

"All right, Dash, you shall have it, and I shall be glad to have you with me," responded the operator. "You will very soon hear these instruments tick more than you ever heard," he added, with a twinkle in his eye.

"And I will be trying to make out which are dots and which are dashes," rejoined the boy, with an answering smile.

"I see you haven't forgotten our first punning contest," laughed the operator.

"No; and I'm going to decide whether I will make a good operator because my name is Dash. When will you be ready for me?"

"You can come around Monday. We'll have everything in running order by then."

"Thank you, Mr. Tickmore. You seem to be my good angel."

"Without the wings," added the other smiling. "But I hope I will have the chance of doing you many a good turn yet."

After some further conversation, during which the operator told of the ups and downs he had had in following his profession during the last five years, Dash took his departure.

As Tickmore had stated on the train, he was on his way to accept a position with the American Union Telegraph Company. He became one of the leaders in a strike of the operators of that company, and when it ended unsuccessfully he was "blacklisted"—that is, forever debarred from being employed in any office of the company. He then went over to a rival company, but this company, finally absorbing the American Union, added the names on the latter's black list to its own. Finding himself thus shut out from all commercial work, Tickmore turned to the railroads. He went to work for the St. Louis & Pacific Railroad, first as an extra, or relief, operator, who was used to take the places of men who were sick or off on leave of absence; then in a steady night position, and finally a day situation at a heavy and important repeating station. His splendid work at the latter place was quickly appreciated, and he was given charge of the telegraph department of the general offices in St. Louis. He then became chief operator of the road, in full charge of all telegraph employees. From there he came East to accept a similar position on the Pennsylvania Central, which was the road making the improvements at the exposition grounds.

On Monday Dash was on hand early in the morning, ready to be initiated into the duties of his first position. They were few and simple, and he found he would have ample time to practice telegraphy.

Tickmore rigged up a local circuit, with battery, sounder, and key, on a small table in one corner, and Dash set himself resolutely to work to master the mystic art. He had already committed to memory, since the Friday before, the characters of the Morse alphabet, and his first efforts were to properly form those signs on the key.

We do not propose to follow, step by step, the slow, tedious acquisition of the art. Dash quickly became proficient in making all the Morse letters and figures; in fact, much quicker than the average learner. But even then the battle was not half gained; there was the much more difficult part to follow of learning to read readily by sound. Dash had no one to send for him to copy from as practice, as most learners have, and had to depend on what he could make out on the busy instruments in the office. Hour after hour, day after day, he would sit, with paper and pencil in hand, and straining ears, endeavoring to catch the fitting letters and words as they continuously clicked from the half dozen sounders. It came slowly—first a letter, then a pair of letters here and there, then a word, and finally a whole sentence and a complete message. There were discouraging stages, when he seemed to make no progress at all, which were generally followed by rapid improvement that surprised and delighted him.

Tickmore would not permit Dash to send or receive a message over the line wire (or wire on which regular business was done) until he could do it in a creditable manner, as he did not believe in "plugs" (learners) obstructing the wire by slow, distorted work. It was a proud moment when Dash sent and received his first message and the "O. K." was given. Though they were unimportant telegrams concerning the business of the company, the sending of them was always remem-

bered as the most momentous feat in his career as an operator. Thenceforward his improvement was rapid, and he developed an unusual skill in handling pen and key. He acquired that round, bold and legible style of handwriting so peculiar to operators of the first class.

He was finally awarded the position of operator in the office, where he handled all the messages, both the dead head business of the railroad and that paid for by the public, and his salary was raised to fifty dollars a month. Though the post was a heavy and arduous one for a beginner, Dash filled it to the satisfaction of his employers and with credit to himself.

Then he was made the train dispatcher's operator, where his duties, though not so numerous, required constant vigilance and accuracy. He copied all orders for the movement of trains when they were repeated back from the station to which the dispatcher had sent them, and gave the "O. K." when the latter signified they were correct. He also kept a train sheet, on which was noted the arrival and departure of every train at every station on the road, as the time was reported by telegraph.

Dash had worked several months in the latter position before anything occurred to relieve the usual routine of his duties, though he keenly enjoyed the performance of them.

One day, when a freight train—we will call it No. 19—was standing on the siding at the relay station waiting for orders to go out, the dispatcher sent an order to the operator at Ardley, a station fifteen miles out on the line, to hold train No. 20, coming in the opposite direction, for orders. The operator at Ardley duly repeated the order back and signed his name to indicate that he understood. It was his duty then to put out his red flag and hold No. 20 at his station till he got orders for it to proceed or was notified that there were none.

It was the intention of the dispatcher to run train No. 19 to Oak Grove, seven miles this side of Ardley, to meet and pass train No. 20 there, and he held No. 20 before he gave his orders to No. 19 to proceed. When the latter had been done, he would instruct No. 20 at Ardley also to meet and pass No. 19 at Oak Grove. The orders given at the relay depot were always written out on the proper blank by the dispatcher himself, and did not pass through the hands of the operator.

A few minutes after Dash had copied the order to the operator at Ardley to hold No. 20 there, and had given the O. K. and time, he heard Mr. Clikenger, the dispatcher, calling "R. D., which was the Ardley office call.

"I, I, RD," he soon heard the response.

"Is No. 20 there yet?" asked the dispatcher.

There was no reply for a few seconds, as the circuit remained open, and then came in a decidedly shaky manner:

"No. 20 has passed."

"Good Heavens, man, why didn't you hold that train?" flashed Mr. Clikenger with energy. "No. 19 has orders to meet No. 20 at Oak Grove, and before she can get there No. 20 will have passed. If there isn't going to be the worst collision in the next forty minutes you ever heard of, I'm mistaken!"

Dash's heart came up in his throat as he pictured the dread catastrophe. Mr. Clikenger's face was calm and expressionless.

As there was no telegraph station between Ardley and Oak Grove, or between the relay station and Oak Grove, where either of the trains could be reached and stopped, a collision seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER VII.

A RIDE ON A SWITCH ENGINE.

DASH looked across the operating table at the dispatcher with a face that was a shade paler, and a heart that beat rapidly with excitement and apprehension. Mr. Clikenger was perfectly unmoved, and unconcernedly began writing in his order book.

Dash watched him with much curiosity, and wondered that he could control the expression of his emotion, if he had any, in such a wonderful degree. His wonder was turned to positive amazement when he saw the dispatcher smile, and then almost chuckle to himself.

At the same moment the latter looked up and over towards his companion, when, noting the ludicrous blending of perturbation and amazement in Dash's face, he burst into a laugh, and said:

"What's the matter with you, Dykeman? You look as if you had seen a ghost?"

"Didn't you just say to 'R. D.' that 19 and 20 would come together?" faltered Dash, wondering at the other's levity.

"No, I didn't say so. I said if there wasn't a collision in the next

forty minutes, I was mistaken. *I am mistaken*," chuckled the dispatcher.

"But 'R D' let No. 20 go by without orders when he had orders to hold them," interposed Dash, still mystified.

"But I didn't let No. 19 out before he told me he had let 20 go by. No. 19 is still in the yard," explained Mr. Clikenger.

"And you want 'R D' to think there will be a collision as the result of his carelessness," smiled Dash, much relieved as he comprehended the ruse by which a lesson in vigilance had been administered to the derelict operator at Ardley.

"Exactly. I knew it wasn't Wilson, the regular man, and I wanted to teach him that it isn't safe to leave a 'plug' in his place. I guess I've scared the youngster out of a year's growth."

Fortunately, owing to the precaution of Mr. Clikenger, nothing more serious resulted from the operator's omission than the delay of No. 19 till the arrival of No. 20 at the relay station. It afterwards transpired that the student operator who had failed to hold the train at Ardley, was the regular operator's sister, who was taking the latter's place while he visited a sick mother.

When the young girl realized what she had done, and was led to believe by the dispatcher's words that a terrible wreck would ensue, she did the proper thing for a girl to do under the circumstances, and fainted. Quite a severe illness followed her scare, and when the dispatcher heard all the facts of the episode, he admitted that he would not have practiced the ruse had he known the guilty one was of the gentler sex.

The incident had one good effect, however, as Wilson never afterward left an inexperienced person in his place, though the circumstances under which he had done so in the present instance were extenuating. The experience was considered sufficient punishment for the neglect of duty, and nothing further was done than to send Wilson a warning letter against such an occurrence in the future.

This episode only impressed more thoroughly upon Dash the great importance of never tiring vigilance; but he soon found that even the most watchful cannot help sometimes being drawn into a position where they are censured or punished for an apparent mistake or neglect of duty. But before experience had taught him this fact, he performed a service that raised high hopes of promotion, and when he received punishment instead of expected reward it was all the more keenly felt.

It was only a few days after the affair with the operator at Ardley, when the shades of coming night were darkening over the busy railroad yards, that Dash received a message which filled him with pity and horror. There had been a "head on" collision between two engines hauling heavy freight trains. The engineers of both locomotives had been killed almost instantly, while the two firemen were seriously, if not fatally, injured, and the message requested that a surgeon be sent immediately to the scene, as there was none anywhere near there.

Fortunately one of the surgeons employed by the company was stopping at a hotel not far from the relay station, and a messenger was quickly dispatched for him. The collision had occurred at the entrance to the freight yards, about three miles from the relay depot on the other side of the city. All freight trains were made up in the freight yards and brought to the relay station before they were taken charge of by the conductor and his crew. In like manner, all incoming crews stopped at the relay depot and their trains were turned over to the yard crew. An extra engine was provided for carrying the freight crews to and from the city, where most of them lived, and on the evening of the accident this engine was standing near the station.

In a few minutes the surgeon appeared, and he was directed to get aboard the engine to be taken to the freight yards. Then it was found that there was neither engineer nor fireman on the locomotive, and a hurried inquiry and search failed to find them. As they knew they would not be needed, under ordinary circumstances, for half an hour, when the next train was due, they had doubtless improved the opportunity to visit some one near by, which was not an unusual thing.

A good head of steam was on the engine, and she was all ready to start. All she needed was a competent hand at her throttle.

Time was precious, as every moment lost might mean a life, and when Dash heard the several messengers report that the engineer and fireman could not be found, he said:

"I'll take her around, Mr. Clikenger, if you can get along without me for a short time."

"You, Dykeman?" queried the dispatcher, in surprise. "What do you know about an engine?"

"I know enough about one to run it around to the freight yards, I guess," responded Dash confidently.

"All right, go ahead; I can run things alone till you get back," asserted the dispatcher without further question.

Though Dash had never practically run a locomotive, he was as familiar with every part of the wonderful machine, and their various uses, as if he had been an engine driver for years. He was passionately fond of mechanical engineering, and, as we have already mentioned, had thoroughly digested Forney's book on the subject. He was, in fact, much more familiar with the actual construction of the iron horse than are the majority of practical locomotive engineers.

With full confidence, therefore, of being able to discharge the duty he had undertaken, Dash mounted the cab of the engine, where the surgeon was waiting for him. He took his seat on the right side, while the doctor placed himself in the fireman's seat on the left.

"Are you going to take her around, Mr. Dykeman?" questioned the medical man.

"Yes; I know all about an engine, though I have never run one before.

"All right; then I'll be your fireman, though I have had no experience," laughed the doctor.

"Very well," smiled Dash; "then the first thing you do, please give us several shovelful of coal, and close the firebox door."

The green fireman proceeded to do so, and the young engineer, after making sure the switch was turned to the main track, slowly let the steam into the cylinders. The engine forged slowly ahead till it was on the main line, and then Dash gradually opened the throttle till they were flying over the polished rails.

Far ahead, the line of double rails, well worn by constant and heavy traffic, glistened like polished silver, as the gleaming headlight and the myriad signal lamps were reflected upon them.

Every few yards there was a signal—white, green, or red—close to the ground, indicating a switch and its condition, or high up in tower or semaphore, telling if there was safety or danger on the main line ahead. The tracks and signals in a railroad yard are an intricate puzzle to the general public, but to a railroad man, and especially an engineer or yardman, they are as plain as an open book.

Between the relay station and the freight yards was a system of block signals and semaphores. A white light meant that the track was clear and that the train might proceed. As soon as a white signal was passed a red light appeared in its place, which remained in position until the train reached the next signal, in order to protect it against a train following. Reaching the next station the engineman gives four toots of his whistle, and the white light appears on the block or semaphore he has passed, indicating that that portion of the track is clear. This operation is repeated as the train clears each block section.

Under Dash's control the switch engine glided on its errand of mercy, to the accompaniment of its clanging bell and the rattling switches. Aside from the noise of the rapidly working machinery, the rasping roar of the exhaust through the smoke stack and the pounding of the heavy drivers on their steel bed, all was quiet, and not a soul was to be seen along the roadside.

The telegraph poles on both sides of the tracks, with their network of wires, flashed by so rapidly that the roadway far ahead seemed like a long fenced-in lane. Every few moments a signal tower loomed up and the operator was seen near his switch levers. The instant the engine struck a certain switch it rang a bell in the switch tower, and the operator knew the direction the engine was coming and what track was wanted. He then pulled the proper lever and the switch was thrown.

It was a rare excitement to Dash and the doctor, though it was only riding on a switch engine; and it is doubtful if those who made a business of it ever experienced such feelings as theirs. Driving an engine for a livelihood takes all the novelty out of it, though old engineers admit that there is a certain fascination about the business that make them cling to it.

Everything went well with the flying switch engine for several minutes, and Dash was just congratulating himself that in very brief time now they would be at their destination, when, as he was peering out ahead, he noticed something standing on the track. At first he thought it was only a shadow, but as he rapidly approached the object he made it out to be a two-horse team standing square on the road.

Though in the hasty glance he had given he could not determine if there was any one with the team, he feared there might be. He hast-

ily applied the steam brake, with which all switch engines are furnished, shut off steam and reversed his lever; but so great was their speed that it was utterly impossible to even reduce it to a perceptible degree, before striking the obstruction.

The doctor got down from his seat and started towards the step on the fireman's side, with the evident intention of jumping before the collision.

"Stay where you are!" yelled Dash hoarsely, as he stood at his post and glared ahead.

The next moment there was a terrific shock, a grinding crash, and Dash fell to the floor of the cab in front of the firebox door.

(To be continued.)

CHEERFUL CHARLEY.

A TRUE STORY OF THE WAR.

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHARLEY CUTTER was cheerful. You would have had no doubt about that fact, could you have seen his laughing, good humored face. His cheerfulness was never strained or assumed, but was the natural bubbling over of a superabundance of animal spirits and a happy, sunny disposition. Trials and troubles rolled away from his buoyant nature as water from a duck's back, his shipmates said.

He was the life of the sloop of war *Vandalia*, on which he was midshipman during the late War of the Rebellion. He had been a cadet at Annapolis on the breaking out of the struggle, and had just blossomed from a much despised "plebe" to a junior, when he obeyed his country's call and went into active service. He had been a favorite at the school, and was beloved by all on board the *Vandalia*, from the lowest powder monkey to his father, who was her commander.

Charley, at the time of which we write, was a stout, manly young fellow, between seventeen and nineteen years of age. Whether in the midst of a terrible storm, or in the thick of a bloody contest, there was an air of cheerfulness and ardor about him that won the hearts of the sturdy seamen and incited them to greater effort.

It is of the memorable battle of Mobile Bay we write. There it was that Cheerful Charley performed his first and last brave exploit.

With the long line of vessels, men of war, steamers and gunboats, the *Vandalia* had plowed her way slowly, yet surely and safely, through the hidden dangers of torpedoes and the numerous ironclads and gunboats that blocked up the entrance to Mobile Bay. Finally she reached the thickest of that terrible fight, and stood solid as a rock, her crew working bravely at their guns, sending sheets of flame and shot belching from her sides right and left.

With his blue cap clutched in his left hand, and his right grasping the mizzen shrouds, the captain's son, with pale but smiling face, peered through the dense smoke at the awful scene round about him. On all sides whistled the shells and round shot, mingled with the rattle of musketry, the cries of the living, and the groans of the wounded and dying.

With a fearless eye Charley gazed at the terrible scene, and his heart was stirred as

he thought of his countrymen who were falling around him. Then an intense desire for revenge took possession of him, and he longed for an opportunity to come at close quarters with the enemy. His wish was to be gratified sooner than he expected.

Rushing at a terrific speed, and coming straight at the *Vandalia*, was an enemy's ram. It was only by Captain Cutter's presence of mind and promptness of action that a collision was prevented. As it was, she just grazed the sloop of war and grappled with her.

"Stand by, to repel boarders!" shouted the executive officer.

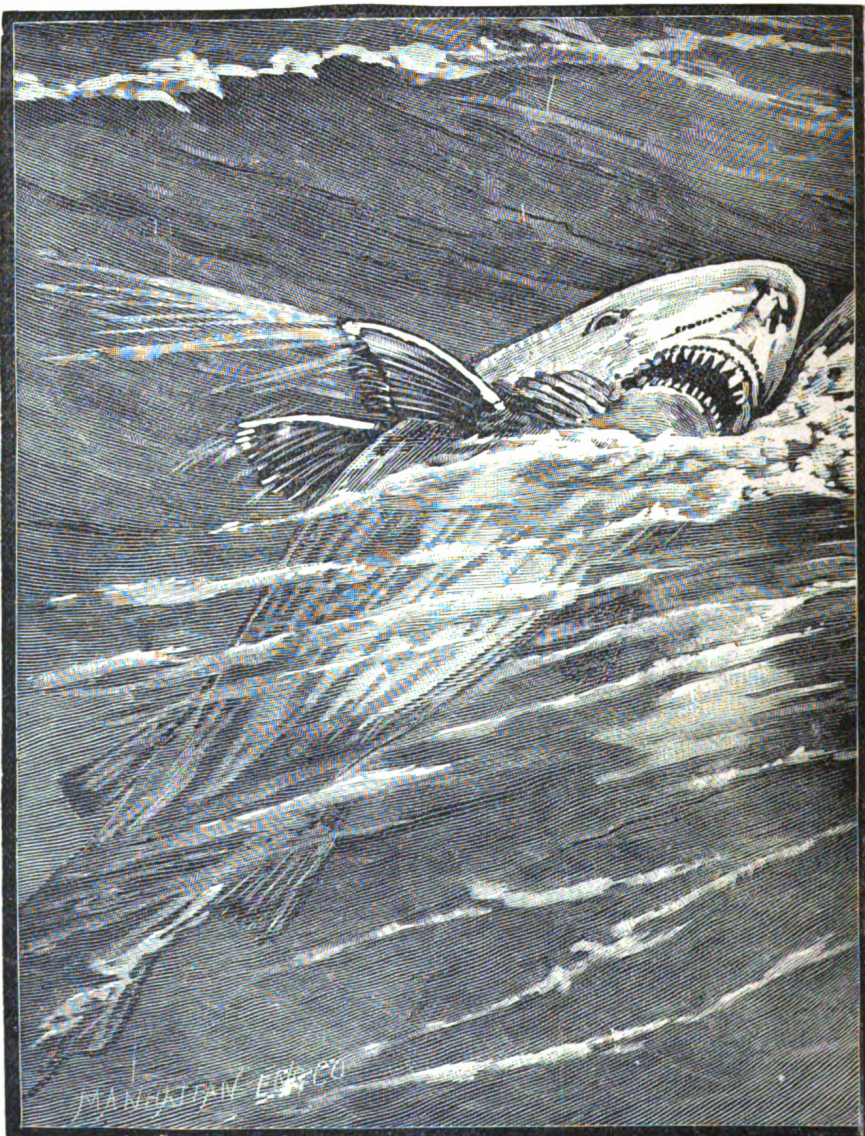
Springing from his position, Charley drew his cutlass, and, with a revolver in his other hand, placed himself at the head of ten weather beaten tars, who seemed naturally to choose him as their leader.

"Now, men," he cried gayly, "let us show those fellows what we're made of, and strike a blow for the old flag."

"Aye, aye, sir," they chorused in low tones.

A shock, and the two vessels came together in the death grapple.

With a rush and a bound young Cutter sprang on the bulwarks, followed closely by his ten men and his father, with the lieutenants and the crew. But here they stopped, for the enemy's deck was bristling with cutlasses, and a hot fire was poured down upon them from the tops. Only for a moment, however, and then they sprang at the enemy with impetuous fury.



THE MAN EATER'S JAWS WERE OPEN, AS IF AWAITING ANOTHER VICTIM.

A horrid carnage ensued, the dread details of which could not be portrayed by words. Flashing cutlasses, with cut, thrust and lunge; cracking revolvers, roaring of cannon, and rending of woodwork; and yells of rage, pain and triumph, all blended together and enveloped in thick, pungent powder smoke, was all that could be seen or heard.

In the beginning of the contest, young Cutter and his men fought hard to gain a footing on the enemy's deck. With a navy revolver in one hand and his cutlass in the other, Charley led his chosen few. So fierce was their onset that the enemy gave way slowly. The latter stubbornly contested every inch of space, and for a moment it looked as if the Vandalia's men would eventually have to give up their effort to take the ram. The crew of the latter outnumbered that of the Vandalia almost two to one.

Suddenly an idea occurred to Charley. Fighting like a fury, he headed toward the mizzen shrouds. The enemy were compelled to fall momentarily back.

With a wild hurrah, Charley sprang like a cat into the rigging. With drawn cutlass in one hand, he ran quickly and nimbly up the ratlines. The top was filled with men who were firing at the Vandalia's crew. They had not noticed any one coming up the shrouds.

Suddenly Charley's head appeared over the rim of the top, and one of the men made a furious blow at him with the butt of his gun. The midshipman ducked his head, and the weapon came against the top with a crash that almost carried the stock from the barrel. Before the men could deliver another blow, young Cutter sprang into the top and ran the fellow who had struck at him through the body. A howl of rage, and five other men who were in the top rushed at the intrepid midshipman.

With a cheerful smile, Charley braced himself against the topmost shrouds and awaited their onset. With a downward slash of his cutlass and a blow with his left fist, he disposed of two of his enemies. There was hardly room in the top for the men to bring their guns to bear, so they reached for their revolvers. While they were doing so, Charley sprang quickly past them, and leaping upon the gaff, pulled himself along the spar toward the extreme end, where hung the enemy's colors. He grasped the flag, and with a slash of his cutlass it was free from its halyards. Twisting it in a sort of line, he tied it about his body. When this was accomplished, a cry of triumph burst from his lips, and he prepared to descend to the deck by a rope.

Meanwhile the men in the top had no doubt been puzzled to know what had become of their daring antagonist, as the rolling smoke had hid him from their view. Then there was a sudden lull in the contest below them, and as the smoke cleared away, they saw and realized the daring midshipman's purpose.

One of them took deliberate aim at the boy. But Charley looked toward him just in time to escape the bullet by dropping at full length on the gaff. The deadly missile sped over his head, and he raised his body quickly again.

There was no rope within reach by which to descend. He glanced down into the sea over the stern. With a shudder of horror and loathing, he saw through the murky air a number of sharks churning up the water into foam as they rushed hither and thither to devour their human prey.

In that momentary glance he remembered afterward to have seen a shark of enormous size. The "man eater" appeared to be nearly half out of the water, with open jaws and lying over on its side, as if awaiting another victim.

Charley hesitated a moment whether to try to regain the top or go overboard. There seemed certain death in either direction. Quickly reasoning that if he reached the top and the men dispatched him, they would capture the flag, he turned to jump over the stern.

At the same moment there was the crack of a revolver in the top and an explosion beneath him. He gave a shriek, and fell like a rocket through the smoky air.

Immediately after Charley had taken the enemy's colors, the latter noticed their absence. Supposing their vessel had surrendered, they stopped fighting. Then the Vandalia's crew quickly disarmed and secured them. Thus the battle was ended by Cheerful Charley's brave act. The navy achieved another victory by his daring exploit, and no doubt many of the crew of the Vandalia owed their lives to the discontinuance of what was a most unequal struggle.

Meanwhile, what had become of the young midshipman? Immediately on returning to his own vessel, Captain Cutter found his son in

his bunk, still wrapped in the enemy's flag, and insensible from a bullet wound in his side. One of the men, Ben Blayall, had closely watched the boy's movements, and as he fell from the gaff, sprang to his rescue. Fortunately, just before they went overboard a hand grenade exploded in the water astern and dispersed the sharks. After considerable delay and a brave struggle, Blayall got on board the Vandalia with his senseless burden.

A few more words and we will conclude this veracious sketch, for it is true, the author having received the main facts from the hero himself. Of course all the names are fictitious.

After the battle Charley was conveyed to the hospital, where he remained six weeks, after which he went home on a furlough. Two months later he returned on board the Vandalia and was presented with a lieutenant's commission in recognition of his gallant action. In the report of the exploit to the Navy Department there was no mention of the fact that a school of man eating sharks was under the Vandalia's stern, into whose dreadful jaws Charley believed, at the time, he was jumping. He was too modest to mention that circumstance of his daring venture. Charley says to this day nobody will ever know his thoughts and feelings at that moment, for he cannot find words to express them.

Blayall, the sailor who had rescued him, was not forgotten, for he was soon advanced to a petty officer. Charley saw lots of active service, and at the end of the war everybody addressed him as captain. To this day, however, he is thought of as, if not called, "Cheerful Charley."

POWER OF THE MYSTERIOUS.

LOWER animals stand in fear of what they cannot comprehend. Man betrays the same emotion when confronted by anything mysterious under exciting circumstances. Once, in the long ago, says a contemporary, an English and a Dutch ship had a battle, and the latter was getting the worst of it, when the second officer reported to the Dutch captain that the cannon balls were all gone.

"Then load the guns with cheese," was his order; and all the guns were at once loaded with little round, hard Dutch cheese of the kind often seen in New York, but which I never saw elsewhere.

"I wonder why they stop firing?" said the English commander, as he peered through the smoke at the silent Dutch ship with the eye of alert suspicion.

After a while the Dutchman resumed firing, and a cheese struck the mast of the English ship, and its crumbs fell all over the deck.

"What in Heaven's name is that?" exclaimed the English captain, in alarm.

Another cheese struck a gun carriage, and its crumbs scattered all about. Then the souls of the Englishmen died within them, for they thought these cheese crumbs some new kind of infernal compound which would soon unite and blow them into "kingdom come," and they hastily lowered their flag as a token of surrender, and taking boats, they pulled for the Dutch ship for safety.

HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE MEMORY.

NUMEROUS devices have been invented whereby it is claimed the memory can be strengthened. Many of these systems require about as much mental effort as the simple memorizing of facts which you wish to impress upon the mind, but there is one method which commends itself to general favor for its simplicity. Recall at the end of each day every incident that came under observation from the hour of rising until the time of retiring, and soon you will be the happy possessor of a retentive memory.

More complicated mnemonics have often been found valuable in keeping the mind from going astray, and one of them is thus described by a writer in the *New York Tribune*:

"I never have any trouble in remembering how "Mississippi" is spelled, for I have firmly fixed in my memory this combination, which has been there in fact from my childhood: "Miss-iss-ipp-i"—that is to say, whenever I have occasion to spell "Mississippi" I say mentally or otherwise, "M-i-double s, i-double s, i-double p, i." If I had been taught in the modern schools I suppose "double s" would have been ruled out; you know they say "s-s" in such cases nowadays; so while my method does admirably for me it probably won't do at all in the case of my children.

In very much the same way I remember the orthography of Cincinnati. My mnemonic is as follows: "C-i-n, c-i-double n, a-t-i." But what I want to do is to show my application of this principle to the population of the United States, which was announced the other day. For the next ten years there isn't a man, woman or child in the country who will not want to remember the exact population as reported by the census bureau. But how many of the 62,622,250 do you suppose will be able to do it? I should say, at a venture, not one-one-hundredth of 1 per cent. Yet it is an easy thing to do. This is my way of doing it: I find no difficulty in fixing in my mind such a combination of sounds as the following: "six-two, six-two, six-two-two, two-five-nought." By repeating that half a dozen times it becomes a permanent part of my mental possessions. That is the way I shall remember the population for the next decade, while I should find it both difficult and awkward to burden my memory with "sixty-two millions, six hundred and twenty-two thousand, two hundred and fifty." Compared with that, "six-two, six-two-two, two-five-nought" is simplicity itself. I advise all who have difficulty in remembering things of this kind to try my method or something like it.



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* * * *

Next week we shall begin the publication of

BRAD MATTOON;

OR,

LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT,

Author of "The Crimson Banner," "The County Pennant," etc.

This is a charming serial of boarding school life, which is certain to fascinate a wide circle of readers. Mr. Moffat's style is a singularly pleasant one, and in the present story he has a field in which he is as much at home as on the baseball diamond. Brad Mattoon is destined to become a prime favorite with young and old.

* * * *

GOOD NEWS FOR SMART BOYS.

ALL indications point to the fact that the horse must go, not faster, but not at all, so far as the street railway service of the future is concerned. The electric spark is bound to take the place of the iron shod hoof, and in this fact ambitious boys with a scientific turn of mind should find cause for rejoicing, as there is thus opened up a new field for the employment of graduates in courses of electrical engineering. In these days, when the cry of "overcrowded professions" is heard so often, a new vocation marks indeed a golden era in the march of civilization.

ANDREW CARNEGIE.

FROM MESSENGER BOY TO IRON KING.

PLUCK wins a great reward. This is shown in the career of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, once a poor messenger boy, now the great iron king of America. His early life was full of sharp struggles. He was born in Dunfermline, Scotland, November 25, 1835. When a mere lad of ten he left his native land for America. Upon his arrival he walked the streets of New York for days, searching in vain for employment, and with a single sovereign in his pocket. At the end of three weeks he was out of work and out of sovereign.

Then he turned his face toward Pittsburg. At last he found employment at firing a small stationary engine in a factory cellar. There were only about seventy five pounds of Andrew Carnegie then inside the "Smoky City," but they were seventy five pounds of energy and ambition. As soon as he had made himself familiar with the geography of the city, the lad sought employment at the office of the Atlantic and Ohio Telegraph Company as a messenger, and obtain it.

"I liked the boy's looks," said the manager afterward, speaking of Andrew's first step up to higher things. "It was easy to see that, though he was little, he was full of spirit. His pay was \$2.50 a week. He had not been with me a full month when he began to ask whether I would teach him to telegraph. I began to instruct him, and found him an apt pupil. He spent all his spare time in practice, sending and

receiving by sound, and not by tape, as was largely the custom in those days. Soon he could do as well as I could at the key, and then his ambition carried him away beyond the work of a messenger boy."

During all this time the boy never forgot each week to remit seventy five cents of his scanty wages to his mother in far away Scotland. Besides this, he managed to lay aside a small sum for himself.

It was not long before the lad obtained employment with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company as telegraph operator. The "Pennsy" was then but an humble, though busy, single track road. Young Car-



ANDREW CARNEGIE.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

negie was sent to work in the train dispatcher's office. The grave responsibilities attending the handling of trains by telegraph imposed trying duties on the boy of fifteen, but his shoulders were broad.

Before he was sixteen years old he had thought out a plan to forward trains systematically and swiftly. His plan is now in universal use on the single track roads of this country. The scheme was to run trains in opposite directions until they approached within comparatively a few miles, and then hold one at a station until the other had passed. This system was almost as good as double tracking the Pennsylvania Company's road.

The fact that young Carnegie had formulated this plan quickly brought him into prominence. He was promoted to higher positions and grew rapidly in the esteem and confidence of the company's officers.

Hereafter Mr. Carnegie's life took a new and broader direction. He received a generous income and was naturally prudent and economical. Meeting Mr. Woodruff, he embarked his small capital of several thousand dollars in the scheme of sleeping cars, not then in vogue.

This investment brought him handsome returns. Then he bought several farms in upper Pennsylvania that turned out to be rich oil country. The output was enormous, and the young man soon began piling up a fortune. From these rapid successes he found the capital with which to enter the iron business. In a short time he became chief owner of the Edgar Thompson steel works, the Homestead iron works and other vast manufactories whose roaring furnaces make a gateway of fire to the city of Pittsburg. Today, at the age of fifty six, Mr. Carnegie is the greatest iron and steel manufacturer in the world.

In all his enterprises the strong, broad intelligence, so characteristic of certain types of Scottish character, is marked and prominent in Mr. Carnegie. He is generous to his fellow men, and has founded magnificent public institutions in this and other countries that will live as glorious monuments to his memory.

WILLIAM J. BAHMER.

A SHOP ON WHEELS.*

BY WALTER F. BRUNS.

CHAPTER XX.

TROUBLE.

"WHAT on earth is going on?" Chub asked, in a hoarse whisper, as the three sat motionless, listening to the pounding in the lower regions.

"If I knew I would tell you," Dick frankly admitted.

"What time have you got, Chub?" Jack asked.

And, after finding the matches and examining his watch, Chub announced that it was half past two.

"Now, fellows," exclaimed Dick, "there is some underhand work going on here, or they wouldn't be working at this time of night, and that woman would have had no cause to tell such a downright fib."

"Of course there is," agreed Chub, "unless it is she throwing those heavy weights around, and that is not likely, for she looks thin enough to be compelled to carry a sad-iron in her pocket to prevent the wind from blowing her out of the door."

"Oh, it isn't she," assured Jack. "It is a man wielding that hammer. Perhaps the two we heard talking through the fireplace."

"Those 'we-know-what-to-do-with-'em' fellows," remarked Chub. "I had about forgotten them. Wish you had not mentioned them. It makes me feel nervous."

"Well, you needn't," said Dick coolly. "We will be as dumb as beetles when Moll questions us in the morning."

"You'd better attend to the answering," said Jack. "I don't like the way things look at all, and if we all try to chip in we may give ourselves away and get in a dreadful muddle."

Then came the pounding again, and the boys listened. It was followed by a heavy jar, and, after a slight intermission, the sound like the throwing about of kindling wood.

"I've listened to that long enough," exclaimed Dick, springing out, "without knowing what it is, and I'm going to find out."

"You'd better go back to bed and mind your own business," advised Chub.

Dick tried the door carefully, but it did not open, and in surprise he asked:

"Say, boys, who locked the door?"

"Nobody," replied Chub.

"Well, it is locked!"

"Then it has been done on the outside."

"I don't like the way these people have of running things their own way," remarked Jack.

"They must have thought we would hear the racket and investigate, and are going to prevent us," said Chub. "Just turn the switch on that electric light, Dick, and we will fool them a whole lot."

And Dick turned the switch by applying a lighted match to the candle, and Chub opened his jackknife and began operations.

The screws that held the lock were taken out at the sacrifice of the point, and, after the knob was removed, the lock was taken off and laid carefully on the floor.

"Now put out that candle, take the guns, and we will do a little exploring."

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack. "Where are the guns?"

"In the corner by——"

And the three faced the empty corner, staring at the place where the guns and rifle had stood, in bewilderment.

"These people are too brand new!" exclaimed Chub indignantly. "I am not a bit pleased with the management."

"That won't make any difference," replied Jack dryly.

"Please notify office of any lack of courtesy on part of employees," quoted Dick gravely.

"Oh, you fellows can get awful funny," said young Mr. Matthews; "but I don't see anything comical in their lugging our things off. What are you sitting there laughing at?"

"At you," replied Dick.

"I must be excruciatingly funny," growled Chub.

"You are. If you will stop hopping about there as though you were treading on tacks, and moderate your voice, perhaps we can accomplish something."

Chub instantly followed instructions, and Dick continued:

"Blow out the light, Jack, before they see it in the hall. We will leave our shoes here. Be careful to make no noise."

And with the others following closely behind, Dick felt his way out in the dark hall.

That they might experience trouble in moving about in a strange place in the dark had never occurred to the trio; but after Chub had stubbed his toe against the banister, and involuntarily said "Ouch!" in a voice too loud for safety, and Dick had walked against a solid wall, they grew cautious.

"We've got plenty of time," whispered Dick, feeling about him, "so there is no use to hurry. Where is that banister?"

"I know where it is," replied Chub, feeling of his toe. "Here, I am leaning against it. What are you doing off there?"

"Hunting for you fellows," and Dick groped his way toward them. "The first thing we know we will be lost!"

"They are pounding down there again," put in Jack. "Here is the top step; now down you go."

It was so dark they could not see each other's faces, and, feeling carefully for loose boards, Dick led the descent.

They reached the bottom and found the front door, and, taking his bearings, Dick whispered:



"SOME ONE IS COMING UP THE STEPS! BACK YOU GO!"

*Begun in No. 428 of THE ARGOSY.

"Take the left hand side and feel for doors, Chub, while I do the same on the right. Jack can keep his ears open, and be ready to lead the retreat."

And in this manner they moved slowly along, passing the front room door, and another that Dick concluded was a bedroom, until they reached the end, where it terminated in what they rightly judged to be a sitting room.

"Keep right on through," Dick whispered. "In all probability the door to the cellar is in the rear. Hear them talking?"

"Yes," replied the other two, and the boys stopped to listen.

The subdued murmur of conversation carried on below could be heard. Also the sound of persons moving about. A strange odor prevailed, and when the hammering began it sounded so loud the boys were startled.

"There is no use standing here," whispered Chub. "We cannot hear anything. If we had our guns and shoes, I would be only too glad to clear out."

"So would I," agreed Jack. "It is going to be risky opening the cellar door, and I am almost afraid to try it—Great Scott!"

And the other two's hearts almost stopped beating as Jack collided with a chair and came to the floor with a terrific racket.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN UGLY PREDICAMENT.

THE sounds in the cellar instantly ceased, and the boys heard a gruff voice ask:

"What was that?"

"Blamed if I know," responded another.

"I guess it's Moll prowlin' 'round agin."

"I'm not goin' to let it go at that. Bill, you——"

And then his voice dropped so low the boys could not hear.

They stood motionless, not caring to stir until the actions of those below directed their movements, and, while perspiring profusely, Dick said reassuringly:

"Keep perfectly cool; we'll come out all right."

"That is well enough to say," Chub returned, "but if I was standing in 200 degrees Fahrenheit I couldn't perspire a drop more a minute. Listen!"

"Some one coming up the steps!" whispered Jack excitedly. "Back you go!"

And with Chub in the lead they flew down the hall just as the bedroom door opened.

The person who opened it stepped out just in time to get in Chub's way, and they came together with a force that sent both sprawling.

Dick and Jack tripped over them, and by the time they regained their feet the stranger had Chub by the collar, and two men with a lantern had arrived via the sitting room.

"What's the trouble here?" asked the man with the light.

"It's them chaps that Moll took in," said the other, peering into the boys' faces. "There's some keerness 'bout this."

"Naw, there ain't," retorted the other. "I did jess's you said."

"What do you want, prowlin' round the house at this time of night?" demanded the man, turning to the boys.

"A drink," said Dick boldly.

"Sure you warn't after anythin' else?"

"Our guns," admitted Jack.

"Nothin' else?" persisted the man.

"What else would we want?" blurted out Chub.

"Look here," chimed in the man who had been knocked down; "if you was after a drink, what made you run so blamed hard?"

This was a poser, and Dick began lamely:

"The lady that admitted us told us she was alone, and that there was no men on the place, and, consequently, when we heard you talking——"

"Heard us talking?" interrupted one of the men quickly.

"We could not hear what you said," Dick hastened to add; "but we heard your voices——"

"An' you run?" finished the man.

"Exactly," replied Dick.

"No, you didn't do nothin' of the kind," contradicted the man with the lantern. "You're gettin' muddled. The first we heerd was a big racket, an' we sent Bill up this way an' we started up the other, an' you never run till Bill got here."

"There!" cried Bill triumphantly. "Now, how did you git out of your room when it was locked?"

"Took the lock off," replied Dick promptly. "When people are thirsty they are not particular."

"No, I guess not," agreed Bill sarcastically. "Strikes me as kinder funny you'd take the trouble to take the lock off to git a drink of water when there's a pitcher brim full standin' in the room."

That was a crusher. In vain the boys declared they "never saw it."

"If you was as hard up for water as you say," returned Bill frigidly, "you'd a-done a heap of snoopin' 'round. Accordin' to my idy, Dillon, these fellers know a heap more'n they let on."

"Then we know how to take keer of 'em!" replied the man with the lantern.

"I reckon we do know how to take keer of 'em," chimed in the third man; and now that they were in for it, the boys became more self-possessed and took a good survey of their captors.

Bill and the fellow called Dillon wore stumpy beards, and the other man, who was small in stature, was smooth faced. They ail had a hangdog expression about the eyes.

Bill was the mildest looking of the three, and he was far from good looking. His nose was prominent and red, his hair of a lighter hue, and his neck covered with big, yellow freckles. His hands were scrupulously clean, and marked in the same manner.

Dillon was a large, heavy set man, with a very fierce look, which his black, short beard and sullen eyes did not lessen. He had a peculiar and disagreeable way of shifting his hand to his pistol pocket, which caused one to prepare to dodge bullets.

The small man's countenance bore a striking resemblance to the picture the boys had noticed in the front room. His voice was very gruff, as if for no other reason than to contradict his looks of old age, for his hair and eyebrows were white.

"I expect our workin' on the apple bin woke you up, eh?" questioned Bill.

"Yes, we heard you pounding," replied Dick quietly.

"Yes," went on Bill affably, "we are goin' to harvest a heap of apples tomorrer, an' we've got to have some place to put 'em."

"Exactly," acquiesced Dick.

The men gazed hard at the boys, as though trying to determine how much they knew, and finally Dillon said shortly:

"We ain't makin' nothin' standin' here chinnin'. Put 'em in the back room an' make shore there ain't no way to git out. Ain't that right, Dinny?"

"That's shore right," chuckled the old man. "We know how to fix 'em."

"What have we done to be treated like this?" demanded Dick, with a great show of indignation, which, however, would not work.

"It don't make no difference what you've done, doin' or would do," returned Dillon crisply. "The best thing you can do will be to foller quietly after Bill. You fellers can look awful innercent when occasion requires. Where's your footgear?"

"In our room," said Jack.

"They didn't want to wake up Moll when they went after a drink," explained Bill, and the boys knew it counted much against them.

"You can stop an' get 'em on your way," said Dillon. "If you think they'll give you any trouble, Bill, Dinny or I'll go 'long."

"It won't do them any good to git rampagous, the way the house's locked," replied Bill, with a laugh.

"You needn't give them a light to burn us out, either," Dillon called out, when they were half up the stairs.

Bill waited long enough for the boys to secure their shoes, and then led them the length of the hall to another room.

With only the lantern, it needed but a glance to note its strength. There was a small window with stout bars bolted on the outside, and the door was of some heavy, hard wood, with several bolts, also on the outside.

"We fitted up this room for such chaps as you," said Bill, setting down the lantern and taking a look around. "The last chap we had in here got too brilliant, an' we shipped him."

"Where?" inquired Jack.

"Hub! I'm not a-goin' to tell you. You can gamble on the fact that we sent him to a safe place, an' he didn't feel a little bit like splittin' when he got there, either."

"I expect you were building apple bins then, too," Chub remarked sarcastically. "Strange, what precautions you take to keep it secret."

Bill suddenly straightened up, scratched his chin and began to think of what he had said. He concluded that he was telling more than was necessary, took a round turn and said shortly:

"There's some sacks you can sleep on. Good night!"

He picked up the lantern and passed out, bolted the door securely and the boys followed his footsteps along the hall and down the stairs, where they gradually died away.

"Do not forget me," warbled Chub; but the others did not respond to this touching appeal, and he soon subsided.

"If you want to sing anything," said Dick, "try something that will raise one's spirits, instead of rehearsing your stock of emotional songs."

"I believe if we had sung that the night of our grand closing out sale," announced Chub, "we would have finished——"

"Sooner than we expected," completed Jack dryly. "The people would have run us out. If you don't believe it, try it the next time we have one."

"Don't plan so far ahead," advised Dick. "We are not out of here yet, and we are not likely to begin peddling until we are."

That brought them back to painful reality, and after a few moments of reflection Jack suggested:

"Let's turn in. They are not likely to molest us during the night, and there will be nothing gained by sitting up."

The noises in the cellar had ceased, and making themselves as comfortable as the limited means at their disposal would permit, the boys drifted off to sleep, and did not awake until the sun shone through the little window on their faces.

CHAPTER XXII.

NIPPED IN THE BUD.

THEIR breakfast was brought by the sharp faced woman named Moll, and consisted of a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water.

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated Chub, after she had left and he had recovered from his surprise. "Nothing but bread and water! They surely don't intend to fatten us."

"I don't know," returned Dick dubiously, turning the meager loaf gingerly over. "You don't want to overfeed yourself; it is considered healthy."

"Overfeed myself!" snorted Chub disdainfully. "On what? We should wait until Bill comes and make him eat it."

"He said the other chap was too brilliant and they shipped him," warned Jack; "and he might think we were too familiar and do the same with us."

"It is better than nothing, but only by a small margin," said Dick; "and as we can't help ourselves we will have to put up with it. Draw on your imagination and grow fleshy. It is evident that meals, such as we had yesterday, will be a thing of the past while we remain here."

And the boys' faces wore a very woebegone expression as they masticated the simple fare.

"I never knew what it was to be locked up before," remarked Jack, standing by the window and looking out at the bright sunshine. "It would be no trick at all to walk to that farmer's, even if the roads are muddy."

"Can't we manage to get out of the window?" asked Dick, coming to his side and looking out.

"We could if it wasn't for those bars," Jack replied. "But it would jar up one considerably to drop to the ground. We have no rope to let ourselves down by."

"That is easily overcome," cried Dick excitedly. "We can tie these sacks together. It would hold all three of us, and there are enough to reach the ground."

"Don't get in such a hurry," urged Chub. "My dear boy, you haven't got those bars off yet, and I'm sure you can't crawl through."

And Dick's momentary hopes were as suddenly blasted.

"If we had a hammer," he sighed.

"Which we haven't," answered Chub. "If the doors weren't locked we could walk out."

And after looking at him a moment Dick had to smile and give up.

An hour or two afterward a loud rap sounded on the front door, which was opened with the customary caution. The boys heard Moll utter a cry of surprise and gladness, and whoever arrived was conducted to the sitting room, and for some time the boys could hear a steady stream of conversation.

When Moll brought up the dinner somebody accompanied her, and the boys heard her say, as she unbolted the door:

"They are mighty smart fellers, an' Dillon thinks they know a heap more'n they let on. We can't tell how long they was prowlin' round

before they knocked over the cheer, an' mebbly they've seen the whole workin' of the——"

"Sh! that'll do," interrupted a man's voice.

And when she opened the door, who should follow her in but Roper! The surprise was mutual and anything but agreeable to the boys.

"Ah, ha!" cried Roper tragically. "So you are the chaps, eh?"

"You're looking at us," returned Chub boldly.

"An' a healthy lookin' lot you are," said Roper with a grin. "But you're not a bit respectful," he added, "for every time I find you you give me the slip. Mebbly it'll be different this time."

"Mebby it will," agreed Dick.

"An' while I think of it," went on Roper, "you might hand me over your money."

"Can you change a quarter?" asked Chub coolly.

"Cause why?" demanded Roper.

"Cause I've only got a quarter, and ten cents of it belongs to Dick. I'm not in the habit of giving away money that don't belong to me."

"Where's the rest of it?" and Roper began to grow angry.

"Where our wagon is, and where you won't get it," replied Chub spiritedly. "Your back is better looking than your face. Mosey!"

"Yes, I will," shouted Roper wrathfully; but he said it in a tone that did not indicate assent. "I've got you in a tight place agin, and I'm goin' to make it a point to keep you there!"

"Where's Foxy?" inquired Dick.

"He'll be down before long. We don't come here in a crowd. There ain't no use askin' you where your wagon is, 'cause I know you wouldn't tell me, but we'll nose around the country till we find it, an' you'll stay right yere till we do. If Dillon's got any accounts to settle with you, you can do that afterward!"

Moll had stood looking on in silence and surprise, and when Roper turned and abruptly left the room she followed.

"If you chaps want any better proof of the necessity of our getting away from here, you are very dull," said Dick, after the others had left.

"There is no use in attempting to escape by the door," added Jack. "It is too well built for us to tackle, so our only hope lies in the window, and the bars have to be removed without noise. Now, how are we going to do it?"

The boys were lying on the sacks, and in a desperate effort to think of some plan Chub rolled and tossed about until a squeak caused him to spring to his feet and exclaim:

"Eureka, I've got it!"

"Got what?" demanded the others, jumping six inches.

And for reply Chub began to toss the sacks away. The others looked on in mute surprise until he began to pry up a loose board with his jack knife, and then they caught the infection and the board at the same time, and up it came.

"Raise the window, Jack," cried Chub hurriedly. "All we have to do is to wrap some sacks over the end to deaden the noise, and we have a good battering ram, with three of us to work it."

"Can't we pry them off easier?" Dick asked.

"We can break the board that way and accomplish nothing," retorted Chub.

And while Jack raised the window, the sacks were fastened on, and with Dick and Jack to guide it, and Chub's additional strength on the end, the ram was propelled against the bar close to the frame, with a force that tore the screw bolt through the wood.

"Good enough!" cried Jack. "The other side."

There were six bars. Two had been removed and another had yet to be driven off before they could pass out, when a man's step sounded on the stair.

For one brief moment they stood motionless, and then Jack said rapidly:

"We have gone too far now to stop. If he comes in here we will have to keep him from sounding the alarm. And the work has got to be done quickly and quietly!"

The steps advanced and stopped before the door. They heard him begin to slide the bolts, and quickly taking their places on each side, Chub with uplifted board, they prepared to pounce upon him.

(To be continued.)

COULDN'T EVEN MAIL IT.

SHE—"I cannot express my love for you."

HE (eagerly)—"Why?"

SHE—"I haven't any."—Judge.

DIGGING FOR GOLD. A STORY OF CALIFORNIA.*

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNPLEASANT ADVENTURE.

"COUPLE of whiskies—straight—for me and the kid," ordered Grant's companion, as he came to a standstill in front of the bar.

"None for me!" said Grant quickly.

But all the same two glasses were set out and the bottle placed beside them.

"Pour it out!" said the miner to the barkeeper. "I'm afraid the boy will get away."

The barkeeper, with a smile, followed directions, and the two glasses were filled.

The miner tossed his off at a single gulp, but Grant left his standing.

"Why don't you drink, boy?" demanded his companion with an oath.

"I told you I wouldn't," said Grant angrily.

"We'll see if you won't," said the miner, and seizing the glass he attempted to pour it down Grant's throat, but his arm was unsteady from the potations he had already indulged in, and the whisky was spilled, partly on the floor and partly on the boy's clothes. Grant seized this opportunity to dash out of the saloon with the miner after him. Fortunately for him, Bill Turner, as he called himself, tripped and fell, lying prostrate for a moment, an interval which Grant improved to so good purpose that by the time the miner was again on his feet he was well out of harm's way.

"I thought the drinking habit was bad enough at home," thought Grant, "but no one ever tried to *make* me drink before."

And now we will go back and see how it fared with Mr. Cooper.

Some quarter of a mile from the Metropolitan Hotel and Restaurant his attention was drawn to a blacksmith's shop. That was his own line of business, and he felt a curiosity to interview his California brother workman.

Entering he saw a stout, black bearded man in the act of shoeing a horse.

"Good morning, friend," he said.

"Good morning, stranger!"

"I thought I'd take a look in, as you are in my line of business."

"Is that so?" asked the blacksmith, looking up with interest. "How long since you arrived?"

"Just got in this morning."

"Going to stay in Sacramento?"

"I am ready for anything that will bring money. I suppose I shall go to the mines."

"Humph! Why not buy me out and carry on your old business in Sacramento?"

"Do you want to sell?" asked Jerry Cooper, surprised.

"Yes; I want a little change. I might go to the mines myself."

"Can't you make money blacksmithing?" asked Cooper cautiously.

"Yes; that isn't my reason. I haven't seen anything of the country yet. I bought out this shop as soon as I reached Sacramento, and I've been at work steady. I want a change."

"How well does it pay you?"

"I get big prices. A dollar for a single shoe—and I have all I can do. Why, how much money do you think I have made since I took the shop, a year since?"

"I can't tell."

"I've laid up three thousand dollars, besides paying all expenses."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the blacksmith, impressed.

"Yes; I shan't make as much money at the mines probably, but it'll be a change, and not so hard work."

"Then you want to sell out?"

"Yes."

"What will you take?"

"A thousand dollars. That buys the shop, too. It's dirt cheap."

"It may be, but I haven't the money."

"I will take half cash, and a mortgage for the balance."

"Suppose I bought, is there a house near by where I can live?"

"What family have you?"

"A wife and son; but I suppose Tom will want to go to the mines."

"There is a cabin across the street with three rooms. It is empty. You can hire it for fifty dollars a month, likely."

"Fifty dollars a month for a cabin with three rooms!" ejaculated Cooper.

"Yes; or you can buy it for five hundred dollars, I expect."

"Seems to me prices are pretty steep in Sacramento."

"So they are; but you can get rich faster than at home, in spite of the high prices."

"Well, that's a consideration, certainly. How much time will you give me to consider your offer?"

"Till tomorrow."

"I'll let you know by that time."

Jerry Cooper walked away in a state of excitement. He felt that he would rather stay in Sacramento and carry on his own old business, with which he was thoroughly acquainted, than undertake gold mining, of which he knew nothing. He was a man of fifty, and was not so enterprising as he had been when half the age.

"It seems a good chance," he reflected. "But how will I get the money?"

He had five hundred dollars left, perhaps more; but all this would have to be paid down for the shop, without leaving anything to provide for his family in the interval before he got to earning an income.

"If I only had the money I would take the shop," he said to himself. "I wonder if I could borrow any. I might send home for some, but it would come too late."

He walked slowly back to the hotel and restaurant.

In front of it Mrs. Cooper was waiting for him.

"I'm glad you've come, father," she said. "I was afraid you would be gone all day."

"Were you discontented, mother?"

"No; it isn't that; but I've had an offer for the wagon and oxen."

"You have?"

"Yes; quarter of an hour after you went away a man came in and inquired of the landlord who owned the team. He was referred to me, and asked if I wanted to sell. I told him I didn't know what your plan might be, but finally he offered me eight hundred dollars, or a thousand if Dobbin were thrown in."

"You should have accepted," exclaimed her husband excitedly.

"I didn't dare to. I didn't know what you would say. But he's coming back again, and— There he is!"

Fifteen minutes later the bargain was struck and the money paid, cash down.

"That settles it!" decided the blacksmith. "Mother and I will stay in Sacramento."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A TRUE FRIEND.

THE next morning, as Grant was enjoying a few minutes' rest, breakfast being over, he was surprised by the entrance of Giles Crosmont. It seemed pleasant to see a familiar face.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Crosmont," he said warmly. "Will you have breakfast?"

"No; I am staying at the hotel and have already breakfasted. I have come in to see you."

"I am very glad to see you, sir. I was afraid we would not meet again. How did you know where to find me?"

"I met Tom Cooper on the street early this morning."

"Tom has gone to the mines."

"So he told me. That is, he told me he was to start this morning. You intended to go to the mines, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why didn't you go?"

"I hadn't money enough," answered Grant candidly.

"That needn't have prevented your going."

Grant looked inquiringly at Mr. Crosmont.

"I mean that I would have lent you a hundred dollars. That would have been enough, wouldn't it?"

"It would have been ample. You are very kind, Mr. Crosmont."

"Why shouldn't I be? I have more money than I know what to do with."

"But I might never have been able to repay you."

"I would have taken the risk of that. Besides, to be frank, I should have intended the money as a gift, not a loan."

"Thank you, sir," said Grant gratefully. "I never met such kindness before."

"Do you wish to give up your situation, and go to the mines at once?"

"No, sir— I enjoy feeling that I am so well paid for my labor. You see I never earned much before, Mr. Tarbox only gave me my board."

"And how much are you paid for your services here?"

"Three dollars a day and my board," answered Grant proudly.

"That is indeed high pay for a boy of your age. If you will let me advise you, don't let it make you extravagant. Don't form the habit of gambling. I notice there are several gambling saloons here."

"No, sir, I won't. I know nothing about cards."

"You could soon learn."

"Thank you for your advice, Mr. Crosmont."

"I give it because I feel an interest in you, Grant. I can't explain why, for I have met a good many young persons in my travels, and never was drawn to any one as I am drawn to you."

"I am glad to have so good a friend, Mr. Crosmont," said Grant earnestly.

"And I am glad to have found some one in whom I can feel an interest. I begin to feel that there is some object in living."

"Are you going to remain in Sacramento, Mr. Crosmont?"

"No, I start this afternoon for San Francisco."

Grant's countenance fell. Just as he had ascertained how true and reliable a friend Mr. Crosmont was, he was destined to part with him.

"Then I shall not see you again," he said soberly.

"I hope you will, Grant," returned Mr. Crosmont, with a friendly smile.

"Indeed, I mean that you shall. I don't propose to lose sight of you. How long do you think you shall remain in your present employment?"

"One month, and possibly two. I would like to get a good sum of money together before I start. I shall need to buy a few things."

"What things?"

"Some underclothing, a new pair of shoes, and new suit. The clothes I have on were pretty well worn out by the trip across the plains."

"Don't trouble yourself about that. I will take your directions on the size, and send you what you need from San Francisco."

"I can't thank you enough, Mr. Crosmont. It will save me a good deal of money."

"You will need all the money you can earn. Now I will give you my address in San Francisco, and if you have any occasion to ask help or advice write unhesitatingly. I shall travel a part of the time, but I shall always answer your letters as soon as I receive them."

"Thank you, sir."

"You have no father. Look upon me as a father or guardian, whichever you please. This will be my address."

He took a card from his pocket, and wrote upon it under his name, "Care of C. D. Vossler, Jeweler, Market St., San Francisco."

"Mr. Vossler is an old friend of mine," he said, "and he will take care of any letters that come directed in this way. I don't know where I shall put up, so that it will be best always to address me when you write in his care."

"Thank you, sir. I will remember."

"Yes; don't lose the card."

Mr. Crosmont left the restaurant, and Grant did not again see him before his departure. He felt cheered to think he had found such a friend. Two thousand miles from home it was worth a good deal to

think that if he were sick or got into trouble he had a friend who would stand by him, and to whom he could apply for help or advice.

The next day, in an hour which was given him during the time when business was slack, Grant went round to see Mr. Cooper.

He found the blacksmith busy in his shop. He had bought the little cabin opposite, and his family had already moved in.

"It didn't take me long to get established, Grant," he said with a well satisfied smile.

"No, sir. I was quite taken by surprise to hear it."

"I did a good thing in coming to California, I am convinced of that. Why, Grant, how much do you think I took in for work yesterday?"

"Ten dollars," suggested Grant.



"AT THIS RATE I SHALL BE ABLE TO BUY BACK MY OLD PLACE IN A YEAR."

"Better than that—seventeen! Why, at this rate, I shall be able to buy back my old place in a year out of my savings."

"I am glad to hear of your good luck, Mr. Cooper."

"You have got employment, too, Grant?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much are you paid?"

"My board and three dollars a day."

"Why, that's fine, and you only sixteen years old, too. I shall be well pleased if Tom does as well at the mines."

"If he does well, I expect to join him in a month or two."

"I don't know as it's wise. Perhaps you had better stay where you are."

"I might not make as much money, but I should not be satisfied to come to California and not go to the mines."

"That's just exactly what I am going to do. Me and mother are better off in Sacramento. However, you are young, and that makes a difference."

"I must leave you now, Mr. Cooper, and get back to business."

"Are you a good deal confined?"

"Yes, that's the worst of it. I have to be at the restaurant in the evening till ten o'clock, but I can get off for an hour every afternoon."

"Well, come out and see us often. I would invite you to come and take supper some night, but I suppose you couldn't accept."

"No, Mr. Cooper, thanking you all the same."

"You haven't been homesick yet, Grant, have you?"

"No; except the first day, when I didn't know how I was coming out."

"And you wouldn't like to be back on Mr. Tarbox's farm again?"

"Not much; but I should like to see mother again, if only for a few minutes."

"If you do well, and carry home a good sum of money, you can make things comfortable for her, you know."

"That's what I am thinking of all the time."

Grant took leave of the blacksmith and went back to work. He was glad to think he had some one to call upon who reminded him of home. He worked long hours, though the labor could not be considered hard. There was one other waiter beside himself, a young man of twenty five named Albert Benton. He was thin and dark complexioned, and Grant, without being able to explain why, conceived a dislike to him. He saw that Benton was inclined to shirk work, though he received higher pay than his young associate. He was paid five dollars per day, and had a room outside. Mr. Smithson, the proprietor of the restaurant, had desired him to sleep in a small room over the restaurant, but he had declined to do so. Upon this the same request was made of Grant, and he complied, glad to save the price of lodging elsewhere. When the restaurant closed at ten o'clock, frequently Grant would go out for a short walk, as it was a relief to breathe the fresh outside air after being confined in the close atmosphere of the eating house during the day and evening. Generally he and Benton went out together, but his companion soon left him, finding a simple walk entirely too slow and unexciting for his taste.

CHAPTER XIX.

GRANT FALLS UNDER SUSPICION.

IT struck Grant as strange that his fellow waiter, though he received five dollars a day, never seemed to have any money on hand.

More than once he had borrowed a couple of dollars of Grant, which, however, he always repaid.

"What can he do with his money?" thought Grant. "He gets very little chance to spend it, for he is confined in the restaurant from twelve to fourteen hours a day."

The mystery was solved when one night he saw Benton entering a notorious gambling saloon not far from the restaurant.

"So that is where he disposes of his money," reflected Grant, "I wish I could venture to give him a hint. But probably he would pay it no attention, as I am a boy considerably younger than he."

He did, however, find occasion for speaking soon afterward.

"Have you ever been to the mines, Mr. Benton?" he asked.

"No."

"Don't you ever expect to go?"

"I would go in a minute if I had money enough."

"I should think you might save enough in a month or two. You get good pay."

"It's tiresome saving from one's daily pay. I want to make a strike. Some day I shall. I might win five hundred dollars in the next week. When I do I'll bid the old man good by, and set out for the mines."

"I believe in saving. A friend of mine, now in San Francisco, warned me to keep clear of the gambling houses, and I would be sure to get on."

Albert Benton regarded Grant suspiciously.

"Does the boy know I gamble, I wonder?" he said to himself.

"Your friend's an old fogey," he said contemptuously.

"Don't you think his advice good?"

"Well, yes; I don't believe in gambling to any extent, but I have been in once or twice. It did me no harm."

If he had told the truth, he would have said that he went to the gambling house nearly every evening.

"It's safest to keep away, I think."

"Well, yes, perhaps it is, for a kid like you."

No more was said at the time. But something happened soon which involved both Benton and his associate.

Mr. Smithson, the proprietor, began to find that his receipts fell off. This puzzled him, for it appeared to him that the restaurant was doing as good a business as ever. He mentioned the matter to the senior waiter.

"Benton," said he, "last week I took in fifty dollars less than usual."

"Is that so?" asked Benton indifferently.

"Yes; I can't understand it. Has the trade fallen off any, do you think?"

"Really, I can't say. It seemed about the same as usual—that is, the number of customers did."

"So it seemed to me."

"Perhaps they ordered less. Now I think of it, I feel sure that they did."

"That might explain it partially, but not so large a falling off."

"I suppose you haven't thought of any other solution of the question?" said Benton, slowly scrutinizing the face of his employer.

"Have you?"

"Well, sir, I have, but I don't like to mention it."

"Out with it!"

"I don't *know* anything, sir."

"If you suspect anything, it's your duty to tell me."

"Well, perhaps it is, but I might be doing injustice to Grant."

"Ha! what has Grant to do with it?"

"Nothing that I *know* of."

"Good Heavens, man, don't tantalize me in this way. What do you suspect?"

"Well, sir, the boy always appears to have money."

"He seems to be economical, and I pay him well. That counts for nothing."

"No, sir, but—some one told me that he had seen him entering a gambling house on the street."

"Ha! that would account for his needing a good deal of money. By the way, do you ever enter such places?"

"I have entered out of curiosity, sir," answered Benton with a burst of candor. "I wanted to see what they were like."

"Better keep out of them altogether."

"No doubt you are right, sir."

"But about the boy—have you ever *seen* him take anything from the drawer?"

"I couldn't be sure of it, but once when he was alone I entered suddenly, and saw him near the drawer. He flushed up, and came away in a hurry. I couldn't *swear* that he took anything."

However, Benton's tone implied that he felt sure of it all the same, and so it impressed Mr. Smithson.

"Did you have any recommendations with Grant?" inquired Benton in an insinuating tone.

"No; but, then, I had none with you, either."

"That is true. Still, I hope you have confidence in me."

"I know of no reason why I should not. Do you know if Grant drinks?"

"I don't think he drinks *much*."

"Does he drink at all?" asked Smithson curtly.

"One evening I saw him coming out of a drinking saloon pretty well loaded. That is the only time, however."

"It was once too often. Benton, I have been greatly deceived in that fellow. I thought him a model boy."

"So did I, sir, and I don't think he is *very* bad now. Perhaps he has been a little indiscreet."

"It is very kind of you to excuse him; but if what you say is true, I shall not be able to retain him in my employment."

"Give him a little more time. Remember that I *know* nothing positive to his discredit. He *may* not have taken the money."

This half hearted defense of Grant led Mr. Smithson to think that Benton was his friend and spoke against him unwillingly. It never occurred to him that his senior waiter was only seeking to divert suspicion from himself.

"Very well," he said. "I'll keep him on a week longer. Perhaps something may occur in that time to confirm my suspicions or discredit them."

The result of this conversation was that the restaurant keeper was all but convinced that Grant was a sly young villain and was secretly robbing him. He had a friend, however, who had once been a detective in St. Louis, though now engaged in a different business in Sacramento.

He sought him out and told him the story.

Vincent listened attentively.

"It looks bad for the boy; don't you think so?" Smithson asked.

"Yes, if all is true that is said against him. But who says it?"

"Albert Benton."

"The older waiter?"

"Yes."

"You have never yourself seen the boy drunk, or coming out of a gambling house?"

"No."

"Then all the testimony to that effect is that of the man Benton?"

"Yes."

"May not Benton have an object in slandering the boy?"

"He seemed very reluctant to say anything against him."

"That may be all artfulness, and to divert suspicion from himself."

"You surely don't think *he* would rob me?"

"Why not?"

"He has been in my employ for a year."

"Then he ought by this time to have a good deal of money saved up—that is, if his habits are good."

"I am sure he has not."

"What evidence have you on the subject?"

"At one time, three months since, I thought of selling out the restaurant, and asked Benton if he didn't want to buy it."

"Well, what did he say?"

"That he hadn't got fifty dollars in the world."

"How much do you pay him?"

"Five dollars a day and his board."

"Whew! and he spends all that?"

"He seems to."

"Look here, Smithson, you are on the wrong tack. *He* is the thief, and not the boy."

"I can't believe it."

"Leave the matter in my hands, and I will prove it to you."

"How?"

"I shall follow Benton in the evening, and see how he spends his time and money. But you must be careful not to let him know that he is suspected. If anything is said of the disappearance of money, tell him that you attribute it to decrease in trade."

"All right; I will do as you suggest."

"He doesn't know me, and will not imagine that I am watching him."

Two days later Albert Benton, a little anxious to know whether he had himself eluded suspicion, asked his employer: "Have you found out anything about the lost money?"

"I am not sure that any has been lost," answered Smithson carelessly.

"Have you watched the boy?"

"Yes, but he doesn't look to me like a thief. It may be, after all, that we are doing less business."

"Yes, sir; that's very likely," responded Benton, glad that his employer was disposed to regard the matter from this point of view.

"I don't like to think that any one in my employ would rob me."

"Very true, sir. It would be a great shame."

"It's all right!" thought Benton complacently. "It is better so. I don't care to have the boy discharged. Some one might succeed him whom I couldn't hoodwink so easily."

CHAPTER X X.

BENTON IS TRAPPED.

JUDGING that his employer's suspicions were allayed, Benton ventured to take two five dollar bills from the till before he went out in the evening. Currency was at that time mixed, and bills, as well as gold and silver, were in circulation.

He left the restaurant at the usual time. It so happened that Grant had something to do and did not go out with him. Benton therefore went at once to the gambling house which he was in the habit of frequenting.

"I'm getting tired of being cooped up in the restaurant day after day," he said impatiently. "Why can't I make a strike? If I could scoop in four hundred dollars tonight I would leave Sacramento and go to the mines. Then I might strike it rich and carry home ten thousand dollars, as Grant's friend did."

Grant had told him the story of John Heywood's good fortune, and it had impressed him.

"If a clohopper like that can make a fortune, why shouldn't I?" he asked himself.

So his purpose to go to the mines and try his luck was strengthened. If he had begun six months before to save money he would have had enough to start before this, but Albert Benton was one of those who despised small and steady savings, and are always on the lookout to "make a strike," as he termed it.

"That boy won't spy on me tonight!" he said to himself. "I must be careful. If the old man knew where I spent my evenings he would smell a rat. I wonder how much I've taken from the drawer in the last three months. Fully as much as my wages, I expect. Well, he can stand it. He's making plenty of money, anyhow."

It was in this way that he excused his thefts. Yet he felt that he would like to leave the restaurant and put himself in the way of making that fortune for which he yearned.

Though Grant was not out in the street to see where he went, there was another who quietly noticed his movements and followed his steps. This was John Vincent, the ex-detective. From the first he had suspected Benton and doubted Grant's guilt. He was a man skilled in physiognomy, and he had studied Benton's face and formed a pretty accurate estimation of his real character.

"If Benton hasn't robbed my friend Smithson's till, then I lose my guess," he said to himself.

He did not, however, say much of his suspicions to the keeper of the restaurant, who, he saw, was disposed to consider Grant the guilty party. He waited till he had some evidence to offer in confirmation of his theory.

When Benton entered the gambling house Vincent followed close behind him. Benton saw him, but did not know that he was a special friend of Mr. Smithson.

Vincent placed himself at a neighboring table in such a position that he could watch Benton. He saw him take out one of the bills which he had abstracted from the till, and stake it.

"What do you put down paper for?" asked a man beside him.

"Gold is better."

"Bills are just as good," said Benton.

"I will give you gold for bills," said Vincent. "I want to send some money to the East."

"All right, and thank you," said Benton. "Here are two fives."

"And here are two gold pieces," said Vincent.

There was a secret look of elation on his face as he received the bills, and furtively noticed a red cross on the back of each. They had been secretly marked by himself as a trap to catch the thief, whoever he might be.

"Now I have you, my man," he thought. "This is the evidence I have been looking for. It settles the question of Benton's guilt and Grant's innocence."

Vincent played two or three times for slight stakes, and rose from the table after a while neither a loser nor a winner.

He did not go immediately, but stayed, like many others, simply as a looker on.

"Won't you join us?" asked Benton.

"No; I must go away soon. I want to write a letter. I only dropped in for a few minutes."

Albert Benton played with unusual good fortune. He had been in the habit of bewailing his poor luck, but tonight the fates seemed to favor him. The little pile of gold before him gradually increased, until he had four hundred and seventy five dollars.

"Twenty five dollars more and then I will stop," he said. "Tomorrow I will give notice to Smithson and get ready to leave Sacramento."

But instead of winning the sum desired, he began to lose. He lost twenty five dollars, and in desperation he staked fifty. Should he win he would still have five hundred dollars, and then he would leave off. Upon that he was quite determined. But again he lost. He bit his lips, his face flushed, his hands trembled, and there was a gleam of excitement in his eye. He had no thought of leaving off now. It must be five hundred dollars or nothing!

There is no need to follow him through his mutations of luck. At the end of an hour he rose from the table without a dollar. He had enough, however, to buy a glass of whisky, which he gulped down, and then staggered out of the gambling house.

"I was so near, and yet I lost!" he said to himself bitterly. "Why didn't I keep the four hundred and seventy five dollars when I had it, and get the other from the restaurant? I have been a fool—a besotted fool!"

He pulled down his hat over his eyes and bent his steps homeward, where he tossed all night, unable to sleep.

But in the morning his courage returned.

"After all," he reflected, "I am only ten dollars worse off than when I entered the gambling house, and that was money I took from Smithson. I've had a pretty good lesson. The next time fortune

smiles upon me, I'll make sure of what I have won, and leave off in time."

Vincent went straight from the gambling house to the house of his friend Smithson. The latter came down stairs half dressed and let him in.

"What brought you here so late?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

"Because I have some news for you."

"What is it? Nothing bad, I hope."

"Oh, no; it is only that I have found the thief who has been robbing you."

"It is the boy, then, as I thought," said Smithson eagerly.

"No, it isn't the boy."

"Who, then?"

"Who else is there? It is Albert Benton.

"Are you sure of this?" asked Smithson, dumfounded.

"Yes; there is no doubt of it."

"Come in and tell me how you found out."

Vincent entered and sat down on a chair in the front room.

"I will tell you," he answered. "I took the liberty to go to your money drawer and mark four bills this afternoon. I marked them with a red cross on the right hand corner of the reverse side. Well, Benton took two of those bills with him this evening when he stopped work."

"How do you know?"

"I was near by when he left the restaurant. I followed him at a distance, and saw him enter Poole's gambling house."

"Well?"

"I entered too, and took my place at a neighboring table. He produced a five dollar bill, when some one suggested that gold was preferable. Upon that I offered to give him gold for bills. He produced two fives, and I gave him two gold pieces for them."

"Well?"

"Here they are."

The detective drew from his wallet two banknotes and showed Smithson the red cross on the reverse side of each.

(To be continued.)

THE PENROSE PLOT.

BY WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

CHAPTER XLI.

IN WHICH THE CURTAIN FALLS.

HARDLY had the words recorded at the close of the preceding chapter left the major's lips, than a head rose over the crest of the house and was followed by a sharp report and a red flash.

"I'm shot," cried Burns, and with a vain attempt to keep his balance, he slipped down over the shingles.

Three officers had already crawled out of the window, and as the wounded man came near they caught him tenderly and passed him through to their companions inside.

Major Penrose blazed away instantly, but too late. The assassin dodged out of sight.

A hundred throats were yelling hoarsely in the street below as the major advanced a few more steps up the roof. He hardly realized the extreme peril of the situation.

"The fiend shall not escape me," he muttered, and then he turned to the officers who were creeping behind him.

"Shoot at first sight," he whispered. "The assassin can never be taken alive."

Bang! A red flash blazed on the crest of the roof, and the weapon, shot from the major's hand, went spinning into the street far below.

"This is the last act," said a voice, hoarse with passion, and looking up, Major Penrose saw Eugene Maillard standing on the very pinnacle of the roof, not three yards distant.

"This is the last act," he repeated. "We will go off the stage together, major. But you will go first."

He turned the muzzle of his revolver into the major's very eyes. His finger was on the trigger, but with fiendish hatred he hesitated to end his victim's torture.

He had forgotten the presence of the officers below him—perhaps he did not know they were there—and as he toyed with the trigger of his revolver two shots rang out from the lower slope of the roof, and, with a shrill cry, Eugene Maillard dropped forward, rolling past the very feet of his intended victim, past the officers who held the smoking weapons in their hands, and then plunged over the edge of the roof

into the street below. His fall was drowned in the cries of the people.

* * *

¶ "This is the last act," Eugene Maillard had said, and he spoke the truth.

When dawn struggled through the chill November mists that wrapped the city in a shroud, his bruised and lifeless body was borne through the streets on a stretcher. All that day the city was in a ferment of excitement, and crowds clustered about the modest brick house at No. 1622 Cumberland Street, and surrounded the city hospital where the wounded chief of police had been taken.

Major Penrose and party went directly back to Lewisberry, and before nightfall the quiet country village wore an aspect that vividly reminded the middle aged citizens of "war times."

It is only proper that the curtain should fall with the death of the chief villain, and yet, as an audience can claim the right to bring their favorite actors out for a final bow before the lights are extinguished, the reader is surely entitled to the same privilege.

Squire Penrose recovered, and great was his amazement to learn the strange events that had taken place at the farmhouse during his sickness.

It is needless to say that Horace Penrose proved to be a model son. He and Dick will be worthy inheritors of the squire's possessions, and the good old man—who looks to be safe for twenty years yet himself—has no fears for the future.

Chief Burns pulled through after a hard fight for life, and all who had taken part in the Cumberland Street affair were amply rewarded.

It was the major's intention to deliver Ford over to justice, but that erratic individual escaped from the farmhouse one night while convalescent, and all attempts to recapture him proved fruitless. He is probably safe in England by this time, and it is to be hoped his future life will be free from crime.

Dock Dawson's reward came in the shape of a permanent position on the farm. He receives a good salary, and is a trusted member of the household. There is no cause to fear that he will ever betray the confidence placed in him.

Dr. Galen will always be the nearest and dearest friend of the family. He is more popular than ever he was, not only in Lewisberry but throughout the neighboring country for miles, and his practice has assumed such overwhelming proportions that he finds it absolutely impossible to treat half of his patients.

Pompey and Betsy seem to have taken a new lease on life since the return of Major Penrose, and from all indications they will administer the affairs of the household for many years to come.

It is a gratification to be able to state that Frank Barret is still employed in the banking house of Medcroft & Holmes. His friends know nothing of the black page in his life.

His reinstatement was largely due to the influence of Major Penrose, though Mr. Medcroft was not averse to giving the lad a new trial. This confidence has not been misplaced, for Frank is now as steady and industrious as he once was wild and dissipated. He has learned a lesson that will stick to him through the future temptations of life.

Dr. Clinch was dealt with in a very summary manner. The New York authorities were informed of his complicity in the celebrated Bannister case, and he was promptly arrested. Dawson was the principal witness, and through his testimony the doctor was convicted and sent to Sing Sing for a term of years.

The asylum at Rockport on the Hudson was thoroughly ventilated by the newspapers. Most of the inmates, however, were genuinely insane, and among these was Dick's friend, Major Andre.

But three unfortunates were found who plainly had no business in such a place, and the exposure of the guilty parties who had put them there was a nine days' wonder.

The Antiquarian Club continues to flourish. The boys made several attempts to force their way into the cavern at Rich Hill. They had to abandon the plan, however, for the whole well had caved in and tons of earth and stone hid the entrance to the underground chamber where Dick, Nellie, Dock Dawson and John Manners so nearly lost their lives.

Miss Nellie Maynard, by the way, is just as pretty and charming as ever. She and Dick remain the best of friends, and though Dick is now away at college, they keep up the acquaintance just the same, as Mr. Jefferson, the postmaster, could no doubt testify if he chose.

Time alone can tell what results may develop from Miss Nellie's connection with the great PENROSE PLOT.

THE END.