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WHOLE NO. 438.

BRAD MATTOON; OR, LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.*

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

CHAPTER VII.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.



WHILE Brad's suspicions had been somewhat aroused by the curious sounds from the pantry, he was by no means prepared for the scene disclosed to view through the chink beneath the partially raised window. One glance convinced him of the seriousness of the situation.

Two masked men stood in the center

of the pantry, one of them holding a dark lantern, while the other was fastening the neck of a sack which rested on the floor. What the sack contained, Brad, of course, did not know, though it was not difficult to guess, for the doors of the safe, set in the opposite wall, which held the silver-ware, had been forced open, and the shelves were empty.

Brad had but a moment to think, for the men were working quickly. He had never in all his adventurous life known a moment of absolute fear, and in the present case, when the first shock of surprise had passed away, no thought of the personal risk he incurred entered his mind. In the few seconds he stood there motionless his only idea was of devising some effectual means of frustrating the plans of the burglars, who were now hastily preparing to make away with their booty.

In those few seconds it suddenly flashed upon Brad that he had the day before placed in Perry Landon's locker a 22 caliber revolver which had always accompanied him on his travels, and which he had concluded to lock up securely when he learned that the rules of the academy forbade the use of firearms. He shared this locker with Landon, and had a duplicate key in his pocket.

He slipped quickly and noiselessly across the room, cautiously opened the locker and groped about for his weapon.

Just as his fingers touched the smooth, polished handle of the revolver, he heard soft footsteps in the room. Instantly he straightened up and turned around, tightly clasping the weapon in his right hand. He was just in time, for the men, having secured their gains, had left the pantry by means of the narrow hall which led into the lavatory, and were evidently intending to make their exit through the door which Brad had unlocked, and which now stood slightly ajar. The hand of one of the men was already on the knob.

"Here drop that!" exclaimed Brad, cocking his revolver and leveling it at them. Immediately there was a quick exclamation of alarm—a crash as the lantern dropped to the floor—and then, before Brad had even time to fire, the men were outside in the passageway, and the door was slammed behind them.

Brad rushed forward, threw open the door, and set off in hot pursuit of the thieves down the passageway. For a few seconds he could hear the clatter of their footsteps on the board walk a short distance in front of him, and he was about to raise his revolver and fire into the darkness, when the sounds suddenly ceased.

Brad hurried forward a few steps, then stopped and listened attentively. Not a sound greeted his ear—nothing but a death-like silence as oppressive as the inky darkness that hung about him like a pall. Brad was sorely puzzled. Where a few seconds before the footsteps of the men had resounded through the covered passageway with startling distinctness, now not the faintest echo indicated their whereabouts. They had disappeared as suddenly as if they had sunk into the earth.

So dark was it that Brad could not see a single foot ahead, and he dared not advance for fear of hidden dangers. Then he remembered the lantern which one of the men had dropped upon the lavatory floor; so, determined upon piercing the strange mystery, he made his way back for the light. The lantern lay upon the floor, still lit, although the slide had been closed. Opening this, Brad held it before him, and advanced once more along the passageway, swinging the beam of light to and fro across his path. For a number of steps the lantern disclosed only the parallel boards of the flooring, but when he had reached a point about sixty feet from the lavatory door, the boards suddenly ceased, and the light shot forward through a large aperture deep into the ground.

Brad stopped in amazement. There was no mistaking it. Four or five boards had been removed from the walk, disclosing a large hole in the earth, the depth and nature of which he was at first unable to discern. Kneeling down

*Begun in No. 436 of THE ARGOSY.

close to the brink, he threw the rays of light into the hole, and then discovered that the cavity must once have been a cesspool. At one side he could see an aperture which was unmistakably the mouth of the sewer which emptied into the pool. The place had evidently been for a long time unused, for it was in bad repair, and half filled with the earth which had fallen in from the sides; and this, mixed with the water that filtered through, remained in a soft, muddy state. Upon the surface of this slime Brad readily discerned the figures of the two men, one of whom lay quiet, as if stunned, while the other was struggling to gain a footing on the uncertain bottom. The drop, being short of six feet, had been insufficient to injure the men, but the heavy sack, which they would not leave behind them, had fallen upon one of them, burying his head in the mud. Unsuspectingly they had run into a trap.

But the trap was none too secure, for, while it might have been difficult for one person to get out of the hole, it was quite possible for two to assist each other in such a manner as to make their escape.

Brad, not daring to leave his prisoners, set down his lantern and began firing his revolver off as a signal of alarm to arouse the household. At the first shot the man who had been struggling to escape, recognizing the hopelessness of his position, ceased his vain efforts and sat doggedly awaiting results.

Brad emptied three chambers of his revolver, and then paused to note the effect. In a few minutes he heard footsteps, and presently he saw Samuel, who slept in the rear of the house, standing in the doorway of the lavatory, scantily clothed in his boots, coat and nightdress, wild eyed, disheveled, and shivering with cold and fright.

Brad could scarcely help laughing at the comical picture he presented.

"It's all right, Sam," he cried. "Go, call the folks from their berths, and don't lose a minute. I've caught a brace of pirates."

But the summons was unnecessary, for white robed and half dressed figures now came flocking down stairs and crowding into the narrow passageway. Prominent among them was Mr. Prentice, who hurried forward with a revolver in his hand, and seized Brad by the shoulder.

"Here, what's this?" he exclaimed,

Brad, who, from what he had seen and heard of Mr. Prentice, had taken him to be a rather tame and insignificant individual, was surprised at his coolness and decision of manner.

"It is all right, Mr. Prentice," he said. "I fired my revolver merely to give an alarm. I caught two thieves in the pantry, and drove them into this hole. There they are, fast enough," and Brad pointed into the cavity.

While Mr. Prentice was examining the situation, Brad felt another hand on his shoulder, and, turning around, found Dr. Hope facing him. A few words explained everything.

"Better send at once for the constable," said Mr. Prentice. "Here, Samuel, hurry on your clothes, saddle one of the horses, and ride into town for constable Armstrong and two assistants."

While Mr. Prentice was giving these directions, Dr. Hope was questioning Brad.

"But," he asked, at length, "who has removed these planks and the iron lid that covered this hole?"

There was no answer.

"It must have been done within a few hours," remarked Mr. Prentice, "for the board walk was as usual just after dinner."

There seemed to be no solution of this mystery.

"It's all for the best, though," said Brad; "for we've caught our thieves, and I've had a narrow escape. I was on my way down here when I heard them, so that if *they* hadn't tumbled into the hole, I would have."

Several of the boys shivered at the thought of a fall into that dismal spot on such a cold night, and expressions of congratulation at the lucky turn of affairs were forthcoming from all sides.

Meanwhile Mr. Prentice, assisted by Tom Sweeny, the stableman, and several of the boys, was dragging one of the men from the hole. As soon as this was accomplished, the fellow was securely fastened with a stout clothesline from the lavatory. Then the other man, who had only been slightly stunned by his fall, was treated similarly, after which their masks were slipped from their faces. Immediately a number of the boys started back with expressions of surprise.

"Why, one of them is Dick Barney!" exclaimed several together.

Barney had been for several years the gardener at the Hall.

"Dick, I am sorry for this," said Dr. Hope, looking at him sadly.

"Well, what was a feller to do?" growled Dick. "Old Ivers told me you was going to discharge me, so I made up my mind to take the things and skip."

"Mr. Ivers was mistaken, Dick," said Dr. Hope. "He urged me to discharge you only last Wednesday, but I told him I was determined to give you another trial."

Barney relapsed into sullen silence, and no amount of questioning could draw anything further from him.

The sack, which was also drawn up from the hole, was found to contain all the silverware, and would have constituted a valuable prize, had the burglars been successful.

Half an hour passed, and the excitement had somewhat subsided, when Samuel returned with the constable and assistants.

"I know that other fellow," he said, as he handcuffed the two. "He's a bad un, and we've been looking for him for some time."

The clock in the tower was on the stroke of twelve as the constable took his departure with his prisoners, and the chattering groups made their way to the various bedrooms. Tom Sweeny set about replacing the planks that had been taken from the board walk, while Mrs. Hollis and several of the servants lingered behind a few moments to lock up; then the lights were again extinguished, and the Hall resumed its customary quiet, though for hours sleep was impossible in the bedrooms, where the stirring events that had just transpired were discussed in excited whispers.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDERHAND WORK.

AS Brad was about to go up stairs with the others, he felt some one touch him lightly. It was Mr. Prentice.

"Come into the library, Mr. Mattoon," said he. "Dr. Hope wishes to speak to you."

"To be sure. I came near forgetting all about that," answered Brad, suddenly remembering his summons, which the episode in the lavatory had entirely driven from his mind.

He turned at once and followed Mr. Prentice into the library, where he found Dr. Hope standing by the hearth.

"Bradley," said Dr. Hope, as soon as the door was closed, "there is a mystery connected with this whole affair which I am at a loss to explain. Do you know nothing concerning the removal of those boards?"

Dr. Hope was looking at Brad very searchingly, but the latter returned the gaze with a frankness that disarmed all suspicion.

"No, sir; I know absolutely nothing," he answered.

"What were you doing in the lavatory and passageway at such an hour?" asked Dr. Hope.

Brad opened his eyes in surprise.

"Why, I came in answer to your orders, sir."

"My orders?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes, sir, your letter. The letter I found on my bureau this afternoon."

Dr. Hope looked puzzled. "There must be some mistake here," he said. "What letter do you mean?"

Brad drew from his pocket the note he had received, and handed it to Dr. Hope. The latter examined it carefully under the light of the lamp, while Brad stood silently watching him. An involuntary exclamation escaped Dr. Hope's lips as he read the lines, and his face grew darker.

"Bradley," he said gravely, when he had finished, "this is even more serious than I at first imagined. You have been deceived. *I did not write that note.*"

Brad started in amazement. "But," he exclaimed, "it is your handwriting, sir!"

"A clever imitation," answered Dr. Hope, shaking his head—"a very clever imitation—a downright forgery. Mr. Prentice, be kind enough to read this note and compare it with the specimen you already have."

"And—and do you mean that you never wrote me any note—that you gave me no directions to meet you at eleven o'clock?" asked Brad, unable to understand it all.

Dr. Hope shook his head.

"The note is not mine," he answered. "I was in New York today, which makes it seem genuine, but I returned on the 9:30 train; and as for the rest of it—I had no reason to ask you to my office. I have not been to the schoolhouse this evening."

Then, for the first time, the whole force of the situation began to dawn upon Brad. The mysterious removal of the planks—the curious summons to the schoolhouse at a late hour of the night, when the passageway would be dark and chances of assistance small—it all became only too clear now.

"Why, it was a diabolical plot on somebody's part to entice me down that passageway, so I should fall into that filthy hole," he burst out excitedly.

"You have ample cause to feel grateful for so lucky an escape," remarked Mr. Prentice. "You came very near being the victim of a mean, cowardly trick."

"But," continued Brad impressively, unable to rid himself of the horror of the thing, "I might have broken a leg, or

been frozen to death before I got any help. I don't mind practical jokes—I've played them myself often—but this is awful. It's little short of crime."

"It *is* crime," answered Dr. Hope, pressing his lips together firmly.

"And what I don't understand," added Brad, "is, why any one should want to play me such a horrible, underhand trick as that. I didn't think any one here was up to that



THERE WAS AN EXCLAMATION OF ALARM AND THE LANTERN FELL TO THE FLOOR.

kind of thing. What have I done to anybody to start him on a tack like that? I haven't any enemies—that is—at least—I mean—"

"Hush!" interrupted Dr. Hope, anticipating him. "Say no more. Suspect no one—at least, not at present."

Then taking up the note, Dr. Hope continued: "Bradley, I wish you to leave this letter with me. I am determined to sift this matter to the bottom, and I wish you to help me by saying nothing to anybody concerning it."

"But Perry Landon knows of the note—I showed it to him," answered Brad.

"Very well, I will speak to him about it," said Dr. Hope. "And be sure that you do not allude to the matter further at present. I have a particular reason for this silence."

"But, sir," continued Brad, "the doubt, the suspense. I don't know what to look for next."

"The doubt will not last long, I think," said the doctor firmly. "And I wish the matter to be conducted quietly. Bradley, this is not the first specimen of this sort of forgery that has come to my notice. Your guardian, Mr. Parker, received some time ago a forged letter pretending to be from me, and postponing the date of an important meeting

of the trustees, so that he was prevented from being present. One other case has occurred, so that this tonight makes the third. We have been unable to detect the perpetrator hitherto, but we shall not let this matter rest until the mystery has been solved. There are only a few here who knew of the existence of that old cesspool, and that fact may serve as a clue to begin with. But I must repeat my direction that you keep the affair perfectly quiet."

With that the interview closed, and Brad, leaving the library, went to his room. Perry Landon, tired of waiting for him, had fallen sound asleep, so Brad had nothing but his own thoughts for company as he retired. But these were active and turbulent enough to keep him wide awake for a long time after his head touched the pillow.

Again and again he went over in his mind the events of the whole evening, from the receipt of the note to the interview in Dr. Hope's library, striving to find a satisfactory explanation of the matter, but with no success.

"Well, well, this is a nice way to get an education," he muttered to himself. "I come here to settle down, and in the first four days I have more excitement than I've had in four months battering around in the Cinderella. But I can't say I like it. This fighting in the dark don't suit me. I'd almost rather walk the plank and have done with it than have to watch out all the time for underhand sneaks. And why anybody should want to serve me that trick I can't understand. I can't believe it. Those boards must have been moved for some other purpose—and yet, there was that forged letter—that knocks all doubt in the head. It must have been a plot. I've been here too short a time to make a bitter enemy of anybody. I know of only two who bear me any real grudge, and—well, I'll do as Dr. Hope said, and not suspect anybody. It leaves the whole thing in the dark for awhile, but I'll obey orders and see what comes of it. Meantime," he continued, as he rolled over and settled back into his customary easy-going philosophy, "I can pat myself on the back for a lucky dog. It isn't often a fellow walks blindly into a trap like that and comes out gloriously on the winning side, with a brace of thieves as trophies."

And with this comforting reflection he fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

IN more ways than one Brad's narrow escape was a cause of self congratulation. The sympathy and interest of the whole academy naturally centered in him for several days following, and he was lionized as only the hero of so exceptional an adventure could be. Again and again he was compelled to narrate his story, including the minutest details; and this he did with the greatest good humor, being careful, however, each time to observe Dr. Hope's injunction to suppress every allusion to the note he had received, and never hinting at the suspicions he entertained.

No better or more general introduction to the favor of the boys could have been desired, and Brad was pleased to find himself growing rapidly in the esteem and respect of his companions. Pluck, graced by modesty and good humor, will soon make a boy popular, and Brad needed but a few days to overcome the first unfavorable impression that his coming had produced. And as for that old corduroy suit which had so offended the aristocratic tastes of some of the upper four—why, bless me, after that Saturday night the boys wouldn't have had Brad wear anything else. It seemed now to give him a peculiar character of his own, and they liked both it and him.

This popularity was not without exception, however, for Brayton Arkell and Clarence Bliss seemed, if anything, to re-

sent the circumstances that had placed Brad upon terms of such good fellowship with his mates. Sidney Ivers was coldly indifferent, as he had been ever since his quarrel with Brad, while Arthur Paton adopted a tone of lofty approval that only amused Brad, knowing as he did how insincere it was. To these four Brad paid little heed, and the slight annoyance they occasionally caused him was more than balanced by the genuine triumph he felt he had won in securing the friendship of Eugene Clifford.

It was on Monday afternoon that Brayton Arkell, Clarence Bliss and Clifford were talking over the affair in the large recitation room, when Brayton said:

"Well, perhaps it was plucky of the fellow. I don't say it wasn't. Fellows of his kind have usually some brute courage, but I can't see why every one should try to make a hero of him. I suppose he is good enough in his way, and yet—"

"Oh, here, Brayton," interrupted Clifford with considerable heat; "I'm tired of hearing you and Clarence run down Mattoon. You have nothing against him, except that he doesn't seem to be quite your kind. Well, I think that's in his favor if you can't prove yourselves above sneaking around, talking behind his back. Now, I wasn't particularly taken with Mattoon when he first came here, although I couldn't help seeing that he was a fine fellow physically; but I have already begun to like him merely by watching the manly, generous way in which he has taken your treatment. He is a mighty plucky fellow, and you can't underestimate him, no matter what you say. If he is popular he deserves it, for there is plenty in him to admire. You may think him unworthy your acquaintance if you chose, but I am going to speak to him."

As Clifford belonged to a most enviable family, both for wealth and social distinction, his words had a keen edge, and both Bliss and Arkell were seriously taken aback as he walked away with an expression of unusual annoyance on his face. He made his way directly to Brad, who was at that moment sitting alone at his desk. Extending his hand cordially, Clifford said in his pleasantest tones:

"Don't think me rude, Mattoon, for not speaking to you before. I am rather slow at making acquaintances. I have been watching you ever since you came here, and I have made up my mind that you are just the kind of fellow I like to know. I hope to see a great deal of you."

"You are very kind," exclaimed Brad with genuine pleasure, warmly grasping the other's hand. "I have been watching you, too, and have wanted very much to meet you. I have been told that you are quite an athlete. I can speak of your skating myself. I was admiring your skill the other afternoon."

"Oh, yes," said Clifford, well pleased by the compliment, and seating himself beside Brad. "I was practicing. You see, the prize competition takes place very soon, and I am getting into shape."

"Tell me about this competition," said Brad, with interest.

"Well, it is the great affair of the winter. There is a regular skating club in the town, who have their headquarters and clubhouse at the lake. I am a member, as also several other fellows here. Every year a big skating contest takes place on the lake, to which every one is invited. A temporary grand stand is erected, and everything is very gay. The contest takes place in the afternoon, and a ball is given by the members of the club at the clubhouse in the evening, when the prizes are awarded."

"When does it come off?" asked Brad.

"We always wait for the cold snap that usually comes at

the end of January or the first of February. Of course the exact date depends on the weather."

"I hear you have won a lot of trophies."

"Well, I have been quite fortunate thus far," answered Clifford, "and I do not feel very uneasy this year, for I know the men who are going to enter, and have measured their abilities pretty accurately, I think."

Perry Landon came up at this moment, and the conversation changed to other topics.

Clifford's attentions gave Brad additional distinction with the other boys, for Eugene, although universally admired, was rather reserved in manner, and his friendship was earnestly sought after, sometimes without success.

To Arkell and Bliss, Clifford's action remained ever a puzzle.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Arkell several times. "What Eugene can see in that fellow to admire I can't understand. He will probably find he is mistaken in him very soon, for they are no fit companions," and Brayton smoothed down his trousers with scrupulous care.

Sidney Ivers, when he heard of the matter, simply sneered in a disagreeable manner and said nothing. Both Clarence Bliss and Arthur Paton, however, demurred. Neither of them having very much decision of character, they were in the habit of relying chiefly upon the judgment of Eugene Clifford for their rules of conduct; so that, although they were greatly surprised at Eugene's behavior, they found themselves unable to resist the influence of his example, and, after some hesitation, they ended by recognizing Brad and treating him quite civilly.

Now that Brad's path had become smoothed for him, he found the process of getting into academic harness much easier than he had anticipated. The introduction to his various studies created a number of surprises, both to himself and his companions. In some subjects he was found painfully lacking, while on others he was unusually well informed. This was most strikingly exemplified in the first French recitation. Brad stumbled along clumsily over the rules of grammatical construction, but when given a French reader, he amazed Mr. Prentice and the class by translating with the utmost fluency.

"Do you already understand French?" asked Mr. Prentice.

"Well," answered Brad modestly, "I don't know anything about these rules, but I've spoken French off and on for several years. You see, it's just the same as my German, Italian, and one or two other languages. I couldn't help picking them up, and yet I never used them except when I was traveling in Germany or Italy, and then I never bothered about grammars. All I wanted to do was to talk and understand."

A few surprises of this kind convinced Dr. Hope that Brad needed very special courses of study; so, after a little experimenting, he was settled in classes where it would be unnecessary for him to relearn anything, and where he could make rapid advances in branches in which he was unimpaired.

Brad carefully guarded his tongue concerning the suspicions that would at times return to haunt him and render him uneasy. He could not but feel more keenly, the more he thought of it, how dastardly a trick had been attempted upon him; and as the days went by without any further revelations, he could not avoid chafing slightly with impatience at the delay, but he suppressed this as best he could, for he felt sure that Dr. Hope was doing all in his power to bring matters to a crisis. In this way a week slipped by. It was upon a Friday afternoon that Dick Barney and his accomplices were tried. Dr. Hope, accompanied by Brad, was in

attendance. Brad's testimony was the first received, and when he had finished he returned to the academy to finish his afternoon's work, leaving Dr. Hope in the courtroom. The doctor did not return until after dinner at night, and was not seen by the boys that evening. On the following morning he did not appear in the main recitation room, as was his custom; but about ten o'clock Samuel entered the school building with a summons for Sidney Ivers, who immediately left the room and went up to the Hall.

Dr. Hope's non-appearance was unusual, and convinced the boys that something out of the ordinary was forthcoming. The hour for closing on Saturday being twelve, the last exercises of the week were taking place before any news arrived from the Hall. It was quarter before twelve when Dr. Hope, alone, and with a sad, tired expression of face, entered the main room, and ascended the platform beside Mr. Prentice.

"I have a brief announcement to make, young gentlemen, before dismissing you," he began.

Every boy leaned forward expectantly, while Dr. Hope paused for a few seconds.

"We regret to say that it has been found necessary, for reasons best known to ourselves, to expel Mr. Sidney Ivers permanently from the academy. If there are any of his personal effects about the room, please to place them in Samuel's charge, that he may deliver them, for Mr. Ivers will not return to the school building."

The boys had expected something unusual, but they were not prepared for such a startling announcement as this. They could not have been more astonished if a bombshell had burst at their feet. They gazed at each other with wide open eyes, as the probable effects of this action of Dr. Hope's dawned upon each in turn.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Perry Landon in a whisper to Brad, who sat next to him. "There is trouble ahead for the academy now; that is certain."

(To be continued.)

STUDENTS IN NEW BUSINESS.

MANY methods have been employed by students to earn money while going through college. Waiting in restaurants and other occupations have been followed, but a new one is now supplied, according to the following Boston account in the New York *Tribune*:

The Boston Gas Light Company has adopted a new plan for taking the meters and for making out the bills. Last October the company began employing students to go around and take the statements of the meters at the close of each month and to deliver the bills the following week. It was a new move in Boston, though the experiment had been tried in Chicago a year or two ago, and has been working successfully ever since. The idea originated with the company, and not with the students, because when men were hired they had to be taken into regular employment. Since it takes only about five days to take the meters and two to deliver the bills, the idea was to get persons who could work for that period for ordinary day's wages (\$2), and whom it would not be necessary to employ after that special work was done.

The only persons that seemed available were college and high school students. Accordingly the advertisement was published, and applications came in fast, so that there has already for some time been a considerable waiting list.

The young men are from various institutions—the English High School, Somerville High School, the commercial schools, Boston University and Harvard. The students at the Institute of Technology cannot come in for their share of the employment since they cannot miss lectures, and during the monthly period for reading the meters the employees must work all day, just as wage earners.

About twenty five are employed in going the rounds, and although the pay is neither high nor constant, it is regular and certain and helps to eke out a poor student's means when he is trying to earn an education for himself. Some fears were felt at first that students would not be fitted for such employment, since they have all kinds of places to go into, and if ruffled by snubs and disagreeable treatment they might reply impertinently. It is true that complaints have reached the gas office from consumers, but, according to the gentleman who has charge of that department, the work is being more and more satisfactorily done, and the experiment is regarded by him as a success.

DIGGING FOR GOLD. A STORY OF CALIFORNIA.*

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PAUL CRAMBO.



ULL of hope, Grant and Tom arrived at the cabin of the old man who had promised them his claim.

"How are you feeling this morning?" inquired Grant, when they were admitted.

"Rather stiff, but better than yesterday. Is this your friend?"

"Yes. His name is Tom Cooper."

The old man scrutinized him closely.

"It's a good face," he said. "You can trust him."

"I do."

Tom looked well pleased.

"You have come to ask me to keep my promise."

"Yes. Your offer was a very kind one. On the strength of it we have given our claims at Howe's Gulch to a stranger, who came to our cabin last night penniless."

"Then I shall be helping him, too. Are you ready to go to work at once?"

"Yes; that's our hope."

"The place where I made my pile is fifteen miles away. Are you good for a long walk?"

"I am," answered Grant.

"I will try to keep up with you," said Tom Cooper, smiling.

"My claim was on a creek at the base of a hill, about a mile from a village called Eldora. In the pocket of yonder coat I have drawn roughly a plan of the place, which will be a sufficient guide."

"May I keep the paper?" asked Grant.

"Certainly."

"If we start now, Grant, we can get there before night."

"Go, then, and may success attend you?"

"Can't we do anything for you before we go, sir?"

"No, thank you. One thing, however, I will ask. In a month let me know how you are getting along. I look upon you as my successors. I hope you may be as fortunate as I was."

The two friends set out with stout hearts, in excellent spirits. The walk was long and fatiguing, but there is nothing like hope to sweeten toil. About midway they sat down under a tree and ate with hearty appetites the lunch they had taken the precaution to carry with them.

"I wish there was more," said Grant wistfully.

"Your appetite seems improving."

"There's nothing like a good walk to make a fellow feel hungry. I wonder how Stockton is getting along."

"He will make something, at any rate. I pity Silverthorn if ever our long legged friend gets hold of him."

After an hour they resumed their walk, and about four o'clock they reached their destination. They visited the location of the claim, and surveyed it with a guarded manner, not wishing to draw attention to it.

They fell in with a thin man of medium stature, who talked in a drawing tone. He seemed to have a considerable share of curiosity.

"Where might you be from, strangers?" he inquired.

"We might be from China, but we ain't," said Tom.

"Is that a joke?" asked their new acquaintance, puzzled.

"Yes; it's an attempt at a joke."

"I reckon you don't want to tell."

"Oh, yes; we're entirely willing. We came from Howe's Gulch."

"So? Did you strike it rich there?"

"No; we struck it poor," said Grant with a smile. "We found ourselves headed for the poorhouse, so we switched off."

"I was at Howe's Gulch myself a year ago."

"Did you have luck?"

"Not much. I paid expenses."

"Are you mining now?"

"No; I'm farming. I live just out of the village—me and Mrs. Crambo, and a boy that's working for us."

"How far from here?"

"About a mile."

"How would you like a couple of boarders?"

"Are you going to stay 'round here?"

"We may—for a while."

"Come to the house, then, and speak to Mrs. Crambo. If she's agreeable I am."

They accompanied their new friend to a plain, but comfortable house, looking not unlike a New England farmhouse. Mrs. Crambo was a pleasant looking woman, weighing at least fifty pounds more than her lord and master. She was evidently the "better man of the two," being active and energetic, while he was slow and seemed to find exertion difficult.

"If you are willing to set up a hotel, Mrs. Crambo," said her husband, "I bring you two boarders for a starter."

"I shouldn't mind a little company," she said pleasantly. "How long have you been out here?"

"Not long enough to make our fortunes," answered Tom.

"Do you expect to make them out here?" she asked shrewdly.

"We would like to. Perhaps Mr. Crambo will put us in the way of doing it."

"Do you hear that, Paul?" she said laughing.

Mr. Crambo scratched his head.

"I haven't made my own yet," he answered slowly.

"If it rained gold pieces, you wouldn't pick up enough to keep you going for three months. You know you are shiftless, Paul."

"Well, perhaps I am, Martha. I can't get up and hustle like you."

"No; you're not one of the hustling kind. Well, gentlemen, if you want to stay with us awhile, and don't object to seven dollars a week each, we'll try to accommodate you. When do you want to begin?"

"Right off," answered Tom, upon whose olfactory the savory smell of dinner, cooking in the next room, made an agreeable impression. "The terms are satisfactory."

So it happened that Tom and Grant became inmates of the Crambo household. The first meal satisfied them that their hostess was a most accomplished cook, and the supper seemed to them delicious.

"Have you had any gold digging near here?" asked Tom.

"Not much. There was an old man who had a claim somewhere near where I met you, but I don't think he made much. Finally he got discouraged and went away. That's a good while since."

"Evidently he doesn't suspect anything," thought Grant. "All the better. We shan't have any competitors."

"Then you don't think he took much gold away with him?" he said aloud.

"No. I guess he wasn't calculated for a gold miner."

"He might have taken a lesson of you, Paul," suggested Mrs. Crambo.

"I never had a good claim," answered the master of the house. "If I had I'd have done as well as the next man."

"It depends on who the next man was," said his wife.

"There ain't any more money in mining," said Crambo dogmatically. "All the claims are petering out."

"I guess you are the one that's petered out."

"Perhaps you'd like to go into the business yourself, Mrs. C."

"No, thank you. I've all I can do to take care of you and the farm. Help yourself to the doughnuts, Mr. Cooper."

"Thank you," said Tom. "I haven't eaten a doughnut before, since I left home. Your doughnuts can't be beat."

Mrs. Crambo was pleased with this tribute to her cooking, and was very gracious to her new boarders. After supper she showed them to a chamber on the second floor, well and comfortably furnished.

"You two gentlemen will have to room together," she said. "This is the only room I have to spare."

"We shan't object," said Tom. "Grant and I are friends and partners, and are not likely to quarrel."

"Crambo and I never quarrel," she said with a significant laugh. "He knows better."

"Yes, my dear," said Paul meekly.

"We're in luck, Grant," said Tom. "For the first time in months we shall live like Christians."

"I hope you won't be offended, Tom, but I like Mrs. Crambo's cooking better than yours."

"That's where you show your good taste. I wasn't intended by nature for a cook, and I can say the same for you."

The next morning the two friends set out after breakfast for the deserted claim. They opened it up, and soon found traces of past workings.

They had been there for about a couple of hours when Paul Crambo came along.

"What's up?" he asked in surprise.

"We've gone to work," answered Tom.

"That must be the claim the old man used to run."

"Very likely. I thought some one must have been at work here before."

"Likely you'll get discouraged and go off, as he did."

"We'll try to make enough to pay our board. That'll keep us here, even if we don't succeed very well."

"I never liked digging for gold," said Crambo. "It made my back ache."

"Grant and I will try it awhile."

Mr. Crambo looked on awhile and then sauntered away. It made him uncomfortable to see others work hard. He became fatigued himself out of sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF SUCCESS.

TOM and Grant met with little success during the first two days, and were correspondingly disappointed. After all the high hopes with which they had entered upon this new enterprise it was certainly discouraging to realize scarcely more than at Howe's Gulch. But on the third day they struck a "pocket," and in the next two days took out five hundred dollars.

"That's the way to do it, Grant," said Tom, his face fairly radiant.

"It pays to dig for gold at this rate."

"So it does, Tom. I felt sure the old gentleman wouldn't deceive us."

"If it will only last, we shall make our fortunes."

"This pocket won't last, of course, but we may strike another. You know Mr. Gibbon told us he took out ten thousand dollars in six months."

"That is true, so we may hope for a good streak of luck."

"There is one thing I have been thinking of, Tom. Where shall we keep our gold dust?"

Tom looked doubtful.

"If we could send it away," he said, "it would be better. Of course, if we keep it under our own charge we may be robbed."

"To begin with, we must not let any one know how well we are doing."

"That is important. The news would attract adventurers and thieves."

Finally it was decided to keep the dust for the present in a box at their boarding place. In the room the two partners found a sailor's chest which had been left by a former boarder, who had left the house in arrears. Grant bought it of Mr. Crambo for a couple of dollars, and Paul seemed glad to get rid of it at that price. There was a good lock upon it, and into this chest their daily findings were put, till at the end of a fortnight, they had, according to Tom Cooper's estimate, about one thousand dollars.

Of their good luck neither Mr. nor Mrs. Crambo had the slightest idea.

"How are you making out at the mines, Mr. Cooper?" asked Mrs. Crambo one evening.

"So, so!" answered Tom indifferently.

"You'll never make your fortune at that there mine," said Paul.

"Oh, well, we are not ambitious," rejoined Grant. "If we make enough to pay our board and a little more, we shall not complain."

"I hope you'll do that," said Mrs. Crambo. "I have got used to having you here, and should be sorry to have you go. If you should find yourself short at any time, just put off paying your board. I am not afraid to trust you."

"You are very kind," said Tom warmly; "but we had a little money with us when we came, and we are doing enough to make it pretty certain that we can pay our board."

"You wouldn't if you didn't work harder than my husband."

"My dear," interposed Mr. Crambo, shrugging his shoulders, "I work as hard as I can. I wasn't made for hard work."

"I don't believe you were," said his wife. "You never have made a success yet."

"Except in marrying you," responded Paul.

Mrs. Crambo smiled.

"It may have been good luck for you," she replied, "but I am afraid that in becoming Mrs. Crambo I made a serious mistake."

"I suppose you regret not marrying Silverthorn," said Paul.

"Silverthorn!" exclaimed Grant and Tom Cooper in unison.

"Yes; his name was Dionysius Silverthorn, and he looked like a preacher. Do you know him?"

"We have met him."

"He taught a dancing school in Wisconsin—that's where my wife and I came from—and was rather sweet on her. I think she gave him some encouragement."

"You know I never did, Paul."

"I sometimes think you hanker after him yet, Rebecca."

"Well, between you and him I am not sure that there is much choice," retorted Mrs. Crambo.

"I can assure you there is," said Grant. "Silverthorn is the worst fraud I ever came across."

"I say the same," chimed in Tom.

"What do you know of him? My wife will be interested to hear," said Mr. Crambo.

Upon this the two partners gave an account of their personal experience with Silverthorn, and what they had learned of him through Nahum Stockton.

"Paul," said Mrs. Crambo, "that settles it. You needn't be jealous of Mr. Silverthorn. I wouldn't marry him if I were left a widow tomorrow. For the first time I begin to see that I might have done worse."

"By the way," resumed Mrs. Crambo, "I have had an application for board from another party."

"A gentleman?"

"Humph! I can't say as to that. It's a man at any rate."

"What did you say?" asked Tom, a little uneasy. The presence of another boarder would render the discovery of their secret more likely.

"I said I would take him for a few days on trial," answered Mrs. Crambo.

"Is he in any business?"

"He says he is prospecting."

"What is his name?"

"I can't remember. However, we shall soon know, for he is to come this evening."

In fact, just at this moment there was a knock at the door, and Mr. Crambo, answering it, ushered in a person familiar to Grant, at least.

"Albert Benton!" he exclaimed.

"What, Grant, you here?" exclaimed Benton in surprise.

"Why, are you gentlemen acquainted?" asked Mrs. Crambo.

"Yes," answered Grant briefly; "we knew each other in Sacramento."

Grant was by no means pleased to see his old associate in the restaurant.

"And what are you doing here, Grant?" asked Benton curiously.

"Mr. Cooper and I are working a claim," answered Grant unwillingly.

"Is it rich? Don't you want a partner?" inquired Benton briskly.

"No; we can do all the work that is required. But what are you doing?"

"Oh, I've been drifting around," said Benton evasively. "I was digging for gold a part of the time."

"Did you meet with any success?"

"Not much. I tell you, Grant, this mining business is played out. I don't know what I shall take up next. If I had capital, I would set up a restaurant of my own."

"You may be right about mining," said Grant. "We made very little at Howe's Gulch."

"I suppose you are doing better here?"

"We are not ready to retire yet."

"I am glad I happened to come here. It will be pleasant to be in the same house with an old friend."

Grant was truthful, and did not respond to the compliment.

About eight o'clock he and his partner went up to their chamber, where, as the nights were growing cool, they were accustomed to sit before a fire and chat of their prospects. Now their privacy seemed likely to be broken in upon, for Benton invited himself to go up with them.

"Come, now, this is what I call comfort," he said, and he leaned back in his chair and puffed at a cigar. "Reminds me of old times. I say, what a queer chap Crambo is!"

"He is rather peculiar, but a good natured, pleasant man."

"Oh, I don't say anything about that, but he's got a wife that is twice as smart as he is."

"Mrs. Crambo knows how to cook. That is what chiefly interests us."

Albert Benton had an inquiring mind, and was gifted with a large measure of curiosity. He looked about the room, and his glance fell on the chest.

"What do you keep in that?" he inquired.

"Clothing," answered Grant briefly.

"What made you get a chest? A trunk would do better."

"We found it here, and bought it of Mr. Crambo. As neither of us had a trunk, we find it convenient."

"When do you go to work?"

"We have breakfast at seven o'clock, and generally get to work about eight."

"What sent you here? This isn't a mining region."

"I suppose we drifted here, as you did."

"Well, we'll see what'll come out of it."

At ten o'clock Tom Cooper suggested to their guest, who showed no disposition to retire, that Grant and himself were in the habit of going to bed early, as their work during the day fatigued them.

"All right! I'll see you both tomorrow," returned Benton, as he bade them good night.

When he had left the room, Grant said: "I'm sorry to see Benton here. I am afraid he will give us trouble."

"In what way? By giving us too much of his company?"

"Partly that, but if he had any suspicion as to the contents of the chest he wouldn't rest till he had opened it."

"He wouldn't find it a very healthy proceeding," remarked Tom Cooper grimly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BENTON HAS A PLAN.

SOME days passed. The newcomer did not appear to find anything to do. He had sauntered out to the claim worked by Grant and Tom, and looked on, but had made no discoveries. He did not know whether to think they were prospering or not. He determined to obtain some information, if possible, from his landlord.

One morning, after the two friends had gone to work, he lingered at the table, asking for an extra cup of coffee as a pretext for remaining longer.

"Do you think my friend Grant and his chum are doing well?" he remarked carelessly.

"They can't be making much," answered Paul. "I think they are fools to waste their time here."

"They must be making something," said Mrs. Crambo. "They pay their board bills regular."

"Do they pay in gold dust?"

"No; in coin."

"Humph! what do they do with the gold dust they get from the mine?"

"I don't know. I never inquired."

This was meant as a hint that Benton was unnecessarily curious, but he never took such hints.

"Is there any place in the village where they can dispose of it?"

"No," answered Paul; "not that I know of. They would have to send by express to Sacramento or San Francisco."

"Where did you know Mr. Colburn?" asked Mrs. Crambo.

"We were employed together in Sacramento."

"He seems to be a fine boy—or young man, perhaps I ought to call him. So steady, so regular in his habits."

Benton shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, he's well enough," he answered, "but he's mighty close with his money."

"I approve of young men being economical," said Mrs. Crambo.

"But not tight. Why, I once asked Grant to lend me five dollars, and would you believe it, he wouldn't do it."

"Did he receive more pay than you?"

"I should say not. I received a good deal higher pay than he, as I ought to, being older and more experienced."

"Then," said Mrs. Crambo shrewdly, "I can't understand why you should need to borrow money from him."

"A man is sometimes hard up, no matter how large his income may be."

"It ought not to be so," said Mrs. Crambo dryly. "Our income isn't large, but I never ask any one to lend me money."

"Oh, well, I suppose you are a good manager."

"Yes, I flatter myself that I am a fair manager. I think it my duty to be."

"What a tiresome woman!" thought Benton. "I hate people who are always talking about duty."

This was not surprising, for Benton concerned himself very little about duty in his own case.

When he left the table, he said to himself, "It seems pretty certain that Grant and Cooper haven't parted with any of their gold dust. The question is, where do they keep it?"

That day Benton strayed into a restaurant and boarding house in the village, kept by a man named Hardy, and learned incidentally that he wanted to sell out.

"What do you want to sell out for?" asked Benton.

"I have got tired of the place. It is too quiet for me. I want to go to San Francisco. There's more life there, and more money can always be made in a city like that."

"How has the restaurant been paying?" questioned Benton.

"I can't complain of it. It has paid me about forty dollars a week, net, perhaps a little more."

"I have been in the restaurant business myself," continued Albert.

"Then you are just the right man to buy me out."

"Will you sell out for the money I have in my pocket?"

"How much have you?"

"I have fifteen dollars in my inside pocket," as the song has it."

Hardy shook his head.

"I want a thousand dollars for the place," he said.

"I will buy it, and pay you on installments," said Benton.

"Well, I might agree to that for half the purchase money. Pay me five hundred dollars down, and the rest you can pay at, say, twenty dollars a week. I am sure that is a liberal offer."

"I don't think so. Besides, I haven't got five hundred dollars."

"Can't you borrow it?"

"I don't know." And then it occurred to Benton that perhaps Tom Cooper and Grant might be induced to advance that sum of money.

"Well, perhaps so," he resumed, after a pause.

"Find out, and then come and talk to me."

"Won't four hundred dollars do?"

"No. I shall need to take five hundred dollars with me to San Francisco."

"Is this the best you can do?"

"Yes."

"I will think of it, and let you know."

Albert Benton walked thoughtfully out of the restaurant. He had tried gold digging, and didn't like it. His old business seemed to him more reliable, and this seemed a good opportunity to go back into it.

"Hardy hasn't much enterprise," he soliloquized. "If he can clear forty dollars a week, I shouldn't be surprised if I could carry it up to sixty. I have never had a chance to show what I could do, always having had some one over me. I should just like to try it once."

Benton waited till his two fellow boarders got home from their day's work, and then opened the subject.

"I can tell you of a good investment for your money, Grant," he said.

"How do you know I have any money to invest?"

"I suppose you have been making some, and you never spend any."

"I never spend any foolishly, if that is what you mean."

"You don't seem to have much idea of enjoying life."

"Not in your sense. I enjoy life in my own way."

"I am glad you do, because you must have some money to lend me."

"To lend you?"

"Yes; I have a chance to buy out a fine restaurant in the village, but must pay five hundred dollars down. I am almost sure I can clear

sixty dollars a week, net profit, from it. You know yourself that understand the business."

"Yes, you ought to understand it."

"I understand it better than digging for gold. I soon tired of that."

"It is tiresome work," admitted Grant.

"And doesn't pay much."

"It used to pay better—in the early days, I should think."

"Well, Grant, what do you say? I can give you the restaurant as security, and pay you back at the rate of twenty dollars a week. I'll pay you one per cent a month interest."

"How much of the sum are you going to furnish yourself?"

"Why," said Benton, embarrassed, "I am not so fixed that I can pay anything at present. I've got an old uncle, over seventy years old, who is sure to leave me five thousand dollars, so that is additional security."

"I haven't five hundred dollars to lend."

"I didn't suppose you had, but your friend Cooper could chip in with you on the loan, and just draw his one per cent a month regular. If that isn't enough, I would pay fifteen per cent. It would pay me, for it would put me into a good business."

"I don't know how Cooper will feel about it, Mr. Benton, but I prefer to keep what little money I have in my own hands."

"I think you might oblige a friend," said Benton crossly.

"There's a limit to friendship. I shall need my money for my own use."

Cooper said the same, and Benton saw that he must get the money in some other way. He dropped the subject, in order to avert suspicion, and began to consider the scheme which all the time he had in view to fall back upon.

The next day, when the coast was clear, he went up stairs, and entered Grant's room. There was no lock on the door, for in California people were not suspicious.

"Now I wonder where they keep their gold dust?" Benton asked himself. "It must be somewhere in this room, for they have no other place."

He looked about him. The room was very simply furnished. There was a bureau, with three drawers, which Benton was able to unlock, for he had a key that would fit it. There were only articles of underclothing inside, as indeed Benton anticipated.

"I think it must be in the chest," he decided, as he fixed his glance upon it. "Let me lift it."

He raised it, and found that it was quite heavy.

"That's the weight of the gold dust," he reflected. "If I could only open it."

He tried the different keys he had in his pocket, but none of them would answer."

"I must hunt up some more keys," he said to himself. "It will pay."

CHAPTER XXX.

BENTON LAYS HIS PLANS.

AS BENTON left the room, Paul Crambo, who was just coming up stairs, caught sight of him. Observing his landlord's surprised look, Benton, who was not easily disconcerted, said, "I was looking for a clothes brush. I thought Grant might have one in his room."

"Did you find one?" asked Crambo.

"No."

"I thought he had one."

Paul Crambo entered the chamber, and pointed out a whisk broom lying on the bureau.

"There is one," he said significantly.

"So there is!" said Benton, for once looking confused. "Where could my eyes have been?"

"It is strange you didn't see it. It was in plain sight."

"So it was. I am very absent minded."

Paul Crambo made no answer, but when he went down stairs he said to his wife, "I begin to mistrust that Benton."

"Why?"

Then Paul told what he had seen.

"You are right, Paul. He wasn't in there for any good purpose. I can't say I am very much surprised. I didn't take any fancy to him."

"Nor I. I wouldn't like to have him rob our two friends. They are fine fellows."

"We had better tell them tonight."

"I'll do it before that. I'll go out to their claims at once. The sooner they know it the better."

"Do so."

Paul Crambo didn't often call on the two miners, and they were a little surprised to see him approaching the claim.

"How are you, Mr. Crambo? Are you out for a walk?" asked Grant.

"Partly; but I came partly on business."

"Do you want to buy us out?"

"Well, not at present. I ain't in love with gold digging. Is that Benton a friend of yours, Mr. Colburn?"

"He isn't a friend. He is an acquaintance."

"Do you like him?"

"Not over much."

"You had better look out for him."

"What do you mean?" asked Grant quickly.

"I don't think he's honest."

"You have some reason for saying that, Mr. Crambo," said Tom Cooper.

"Just before I left the house I saw him coming out of your room."

"Did he see you?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He made a blind excuse; said he went in there for a clothes brush, but couldn't find one."

"Why, there was one on the bureau."

"So I found out when I went into the room. I called his attention to it, and asked how it happened that he didn't see it."

"Well?"

"He said he was very absent minded. I think he didn't visit the room for any good purpose."

"I am sure of it," said Grant, and then he told of Benton's experience in Sacramento.

"If you have anything of value in your chamber," continued Paul, "I think you had better remove it, or make sure that it can't be taken away by your old friend."

"The fact is, Mr. Crambo," said Tom Cooper, "we have considerable dust in the chest which we bought of you. We have kept it secret hitherto, but I know I can rely upon you, and I want your advice as to what to do. You don't think Benton opened the chest?"

"No; he didn't have time. Besides, he had nothing with him."

"It won't be safe to keep it there any longer; but the problem is, what shall we do with it? We can't find a hiding place for it here."

"If you will see Mrs. Crambo about it, I think that she has a trunk that you can use for the purpose."

"But wouldn't that be just as risky?"

"Not if the trunk is kept in our chamber. Of course that depends on whether you have any confidence in us."

"The strongest, Mr. Crambo," said Tom cordially. "The plan seems a good one. But the transfer must be made when Benton is out of the way."

"We must pick out the right time. Tonight you can consult with Mrs. C. Then if Mr. Benton carries out his plan and opens the chest, no harm will be done."

"I hope he will," said Tom. "I should like to watch the fellow's face and see how disappointed he will look."

When Tom and Grant met Benton in the evening it was difficult for them to treat him as usual. Tom had a strong desire, as he afterward told Grant, to seize Benton and shake the life out of him.

"Did you have a good day, gentlemen?" asked Benton nonchalantly.

"Oh, so, so! We didn't come across a bonanza."

"I have, but I can't avail myself of it."

"You refer to the restaurant?"

"Yes; I am afraid it will slip out of my hands if I don't raise five hundred dollars within a week."

"Have you any scheme for raising it?" asked Tom Cooper.

"Well, no, not exactly. I hope to find some one who will lend me the money. If you and Grant now—"

"We need the little money we have for other purposes," interrupted Cooper.

"Oh, that's all right! I guess I'll raise it somewhere."

"I suppose he means in our chest," thought Grant.

(To be continued.)



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A NEW SERIAL.

In our next number we shall publish the opening installment of

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.

BY W. BERT FOSTER,

Author of "The Treasure of Southlake Farm," "Down the Mountain," etc.

There are two Blaisdell boys, very different in temperament, and the story is a narrative of their experiences during a trying period of their lives. There are many other characters in the tale, some of them charming people, others quite the reverse, while in the case of one or two the reader will find that he must revise first impressions. Newspaper reporting plays a prominent part in the development of the plot, and among the incidents are some very exciting ones. Taken altogether, "Arthur Blaisdell's Choice" will be found to be one of the strongest serials THE ARGOSY has ever printed.

FOR some time past there has been a noticeable falling off in the number of boys who run away to sea. A "life on the ocean wave" appears to have lost the fascination it once exerted over the juvenile mind, and ships can no longer depend on having their crews recruited by enthusiastic urchins with a roll in their gait and sea lingo at their tongues' end.

Can it be that captains are anxious to make a bid for a further supply of seamen of this description? The daily papers recently gave notice of the arrival at Philadelphia of a vessel from the West Indies, carrying 500,000 gallons of molasses in bulk. Fancy it, sweet toothed youngsters! A whole shipload of sorghum, not tucked away out of reach in barrels, but floating about in great tanks in the hold! Isn't this a magnet to draw the boys? Now look out for items with headlines something like this: "Ran Away to Sea! Tom Pippin Becomes a Sailor and Meets a Sticky Grave by Falling into the Molasses Tank."

MAJOR WILLIAM MCKINLEY, JR.

SOLDIER AND STATESMAN.

VISITORS to the House of Representatives in the capitol at Washington invariably ask to see the desk of a former Congressman from Ohio. When the guides during the last session pointed out an aisle seat, located in about the center of the chamber, and differing only from the scores of others around it in the high backed chair, the sightseers read on a little card attached to the desk the name of the man whose reputation has spread throughout the civilized world—William McKinley, Jr.

All remember the great stir created by the document known as the

"McKinley bill." The excitement in trade circles that swept through this country and over Europe when the bill became a law is still fresh in the minds of everybody. The life story of the author of this celebrated measure is full of interest. Within a few years he has leaped to the front rank of leading American statesmen.

In the little country town of Niles, Ohio, Hon. William McKinley was born on February 26, 1844. During his childhood the nation was wrapped in an atmosphere of war. The United States soldiers, led by



MAJOR WILLIAM MCKINLEY, JR.

From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

Generals Taylor, Kearny and Scott, were battling fiercely with Santa Anna and his Mexican troops, to settle the question of the ownership of Texas. So it is not strange that, living through these stirring times in American history, the Ohio boy should be fired with military ambition. When, in 1861, the heart of the nation was torn with civil strife, he enlisted as a private in the Twenty Third Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He was mustered out as captain of the same regiment and brevet major in 1865.

From the battlefield the major sought laurels in the legal profession. Beginning, as so many other noted statesmen have done, as a village lawyer, he advanced quickly to the head of his profession through hard study and close application to business. When he hung out his "shingle" in Canton, Ohio, it was with the determination to succeed. Backing this firm resolution was a native "grit" that knew no such word as fail. Soon all the surrounding districts were familiar with the name of McKinley. For two years the rising young lawyer served as prosecuting attorney of Stark County. At this stage he began his famous career in the field of politics.

Taking the stump as a Republican, Mr. McKinley was elected to the Forty Fifth Congress. When his term expired, he was again called upon to represent the Eighteenth Ohio District. In the succeeding years he was returned to his seat regularly at every election, except to the Forty Eighth Congress. At the last election in his district, in the fall of 1890, he was defeated by a small majority.

Major McKinley's personal bearing is both dignified and cordial. Though averse to talking about himself, it is known that he is of Scotch-Irish stock that settled in Northwestern Pennsylvania, where his great grandfather made charcoal iron in a little furnace to meet the needs of pioneer times. While Mr. McKinley is an earnest advocate of a protective tariff, he is no traducer of his opponents in argument.

WILLIAM J. BAHMER.

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO FORTUNATE MEETINGS.

"YE murtherin' spalpeen," cried a harsh voice, with an unmistakable brogue, "I was a watchin' of yez, an' I see yez take the goold chain from the felly there. Ye'll hang for this job, or me name ain't Dinny Googan."

"What do you mean?" gasped Dash in amazement, and considerably shaken up. "I found this fellow here dead drunk, and moved him further from the track out of danger."

"Thin yez a maner baste then I tot ye wuz—to rob a felly when he can't help hisself at all," interrupted the man, as he gave Dash's collar an extra twist.

"I never robbed him—the chain is mine," protested Dash, with some agitation.

"That is aisy for yez to soy, but yez'll prove it befoore th' joodge afore yez git away from Dinny Googan."

"I can prove it to you, if you will listen to me a moment," said Dash earnestly, for he had no desire to be carried off to a county jail somewhere.

"Go ahead wid yez palaver," returned his captor, who seemed impressed by his tones, but keeping a firm hold of his collar.

Dash briefly narrated all the incidents of the night, and by the gradual relaxing of the grasp that held him, he knew he was making a favorable impression upon his captor.

"Yez has had a tough toime of it sure," was the latter's comment, as Dash finished, "an' now let's have a squint at the rascal there."

Dash now noticed for the first time that the man had a lantern, alongside of which was a long iron wrench, which indicated he was a track walker.

Googan, as he had called himself, flashed the rays of his lamp on the recumbent tramp, and then knelt at his side.

"This is a bad fix fer yez, young felly," he remarked, looking up; "the poor divil is dead!"

"Dead!" repeated Dash, as he thought of the suspicious circumstances under which he had been discovered, and he feared he was in a disagreeable, if not a serious predicament.

"You don't think I had anything to do with this man's death, do you?" he continued, turning to the track walker,

after it had been established beyond the shadow of a doubt that the tramp was beyond all help.

"No, my boy; I belave what yuz towld me, but yuz'll have to tell what yuz knows about the felly befoore the coort."

"Well, I'm willing to do that," declared Dash, now that he saw his detention was inevitable, though at the same time the prospect of being held in a country village a day, and possibly longer, for a coroner's jury to sit upon the body, was not pleasant; and the fact that the very fellow who had assisted in robbing him, was the cause of it, only made the duty still more disagreeable.

"But how are you going to move him?" he continued, determined to see the matter through.



DASH'S DEVICE TO FORCE A CONFESSION FROM THE TRAMP.

"We'll flag the nixt train, which should be coming along now, sure," replied Googan, as he drew a red flag from his pocket and wrapped it about his lamp.

"I have a red lamp here," suggested Dash, forgetting for a moment that the globe had been broken.

"Whisht! an' I have wan, too," laughed Googan, as he fastened the red bunting about the lantern. "It's an owld trick wid me, and is better'n carrying two lamps or globes wid me. Yuz see, it's made sooner'n yuz cud light yer glim."

*Begun in No. 434 of THE ARGOSY.

It certainly answered the purpose admirably, as the flag was thin and was fastened about the lamp in such a way that no folds overlapped. It gave forth a red glow equally as good as if it had had a colored globe.

"I see you are prepared for trouble," observed Dash, referring to the arrangement.

"Faith, an' we do have to be, for mony's a washout wez find whin the spring rains do be coming; and up in the mountains there be landslides, and what wil bad jints an' loose bolts, we do find plinty to kape us from gittin' rusty."

"I suppose so; but it must be very lonely to walk the track twelve or fifteen miles every night, and very disagreeable in bad weather."

"Yer right, me boy; but it do have to be done, an' only the best fellies are put to it," was the response, with a touch of pride in his tones.

Dash was much interested in the details of this other safeguard of the traveler, which is rarely thought of, though it is as important as the train dispatcher himself; and he told himself that if all of them took as much pride in their humble calling as Denny Googan seemed to, accidents would be rarer from breaks in roadbed or rail.

Googan set his lamp down in the center of the track to signal the expected train, and proceeded to fill a short, black pipe with tobacco chipped from an enormous plug. He had hardly got his pipe charged and fired, after many sounding puffs, such as only an Irishman knows how to give forth, when the train came in sight and whistled for a stop.

Googan swung the signal across the track several times, and soon the iron horse was panting with suppressed energy and at a full stop within a few feet of them. They were quickly approached by the engineer, conductor and brakeman, to learn the cause of the stoppage.

Dash and the track walker briefly made their reports, and the body of the tramp was lifted into the baggage car. Googan said he would complete his inspection and report at Deckerton in the morning in time to give his evidence at the inquest, while Dash was left in charge of the conductor.

Though the latter showed no inclination to get away, the conductor and one of his brakemen watched Dash as if he was already a convicted felon. In the absence of any uniform or cap, they were no doubt skeptical of that portion of his story about being on the Pacific Express and getting left.

This treatment, by those from whom he expected to receive ready credence and sympathy, hurt Dash's pride, and he maintained a dignified silence toward them. He was in the smoking car, and most of the men who were there were stretched about on the seats in different attitudes of repose, if not of rest. The air was close and redolent of stale tobacco smoke, and Dash wondered how the travelers could pretend to sleep in such an atmosphere.

One of them could not, at least. He was an elderly man, with a pleasant face, who was in the seat back of the new-comer.

"What place was that, young man?" he inquired of Dash, as the train again got under way.

"No place at all, sir. A man was found dead near the track, and they are taking him to the next station."

"Were you with him? Was he killed by the train?"

"No, sir; I found him, and don't know what caused his death, unless it was too much whisky," replied Dash, turning in his seat slightly to inspect his questioner.

Encouraged by his appearance and manner, he thereupon related all the incidents of the night since he was left by No. 6. He concluded by saying:

"I am going to Deckerton to find out the cause of the man's death, as the circumstances would seem to indicate that I knew something about it."

"Bless my soul! are we that near Deckerton?" exclaimed the gentleman. "I am going there myself. But don't you be uneasy, young man. I am a physician, and if your story is straight, we will have no difficulty in soon determining what killed the man, and proving it."

"But suppose it is revealed that he was really killed by somebody?" suggested Dash.

"Of course that might make it a little disagreeable and uncomfortable for you; but we won't suppose it."

"Thank you, sir; but they will need my evidence at the inquest any way, won't they?"

"Not necessarily, if you have some one who can identify you and vouch for the correctness of your story."

Dash was about to reply that there was no one immediately accessible to do that service for him, when he thought of the young night operator at Deckerton. He then felt that it was a fortunate thing for him, as well as the passengers of No. 6, that he had detected the belated danger signal at Deckerton that night.

"The operator at Deckerton knows me," he responded, not thinking it prudent to give the manner of making his acquaintance, unless necessary.

"That will be sufficient, for I know him. He is an honest, manly little fellow; the only support of an invalid mother."

Dash felt an increased satisfaction, upon hearing this statement, for having shielded the operator from certain discharge. As the run to Deckerton was a short one, Dash had just finished his conversation with the doctor when they stopped at the station.

Dash got out, closely followed by the conductor and his newly found friend. The body of the tramp was lifted from the baggage car by the trainmen and placed in the station waiting room.

"Here's a man who was found dead near the track a few miles west of here," explained the conductor to the astonished and much disturbed operator, who had come to the platform to receive the baggage and mail; "and this young fellow seems to know a good deal about it. He ought to be held until the body is examined. Whom will I leave him with?"

"I don't know. There's no one here but me, and the constable lives over a mile away," replied the operator.

"There's no necessity for me to be held by any one. I intend to stay here for the investigation," interposed Dash, indignantly and with spirit, though perhaps it was natural for the conductor to take the precaution under the circumstances.

"I can't hold my train here until you get the constable, so you will have to look out for him," continued the conductor, as if he had not heard Dash's words.

"I'll be responsible for this young man," spoke up the doctor, who had been listening near by.

"Oh, that's so; you do stop here. I forgot. All right; I leave him in your charge," and the conductor turned on his heel and signaled with his lamp to the engineer to go ahead, at the same time giving his cry "All aboard," though there was no one to get aboard at the lonely station. The engine gave two or three vigorous coughs, and soon the noise of the rattling train was dying away in the distance.

"He evidently doesn't believe your story," smiled the doctor, as they moved toward the waiting room.

"No; you would think he would have more charity toward one in the same business," responded Dash bitterly.

"That fellow's got too good an opinion of himself, and he'll come to grief yet."

"I wouldn't mind him at all, as long as you have the consciousness that you are innocent, and mean to do the right thing."

"I don't care a rap for him," protested Dash, though it was evident he did; "and perhaps I ought not to blame him, as I haven't a thing to show that I was a flagman on the express but this battered lantern, which could be picked up by any one."

"Mr. Dykeman!" cried the young operator, seeing the boy for the first time when he came under the lights in the waiting room; "is it really you? What has happened, and how did you come here?"

"There's evidence of the truth of my story. He can vouch for my being a flagman, any way," smiled Dash, as he turned to the doctor.

"Indeed I can," began the operator, coloring painfully, as his neglect of duty was recalled.

"I got left from No. 6, and just came back on the train that has left," continued Dash, in answer to the boy's question.

"But how did you get mixed up with *that*?" pointing to the prostrate form of the dead tramp, whose face had been covered with a handkerchief.

"That's a different story," and Dash briefly repeated his meeting with the two tramps, and afterward the finding of one of them dead.

"And now we'll examine the body as far as we can," added the physician, as Dash concluded.

He quickly loosened the clothes from the corpse, and made a thorough examination that took some minutes.

"There's positively not a sign of violence on his person," reported the doctor finally, "and, judging from all external appearances, he died from heart disease, brought on by alcoholism, or excessive drinking."

"Retribution overtook him very quickly," commented Dash, with a shudder.

"But brought on by himself," added the doctor. "Nature *will* have her reckoning when she is abused."

"Heaven have mercy upon him," said Dash with feeling and he could not help wondering where the soul had gone that had inhabited such a vile and much abused body.

"Will you remain till the inquest?" asked the doctor; "there is really no necessity for it, if you would like to go. You can leave a short written statement of how you found the man."

"Thank you, I will do so. I would like to go on as soon as possible," replied Dash, with satisfaction; not so much at being at liberty to continue his westward journey, as at the prospect of escaping the disagreeable attendance on an inquest, and getting away from the vicinity of his recent trying and discouraging experience.

"But hadn't I better leave these until after the inquest?" he asked, producing the chain and locket, though he was loath to part with them again, even temporarily.

"As you say they are yours, I believe you, and you might as well keep them. I'll go security for them, should there be any claimants. All I want is your future address, that I may communicate with you should the necessity arise."

"Thank you again, doctor," said Dash, for a moment wondering what address he could give. He finally gave that of Mr. Hummon in St. Louis, to whom he had a letter, and from whom he expected to secure a position.

Then was presented the problem of how he was to reach Pittsburg, much less St. Louis, without any money, and not even a hat to wear.

But this latter was provided by the young operator, who had an extra one at the office; and he also said he had no doubt he could get the conductor of the next west bound train to take Dash on to Aldunta, which was the end of the division, where all local trains stopped. The conductor proved to be more credulous and kind than the one Dash had already met, and said he would be glad to help a friend of Tom Freeman's.

So Dash once more said good by to the operator at Deckerton, and was soon whirling over another stage of his westward journey.

After an uncomfortable slumber of a few hours, curled up in the confined limits of a coach seat, Dash stepped from the train at the station in Aldunta, with the cool air of early morning sharpening his healthy appetite. The booming of a gong in the door of the restaurant seemed to increase his hunger, and reminded him forcibly of his financial inability to supply his wants.

Just as he was wondering where his next meal would come from, and the prospect seemed most dismal, he glanced at a man who was approaching him, and gave a start of agreeable surprise.

Conductor Freeman was coming down the platform, rolling a toothpick in his mouth, as if he had just finished his breakfast. Dash was certainly astonished, for he thought the conductor was nearly in Pittsburg by that time.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE PAY CAR.

"HELLO, Dykeman! Where did you come from, and how did you get left?" exclaimed Freeman, with visible astonishment and curiosity, advancing toward Dash.

His manner was a little constrained, no doubt occasioned by the temporary flagman's apparent desertion of his post, and the latter hastened to give a brief account of how he had missed regaining his train, and his subsequent perilous predicament and encounter with the tramps.

"You've had a hard night of it, Dykeman," commented the conductor, when he had finished. "But you left us in a bad fix, and I wouldn't have known it if I hadn't gone back to speak to you about that Deckerton matter. I at first feared the engineer had started up without you, but when he told me he had received the signal to go ahead, I could not understand it. Then I was afraid you'd fallen off the rear when the train was running. I'm mighty glad to see you."

"No more than I am to see you," responded Dash, with a faint smile; "and you are the last one I expected to see here."

"I got orders to stop off here to take the pay train, and turn my run over to Cartsover," explained Freeman.

"Did you get another flagman?"

"One of the forward men took your place to Aldunta, and then Cartsover got a man to go on to Pittsburg."

"Then I suppose I am left out in the cold," suggested Dash, in disappointed tones, for the meeting with the conductor had led him to hope that he could get something to do that would take him further on his way.

"Not much, Dykeman; not after last night," responded Freeman positively; but whether he referred to the incident at Deckerton, or the events that followed, Dash could not decide.

"Mr. Freeman," he began in some embarrassment, "as I have told you, those tramps took every cent of money I had. Would you please advance me enough to pay for my breakfast here, until I can get something to do?"

"Great smoke! you don't mean to say you haven't had anything to eat! Come right along; I'll fix you."

Freeman led the way to the dining hall, and, after speaking to the man at the cashier's desk, he turned Dash over to the head waiter, who seated him at one of the numerous tables.

"As soon as you are through, meet me at the telegraph office," called the conductor, as he went out.

Soon an abundant and appetizing meal was spread before Dash, and as he discussed it he vaguely wondered what Freeman meant by saying he would not be "left out in the cold" after last night.

Did the conductor have something in store for him, and was it a run on the pay car with him?

When he had finished his meal the aspect of things had brightened considerably, so potent is a full stomach to raise confidence and courage. He at once sought the telegraph office, where Freeman was getting his orders from the dispatcher.

"Come on, Dykeman," cried the conductor, as he handed a copy of the order to his engineer, and hurried out.

Dash obediently followed, still wondering what Freeman was going to do with him, but more willing to take anything that offered than he had been when his finances were not at such a low ebb.

Freeman and his engineer made direct for the pay car, which was attached to an engine and standing on a siding. It was an ordinary passenger coach, with an office fitted up in one end.

Dash noticed at once that the locomotive was headed east, and as his journey lay in the opposite direction, he hesitated before following the conductor into the car.

"What's the matter with you, Dykeman?" called Freeman from the door of the coach.

"Am I to go on that car with you?" asked Dash doubtfully.

"Yes, certainly. Why not?"

"I want to go in the other direction," protested Dash.

"You *shall* go in the other direction. Come aboard."

Dash mounted the step of the car, failing to see how he was to go the other way, but he was willing to leave it to Freeman, and supposed the conductor knew what he was about, even if he himself was in the dark.

"Mr. Dykeman, let me present you to Mr. Barsteel, whom I believe you have met before," said Freeman, as Dash advanced toward the railing which separated the officials from a space used as a sort of reception room for the employees. A smile hovered about the conductor's mouth, and an exultant ring to his voice would seem to indicate he was doing a very pleasant thing.

"Yes, we have met before," said Dash simply, casting a reproachful glance at Freeman, as he recognized the superintendent. He was now convinced that the conductor had reported to the official, not only his subsequent adventures, but also the particulars of the affair at Deckerton.

"I'm glad to see you again, Mr. Dykeman," said the superintendent, as he stepped to the rail and held out his hand. "You have been very unfortunate in the outset of your journey west, and as soon as Freeman told me about it I requested him to bring you here. If you will come back to us now, we will advance your salary ten dollars a month, and put you to work at once, revoking the suspension for sixty days."

The offer was certainly a very tempting one to Dash, coming as it did so unexpectedly, just when he was so much in need, and in doubt as to his ability to reach St. Louis without funds. He particularly noticed that the superinten-

dent made no mention of the Deckerton matter, and he was now in doubt if he had been told it.

"Thank you," he murmured slowly; and he reasoned quickly that the information that he desired to secure in St. Louis could be obtained just as well at some future time. And besides, would it not be better to return and wait until he had saved up sufficient money to make the journey and pay his board several months after his arrival there? But he told himself that if he accepted the position, he would feel bound to remain indefinitely, as long as he gave satisfaction. In addition, there was an irresistible something that seemed to tell him to continue his journey.

"I do not believe I care to go back," he concluded.

"But Freeman tells me you lost all of your money last night. How can you get on without any?" rejoined the superintendent, evidently disappointed, but with some curiosity.

"I shall work my way by getting extra jobs with the commercial telegraph companies," replied Dash, who had about decided he would take that means in Aldunta or Pittsburg to replenish his empty treasury. There is generally at all times an opening for extra operators in the telegraph offices of places of any considerable size, and a good operator has no difficulty in getting a temporary "trick" as it is called.

"I don't believe you will work your way this time, Mr. Dykeman—" began the superintendent mysteriously.

Dash looked at him in a questioning way, and then at Freeman, who seemed to be enjoying something.

"For I have a pass here that will take you to Pittsburg, and by the time you get there you will find another in care of the ticket agent that will carry you to St. Louis," concluded Mr. Barsteel.

"I am much obliged to you," stammered Dash gratefully.

"Not at all, not at all, Mr. Dykeman," interposed the official; "that is to show we remember that *little* affair of the switch engine."

Dash thought it was a little odd he should now receive a pass in recognition of the service, when it had been refused him on announcing his resignation the day before.

"Though I showed the wisdom of adhering to our rules when I refused you a pass yesterday, we always reserve the right to make exceptions," interposed the official, partially answering the boy's thoughts.

Dash now told himself Freeman must have informed the superintendent of the omission of the operator at Deckerton, and its providential discovery, though the latter had as yet made no direct reference to it.

"And this," began Mr. Barsteel again, as he tendered an envelope to Dash, on which was marked his name and the amount, \$60, "is a testimonial of your service in that *big* affair at Deckerton last night; or you can consider it half pay for the two months you were suspended."

"I'd rather not take it," began Dash, in confusion, but thinking more of the young operator at Deckerton than himself, now that he was aware the superintendent knew the particulars of the affair, "because I was an employee of the road at the time, and only did what any of your trainmen would have done. I want no reward but the assurance that the boy at Deckerton will be retained in the service."

"But all of our trainmen are not as vigilant and quick witted as you are, and it's really only your just dues, Mr. Dykeman. Cutter at Deckerton shall receive nothing more serious than a letter of reprimand, in deference to your wishes."

"I thank you again," said Dash, taking the envelope, "and I regret that my plans will not permit me to accept your liberal and flattering offer."

"I am, too; but you are the best judge, Dykeman," was the pleasant response, and the superintendent gave no evidence of disappointment, if he had any, as he had on a previous occasion.

By this time the pay car had got under way, and was speeding rapidly eastward.

"I told you you were not left out in the cold," laughed Freeman, as Dash joined him in the forward end of the car.

"But you broke your promise," added Dash.

"I couldn't help it, Dykeman, after I learned you didn't have a cent; but I made the old man promise to keep that careless chap at Deckerton before I told him a word."

"Then I forgive you," smiled Dash; "and now, if you will change one of these bills, I'll pay you for my breakfast."

"That's all right, Dykeman."

"But I insist."

"I see now how I will be able to go the other way," continued Dash, when the change had been handed him. "Where do we meet the next west bound express?"

"At Springvale Junction. By the way, I told Carstover to take care of your satchel and hat. You will find them in the station master's office in Pittsburg."

Dash left the pay car at the junction, and was soon once more speeding westward on an express train. This time as a passenger, which he felt was more pleasant than as a flagman, with the prospect of disagreeable and perilous experiences before him. But he soon found that even as a passenger he was destined to witness and participate in some exciting events.

Some hours later, when he had walked forward to the smoking car on a sort of tour of inspection of his fellow travelers, he stopped as he was about to enter the car and gazed intently through the glass in the door.

In one of the seats nearest to him was a man whom he was positive he recognized as the other tramp who had robbed him.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER FORTUNATE MEETING AND A FIRE.

ASSURING himself that he was not mistaken, by a long and close inspection of the man from the platform, Dash turned about to seek the conductor, who was at the rear of the train. He knew the latter casually, from having seen him and given him orders at the relay station, and did not hesitate to solicit his aid in getting from the tramp the stolen watch, if he still had it.

On the way a scheme occurred to him that made him smile, and when he met the conductor he told him his suspicion and unfolded it. The conductor readily promised his assistance, and said he would stand by Dash in case the man made any trouble.

By the liberal application of some white face powder which the conductor obtained from a lady in the sleeper, Dash made his features take on a deathly pallor. Then, borrowing a cap from one of the brakemen, he was prepared to unfold his stratagem.

First the conductor, under his direction, went forward to the smoker and seated himself next the forward brakeman, who happened most luckily to be in the seat just in front of the tramp.

"Barbee, did you hear about that dead man they found west of Deckerton?" he remarked, keeping a sidelong glance on the fellow behind him.

"No; who was it? Was he struck by a train?"

"Can't say if a train hit him or not; but he must have been a brakeman, as his cap was found alongside the track," replied the conductor, and he saw the tramp give an almost

imperceptible start, and lean slightly forward in a listening attitude.

"Do you know his name?" asked the brakeman.

"Didn't hear; but they say there were some suspicious things about his death, and it is believed he was robbed and put on the track when insensible or dead, or was tied to the rails."

The fellow behind was now listening with undisguised interest, and his face was a shade paler.

"Have they got any clew as to who did it?" pursued the brakeman.

"No; but I'll tell you something. There's a fellow on board this train who knows all about it," replied the conductor in low tones, but loud enough to be heard by the tramp.

The latter gave a decided start this time, and a mingled expression of astonishment and fear spread over his face.

As he sank back in his seat, the car door was closed with a loud bang, but no one went out or came in. He glanced with curiosity and apprehension toward the cause of the noise, and saw a pale face, surmounted by a brakeman's cap, peering through the upper glass of the door.

Now, almost shaking with the fear that filled him, he touched the conductor on the shoulder and said in an unsteady voice:

"Mister Conductor, is that one o' yer brakesey's a standin' out there on ther platform?"

"Where?" asked the conductor, looking straight at the door, and at the same time winking at the brakeman. The wink might have meant several things, but, as the brakeman kept a grave silence, he must have interpreted it properly.

"You must be off, my man," continued the conductor. "I don't see any of my brakemen on the platform," which was really true.

The fellow sank back in doubt and fear, half covering his face for an instant, as if to shut out a disagreeable vision.

Then the coach door opened, and Dash advanced slowly along the aisle, keeping his eyes fixed on the tramp. He indulged in none of the conventional ghostly gestures of a menacingly pointed fore finger or a gliding sort of walk. He moved naturally, with his arms at his sides, and paused when he was nearly opposite the tramp.

The latter, on looking up, threw out his hands and cried: "Great smoke! he said we'd see him agin sure, an' here he is. I wouldn't a took 'em if it hadn't a been for my pardner. Yer kin have all I got o' it," and he tremblingly brought forth some bills and silver coin from his pocket.

"Where is the watch?" asked Dash sternly, though in his natural voice. There was no need of further playing on the fellow's fears, as he had already confessed his crime.

"Here she is," replied the man almost eagerly, as he pulled the gold time keeper from his vest pocket. "Jumpin' ginger! he even knows how we divvied!"

"And now you can prepare to take up your lodging in the penitentiary for a few years," concluded Dash, "and on your own confession, too."

"An' yer ain't dead after all," gasped the tramp, his jaw dropping, as he was brought to the true state of affairs by Dash's last words.

"No more than you are."

"Well, brakesey, you played on me slick for sure, an' I'm a great big chump," said the fellow sheepishly, but evidently with great relief.

There was a laugh from the passengers and trainmen, who had been interested and amused spectators.

"An' there wan't no man killed, either," the fellow con-

tinued, in wonder, as if still endeavoring to elucidate his deceptive undoing.

"No," responded Dash; "but there was one found dead alongside the track, and I found him. It was your partner."

"Great smoke! Yer don't say Biffy is dead!" with a touch of emotion.

"Yes; and he had only himself to blame for it. He killed himself with drink."

"I tole him to let ther stuff alone or 'twould knock him out. So Biff is gone! He was a tougher, but a good hearted feller; but if it hadn't bin for him I wouldn't be in no sech fix as this."

"What would you do if I didn't prosecute you for robbery, and gave you a chance to make an honest, decent man of yourself?" asked Dash, who could see that the man was not wholly bad and beyond reclaim.

"I'd try ter do ther right thing, young feller; I'd throw up the road for quits. But yer don't mean it, do yer?"

"Yes, I do; and here's something to help you along till you get work," replied Dash, as he returned five dollars of the money he had just recovered from the tramp.

The fellow's eyes opened wide, and he gazed at Dash as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"Yer too good, young feller, ter sich as me; but I'll do it, an' be a man. No more trampin' fer me," said the man, with intense feeling, as he grasped the boy's hand.

Dash felt that the fellow was sincere in all he promised, and would make a temporary effort to reform at least.

But he learned some time afterward that his leniency had a lasting effect for good, and that permanent improvement followed from that day. From a worthless wanderer, living by begging and stealing from his fellow men, the man became a thrifty farmer in a far Western State.

Dash returned to his seat in one of the rear coaches, well pleased that he had recovered his watch and a portion of his money. And we are sure he felt far more satisfaction from having given the tramp a "chance," than if he had inflicted upon him the full penalty of the law. The fact was, he did not wish to stop off to prosecute the robber, though he would not have done so had not the latter shown a genuine desire to do better.

After an all day ride, Dash became exceedingly wearied, even though the coach was most luxuriously upholstered. He felt that, in view of his preceding night's experience, and the good luck that had followed him since then, he would be justified in indulging in the extravagance of a berth in the sleeper for the second night.

Before bedtime, however, they arrived at Pittsburg, and Dash presented Mr. Barsteel's letter at the ticket office, receiving a pass to St. Louis. Here, too, he found his satchel in the station master's office, where conductor Cartsover had left them, as he had promised Freeman.

For some time after leaving Pittsburg the white jacketed porter was kept busy making up his berths, and as he had a full car, both upper and lower ones had to be prepared. There were quite a number of women and children in the car, and as these were attended to first it was late before Dash's berth was ready for him.

For some minutes before the porter called him, he had been gazing intently out of the smoking room window into the thick darkness, watching a red glow reflected against the sky some distance ahead and to the right. It was soon evident to him that they were rapidly nearing the cause of the light, for it became brighter and seemed to cover the whole heavens in that direction.

All thought of sleep was now forgotten in his curiosity to learn the cause of the glare. If it was a fire, it must be a

large one, he told himself. They were soon rattling through the suburbs of a large Ohio town, at which the train was not scheduled to stop. But as they approached the station, near which the fire appeared to be, the train came gradually to a standstill.

Dash promptly stepped out on the platform, and thence to the ground, going over to the other side of the station to get a full view of the conflagration.

A towering seven story building, just opposite the square back of the station, was almost entirely enveloped in flames. A bystander imparted the information that it was a hotel.

The burning of a large building has at all times an element of excitement in it, even when human lives are not endangered, but as Dash looked at the roaring, leaping flames, bursting from windows and roof, he was fairly fascinated with horror at seeing frenzied men and women leaping to certain death on the flinty pavement below, or sinking back with despairing shrieks into the fiery furnace.

(To be continued.)

A SHOP ON WHEELS.*

BY WALTER F. BRUNS.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COALS OF FIRE.

"I SAY, there," shouted Mason, as the boys drew rein, "won't you give us a hand?" And then he recognized them; and if he was frightened before, he was doubly so now, for in his cowardly nature he thought the boys would turn a deaf ear.

"Never mind what I done against you," he pleaded. "Let's forget the past," he added, in a forgiving tone, as though he had anything to forgive.

"All right," replied Dick. "We are willing."

"You won't go way an' leave us?" cried Mason, as the wagon gave another lurch, and the boys made no move. "If you do, it'll be like murderin' us; I can't swim a stroke, an' Andy ain't no great shakes of a swimmer."

"What made you attempt to ford such a looking stream?"

Mr. Mason hesitated, and then, evidently resolving not to prevaricate, replied:

"I'm standin' on too shaky a thing to lie. We 'lowed we could make it, an' if we could we'd be a long ways ahead before you'd dare cross. Come, lend a hand, won't you? Hurry up, or you'll be too late! Don't you see how the current's gettin' away with us?"

That Mason was becoming more frightened every time the wagon was carried along could be told by his shaky tone. Much as the boys could have enjoyed seeing their self made enemy in such a state of mind, his position was too dangerous for such amusement, and Dick said hurriedly:

"We have Mason in a tight place for once. Of course we will help him out, but before he is out of danger he will have to listen to a little reason, and agree to a few things."

"Just the ticket," agreed Chub quickly, catching his meaning. "But hurry, Dick. I wouldn't be in his shoes for a good sum."

"I say, Mason," Dick called, allowing his voice to range above zero. "You wouldn't agree to a fair proposition a few days ago; but you will have to now, before we help you out."

"What was that—about selling at every other house?" inquired Mason.

"Exactly. You recollect without trouble, I notice. There is something else you will have to agree to. When we started on the road, you told a pack of falsehoods about us, and you have got to promise faithfully to retract them all, and to make everything straight, or you never come off the wagon with our help!"

"I hope I may never see the inside of my head if I don't!" declared Mason rashly.

"We want a more faithful promise than that," cried Dick sharply.

"Oh, yes," shouted Mason, allowing his temper to get the better of his fears. "Why don't you ask me to go to those farmers an' tell 'em

*Begun in No. 428 of THE ARGOSY.

I lied before I git off this wagon? I told you we'd forget the past; an' if you're bound to set there much longer we won't be here, an' then I reckon they'll hang you, or do something like that!"

"Now, don't get boisterous," advised Chub. "I would like to ask Andy whether by accident or intention he ran over Uncle Jim. Tell the truth."

"That ain't none of your business," replied Mason tartly.

"All right," replied Chub coolly. "It isn't any of our business whether you get off that wagon or not, either."

"Well, then," shouted Andy, seeing they were getting the worst of it, "I did it on purpose. If you fellows hadn't chimed in, we'd a had a good trip with Uncle Jim off the road. Are you satisfied now?"

"We are as soon as your father promises," said Dick.

Mr. Mason muttered something under his breath, that would not sound nice if spoken aloud, and then replied:

"All right. I promise to do what you ask."

"You will have to stand a wetting," Dick called out, pulling out the tent rope. "Catch the end of this."

And walking down the bank until he was opposite them, after a few preliminary whirls around his head, he launched the rope out over the stream.

The end fell below the wagon, and quickly floated out of reach, and the performance had to be repeated. This time it fell directly across the vehicle, and Andy and his father grabbed for it as though it was a bag of gold.

"The one that is coming first tie the rope under your arms, so you can use your hands. Catch hold here, Chub. If we pull you under, you want to keep your mouth shut."

The rope was tied about Andy, and after a great many injunctions, the young man lowered himself into the water. He managed to keep his head up, and as the boys braced themselves on the rope, the current swung him into shore.

Mr. Mason then tied the rope about himself, but when he touched the water he lost courage.

"I can't do it," he bawled. "I'll sink like a lump of lead; I know I will."

In vain the boys protested. He stubbornly clung to the wagon, refusing to let go, and, losing all patience, the boys surged back on the rope. Mason went into the water with a great splash, and went down just as he had predicted.

It was an anxious moment to them before he reappeared, with Andy hopping about on the bank, declaring they had drowned his father. Then Mason's head shot up, and without giving him a chance to sink again, the boys hauled him in rapidly.

After he reached the bank, and ceased trying to eject the water he had swallowed, he pretended to be terribly angry, and cried:

"I'll pay you for this, I will. I've got a dreadful poor memory, an' I reckon I'll forgit them promises I made. You're a nice crowd, you are!"

"That shows what kind of a man you are!" Chub declared bluntly. "On the contrary, our memory is exceptionally good, and when we get back to Kirkville we won't forget to swear out a warrant for Andy's arrest for running over Uncle Jim. It will be felonious assault, or something like that. At any rate, he'll abide in a reform school for a time!"

"You can't prove it," said Mason defiantly.

"Oh, yes, I can," returned Chub. "I've got a witness here that heard Andy admit it!"

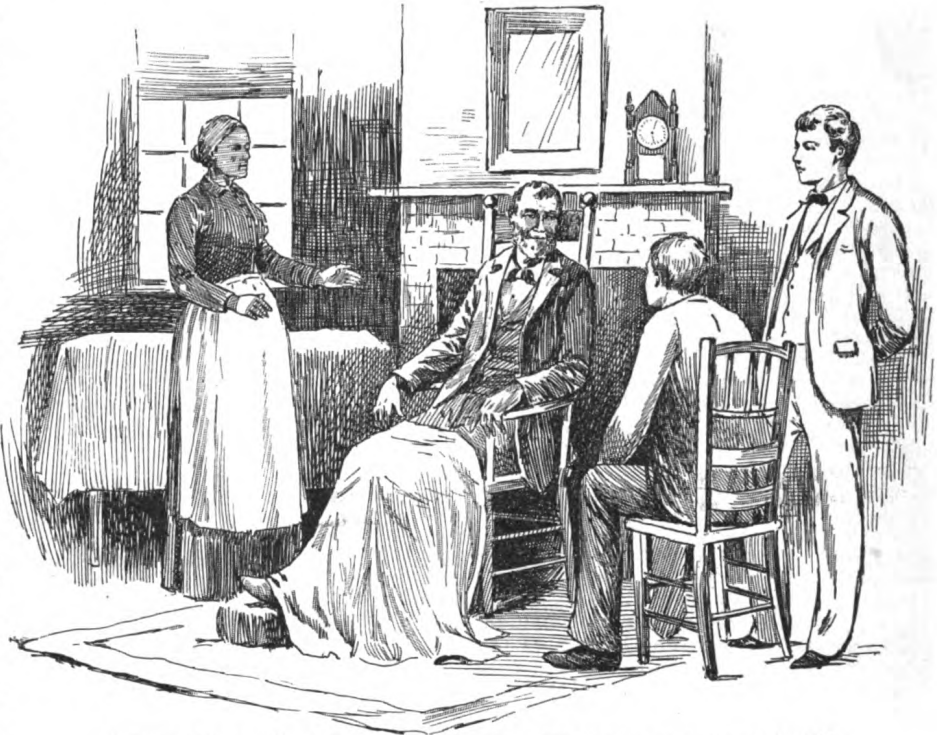
Mr. Mason concluded he was shouting before he was out of the woods, and changed his tactics.

"There ain't no cause to do that," he whined.

"There will be good cause if you try to forget anything you have promised," warned Chub.

And then the party turned about and went back to a farmhouse, Mr. Mason becoming very sociable. The next day the stream had subsided to its natural depth, and he secured his wagon.

The stock was badly damaged, and Mason decided to close it out for whatever he could get. Whenever he showed signs of evading his



"ONE WOULD THINK YOU THOUGHT THE MONEY WAS DEADLY POISON."

promises, during the rest of their journey together, the boys had only to mention Andy's name.

CHAPTER XXX.

A HAPPY ENDING.

THE only incident of any interest, after the rescue of Mason, occurred when the boys were driving through a town not many miles from the scene of their escape from the burning house.

They were driving along the main street, when Chub noticed a man standing in the door of a small dry goods store, whose face seemed very familiar.

"Who is that?" he asked of Dick, with a nod of the head.

"Why, it is Brown," cried Dick, in surprise, quickly turning the horses in toward the curbing. "How do you do, Mr. Brown?"

"First rate; how's yourself?" returned Brown promptly, but showing no indication that he recognized them.

"Don't you know us?" inquired Dick.

"I can't say that I do," he returned cautiously. "I can't remember of ever seeing you before."

"That is funny," said Dick in a low tone, beginning to haul something from under the seat. "We have a package for you."

Then he tumbled the peddler's pack upon the sidewalk, Brown looking at it in surprise, and exclaiming:

"Where did you get that?"

"He certainly don't know a thing about it," said Chub, and he proceeded to tell Brown the story.

"Ah, that is how it happened," cried the latter, when he had finished. "Come in, boys, come in. And so the scoundrels are arrested, eh? Good enough for them! I remember taking refuge in the house, but from then until I came back home is perfectly blank. And you helped me out of their clutches, eh? You've got to stay to dinner, any way, so you might just as well hitch and come in."

And the boys were forced to "hitch and come in," and they found Brown was quite a jolly individual, after all, and he wanted to pay them for their trouble, which they wouldn't listen to, and finally they departed, highly elated in being able to restore his pack.

And when they reached Kirkville they found Uncle Jim propped up in a big chair, waiting for them. Mason had arrived five hours before, and slinking off home, stayed there.

"Back again!" shouted Uncle Jim lustily, as they drew up before his door.

"Back again," repeated Dick cheerily. "How is that limb?"

"I'd be around on crutches if I had my own way; but Mrs. B. has the advantage of me now and won't hear to it. Mason is home, an' he don't look any too gleeful, either. Wouldn't be surprised but what you boys got away with him. Leave the team go an' come in an' shake hands."

And after the boys had modestly obeyed, and every other subject but business had been discussed, Dick told their story from the time they left up to date. Uncle Jim's interruptions of astonishment growing more loud and frequent as he proceeded. And when he had finished, Uncle Jim slapped his damaged leg in his excitement, and after he could straighten out his face exclaimed enthusiastically:

"I knew it! I told Mrs. B. you'd stay by the business through thick or thin, an' from your story you've had it purty thick. An' so you've made more on the trip than Uncle Jim could, eh?"

"Oh, not on the profit of the sales," Dick said hastily. "It was the outside business that raised the amount."

"That I ain't got nothin' to do with," declared Uncle Jim sturdily. "I said we'd share even on the profits, an' that means a third even all around."

Then there was an argument. The boys were determined he should take the whole amount, but Uncle Jim grew so indignant at the idea that they were forced to reconsider the proposition.

Uncle Jim clung to his former declaration all the way through, while the boys gradually gave way, until Chub proposed that Uncle Jim would receive everything but the five hundred dollars reward, and then they refused to take more, and the battle waxed warm.

Even Mrs. Bolton was called in, but as she finally decided in favor of the boys, Uncle Jim declared her decision void.

"Why, the way you talk, boys," cried Uncle Jim, "one would think you thought the money was some deadly poison an' was mortally afraid to touch it!"

"It is a poor rule that won't work both ways," replied Dick grimly. "We consent to take the five hundred reward, and will send Jack one third, for he did just as much toward earning it as either of us, but that is every cent we will take!"

After two hours' arguing, Dick announced:

"Majority rules. We, a self elected committee of three, which includes Mrs. Bolton, have decided against the defendant. He is to receive all over the five hundred, and Mrs. Bolton is appointed to receive the money in trust, for I won't trust Uncle Jim just now. Chub, turn it over."

Uncle Jim was too much exhausted by this time to argue farther, and he looked helplessly on while Chub counted out something over two hundred dollars and handed it to Mrs. Bolton.

"Now everything is satisfactory, and we will put away the team," said Dick. "Chub and I will draw three hundred and thirty three dollars and thirty three cents, and the other third will be turned over to Jack."

Uncle Jim realized by this time that he had lost the day, accepted his defeat graciously, and thanked the boys warmly.

Chub and Dick were summoned to appear as witnesses at the trial of Roper and the rest, which was of short duration, the evidence being too complete, and there they met Jack, who is now a frequent visitor at their homes.

It is said that as they succeeded so well under the difficulties experienced while in the peddling business, they intend to invest in some enterprise of a profitable nature. If they do I predict success.

Roper, Dillon and the rest got long sentences, and after receiving his, Roper announced his intention that if he ever escaped or worked

out his term, he would make the boys feel the weight of his vengeance. But as at the present time he is still in the toils, there seems to be no danger of his doing any harm to the young peddlers.

THE END.

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RED LIGHT WILL, Troy, N. Y. 1. We cannot at present state when we shall have another story by Arthur Lee Putnam. 2. Since Mr. Munsey has had the management of THE DAILY CONTINENT the outlook for his obtaining time to work on a serial has become exceedingly dubious. Two or three new writers are now engaged on stories for our next volume, which will make future numbers especially attractive. 3. No; we cannot be certain of being able to supply you with single copies of THE ARGOSY previous to Vol. VII. The prices are as follows: numbers in Vols. V and VI, six cents each; in Vols. VII, VIII, IX and X, ten cents each; in Vol. XI, five cents each.

TWO STRIKES, Brooklyn. 1. Yes, a member of the Young Men's Christian Association is in a position to take advantage of many opportunities to improve both his mind and his muscles. The cost of membership is \$5 a year. 2. No, a Building and Loan Association cannot do business without a charter. 3. We never criticise the handwriting of our correspondents. 4. The fact that an American's parents were born in Germany is no bar to his eligibility to the presidency. 5. We have already explained that THE ARGOSY goes to press a month in advance of date. This enables readers in San Francisco to receive their paper on the same day that it is issued in New York.

SOCKLESS JERRY, Manchester, N. H. 1. If you have a good, seaworthy canoe, the Hudson River would make fine cruising ground. 2. THE DAILY CONTINENT leads all the New York papers in the matter of sporting news. 3. We cannot undertake to name the twelve most famous Americans. Everything depends on the point of view. Some people would give Boston's John L. a place in the list, while others would have it made up exclusively of authors and artists. 4. We know of only one thing calculated to stop a boy's growth, and that is cigarette smoking. But to be effective, the practice must be begun at twelve or thirteen, and, as you are sixteen, we think we are safe in mentioning such a desperate remedy. 5. We cannot institute invidious comparisons between the different makes of typewriters.

THE ARGOSY

A MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING.



SURVEYOR—"This is confusing, I must say. I've taken bearings from that bush over by that log three times and it's in a different place every time."



SLEEPYWRAGS (the tramp)—"I've moved three times for that blamed fool an' if he points that gun at me again I'll go over there and break it over his head."

IT WAS ALL RIGHT.

"Do you keep a dog?" asked the young man of the old man, tentatively.

"Yes, sir," said the old man sternly, "I keep a dog."

The young man's heart fell forty degrees.

"Yes, sir," continued the old man, softening, for he had seven daughters, "I keep one tied."

No cards.—*Washington Star.*

WITH THE LIGHT TURNED LOW.

CLERK (in the gas company's office)—"This bill of Wishlet's is entirely too large; he couldn't have consumed so much gas last month."

BOOKKEEPER—"How do you know?"

CLERK—"Er—um—I ought to know. I am paying my addresses to his daughter."—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

OF UNCERTAIN HEIGHT.

"Grand opera comes high, doesn't it?" said her husband, referring to the price of admission.

"It doesn't seem to come very high in the neck," she replied, glancing at one of the boxes.—*Norristown Herald.*

AT a recent social gathering a presumptuous young girl determined to discover the composition of a certain handsome woman's complexion.

During a pause in the dance she approached the lady, and moistening the tip of her handkerchief rubbed it rudely down one of the rosy cheeks, exclaiming:

"Pardon, madame, but a speck had alighted upon your face."

"How good of you!" murmured the lady coldly, "but I understand your maneuver; perhaps you will do me the justice to admit that you have not removed the roses. Nature put them there, not rouge and powder."

That is the point.

Every woman is anxious about her beauty; the brightness of her eyes, the clearness of her skin, the abundance of her hair and the plumpness of her figure.

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AND IT SERVED THEM RIGHT.
"HEAR about Chappie's little adventure last week?"
"No."
"Why, he called on Miss Ethel Lettie and found Chollie there, and offered to fight him on the spot."
"Did she scream?"
"Heavens, no. She just spanked them both, and sent them home."—*Indianapolis Journal.*

HER PLACE OF RESIDENCE.

MR. FARWEST (at Florida hotel)—"The lady you were talking to appears to be a person of very high social standing."
MRS. FARWEST—"She is. She knows everybody worth knowing."
MR. F.—"Where does she live?"
MRS. F.—"In New York, I presume. I heard her say she spent six months of the year in Florida and the other six in Maine."—*N. Y. Weekly.*

NOT ONE OF THE STARS.

FATHER (reading letter)—"Ah, what rapid advancement Jim has made! He has been with that 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' Company but two weeks, and now he writes that he is already doing a leading part."
JIM (in parade, a hundred miles away)—"Come along here, Balaam, consarn you! You're the slowest blamed donkey I ever see!"—*Spirit.*



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NOTHING SEEKS THE OLD MAID.

MRS. CRIMSONBEAK—"I think it is perfectly right for a girl to propose to a man if the man is too slow in proposing himself."
MR. CRIMSONBEAK—"You are wrong, Mrs. C., dead wrong. You should remember that the offers should seek the girl, and not girl the offers."—*Yonkers Statesman.*



strument that anyone can play at a moments notice without instruction. It is valuable, as any bird or animal can be so nearly imitated as to call them at once within range. All the various songs of the mocking bird, canary and other choice singers can be given so naturally that the most expert listener can not detect the difference. Just imagine the amusement of a company at the sudden singing of a bird, the squealing of a pig or the meowing of a cat, when it is supposed that none of these are in the vicinity. All the astonishing feats of the most expert ventriloquist can be performed by means of this most wonderful "Patent Harmonica." A child ten years of age can play it without any instruction. We recently saw the utmost astonishment created in a large company assembled in a private parlor, by what appeared the terrific barking of a dog, then suddenly a cat commenced a most unearthly squall in a closet which had not been opened for months, then a child cried out in great agony from the interior of a large box case, and a beautiful bird commenced singing in the corner of the room. Astonishment turned to fear until a boy was discovered in the corner playing the Patent Miretony Mocking Bird Harmonica. This novel musical wonder, which has only been out a few days, is having an unprecedented sale in this city, and agents are fairly coming money, realizing from \$7 to \$10 per day. As soon as one is sold it becomes all the rage in the neighborhood, and all follow suit and buy them. Send for a sample, and feel sure that with the free advertisement they will give you your next order will be for a gross. Remember, this musical wonder is duly patented and copyrighted, and we control it. You can not buy them elsewhere. This wonderful instrument can be sent by mail, with full instructions which will enable any person to use it. We are sole agents and proprietors of this harmonica, and to introduce our goods in every county we will send you one sample of our Patent Miretony Mocking Bird Harmonica for only 15c.; 2 for 25c.; 5 for 50c. Address W.M. WILLIAMS, 121 Halsted St., Chicago.



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