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ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLAISDELL BOYS.

"HULLO, Hal! here's a letter for Little Mum. The postman gave it to me at the door, and I've run every blessed step of these five flights to bring it. Where 's Little Mum? I know this is from Mr. Olney."

The studious looking lad who occupied the chair by the window, glanced up from his book, and said:

"It's lucky Little Mum is not here with one of her headaches, Art. The noise you made coming up would wake the dead. I heard you as soon as you stepped on the lower stair of the first flight."

"Come, now, don't croak, old man," said the younger boy, throwing his cap at a hook on the wall, where it might catch and hang, or fall to the floor as it pleased. "I'm awfully anxious to see the inside of this letter. Where's Little Mum?"

"She went out half an hour ago to take that work home to Mrs. Slocum's. Now, calm yourself, my boy, and you'll hear the letter when she gets back."

"And you let her take that work home herself!" blazed forth Arthur, jumping out of the chair into which he had thrown himself.

"Didn't I tell you to be calm?" said Hal, in an aggravating tone. "Some day, Art, you'll explode—in earnest, I mean; for you do explode now, I was going to say every hour in the day. I wanted to take Mrs. Slocum's work home, but mother thought the air would do her good, and she had some shopping to do."

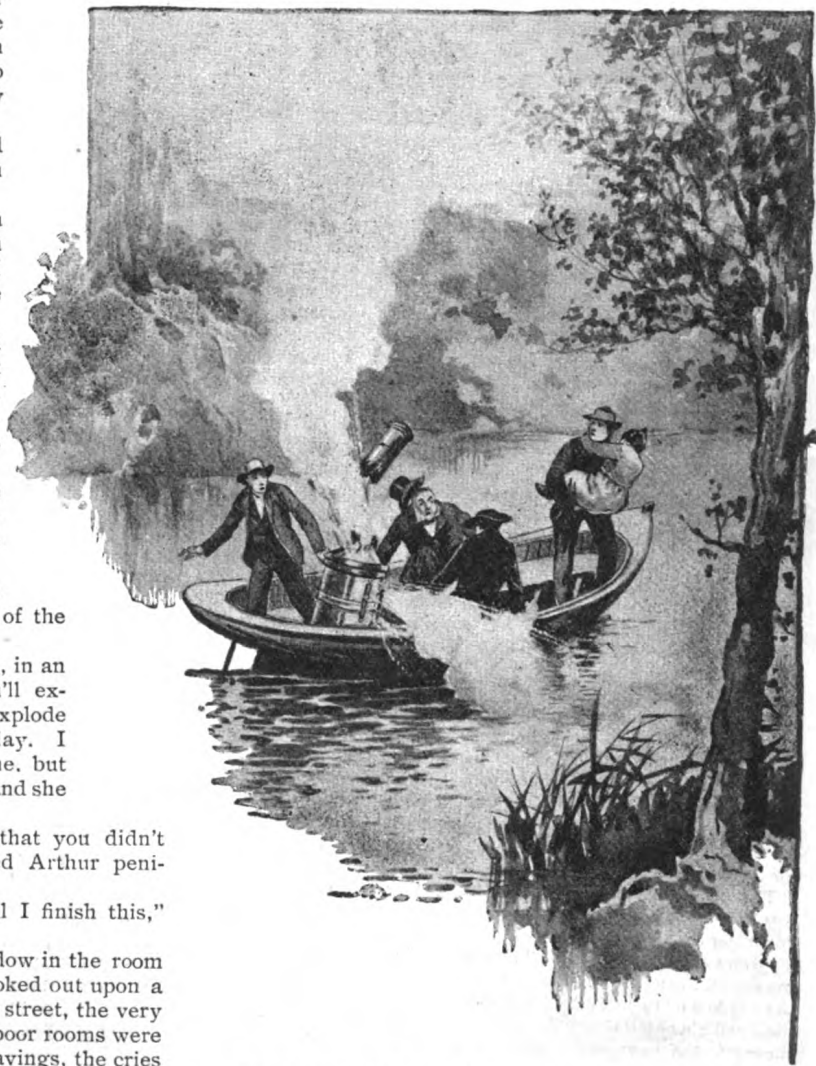
"Oh, forgive me, Hal, for intimating that you didn't think of Little Mum's comfort," exclaimed Arthur penitently.

"That's all right. Now don't bother till I finish this," and Hal turned again to his book.

Arthur went over to the only other window in the room and threw up the sash. Both casements looked out upon a row of brick blocks across the narrow, noisy street, the very counterpart of the row in which these three poor rooms were situated. The rattle of wheels over the pavings, the cries of street venders, and all sorts of noises and smells peculiar

to the poorer districts of any of our large cities, arose from the streets below. It was not a nice place to live in, yet the Blaisdells' quarters were tidily and even tastefully arranged, and the little mother who presided over it made it *home* to her two sturdy lads.

Hal was the older, a tall, broad shouldered fellow of eighteen, the image of his father, so the fond mother



THE CATASTROPHE ON "THE LADY OF THE LAKE."

thought, and with his father's calm, strong temperament as well as his gentlemanly and refined manners. Arthur, however, was of slight build, quick motioned, and impetuous in manner, his little form crowned with a mop of curly brown hair, from under which looked a good humored, though not a handsome face. This face was habitually overrun with smiles, and even now, as he stared out across the street, awaiting impatiently his mother's return, the smiles somehow crept out about the corners of his mouth and twinkled in his eyes, until the sick baby in the window of the Moriarty tenement opposite, grinned as only a true Hibernian baby can grin, and clapped its poor little hands together in delight.

"That poor little thing!" exclaimed Art, noticing the youthful Moriarty's gestures. "See how pale and thin it is! Micky told me 'the babby' was sick. What it needs is some poor fresh air and plenty of sunlight."

"I don't see why you will persist in being so familiar with Micky Moriarty, and I do wish you'd keep still while I'm reading," said Hal impatiently.

"Now look here, Hal Blaisdell," cried Art, flaring up at once, "Micky's just as good as we are in a great many ways, and I do respect him, for he works hard and helps support his mother when old Moriarty goes off on a spree—and that's most all the time. He's to be respected a deal more'n we are, for we pretty near live on Little Mum, both of us."

"Well, we can't shovel coal and clean out ashes, and all that, like Micky," returned Hal, cut by his brother's remark.

"I don't know why we can't—'tisn't because we haven't got education enough," said Art sarcastically. "I declare I have a good mind to take the next job I can find—so long's it's honest I shan't care."

"You'd better use a little common sense, Art," admonished the elder brother. "Micky is undoubtedly well fitted for the position he fills, but you'd cut a pretty figure shoveling coal or clearing out ash bins, now wouldn't you?"

"Well, Hal," returned Art, in a less aggrieved tone, "it does gall me awfully to see Little Mum working so hard for us, and we just about loafing. It does seem as though there's no work to be had in this whole city."

"How do you know but that Mr. Olney has managed to get us both into the *Journal* office, and has written about it in his letter? You know he promised to use all his influence if there was an opening."

"That would be jolly good!" exclaimed Art. "I tell you, Hal, you don't know how glad I'd be to just get a regular sit on the *Journal*. This fugitive writing is dreadfully tantalizing."

"Oh, I don't fancy it over much," said Hal. "But I should accept it thankfully enough, and wait for a better opening. But you, Art, were cut out for a journalist, and I expect you'll be managing editor of the *Journal*, or some other paper just as large some day."

"Now you're laughing at a fellow."

"Not a bit."

"Well, I wish I could give that little one a two weeks' trip to the country," said Arthur, going back to the Moriarty baby; "it would do it a world of good."

"Why don't you constitute yourself its nurse and take it out to the Park this afternoon?" suggested Hal, with a smile which was just a little malicious.

In his own mind he pictured his tall and neatly dressed brother carrying the dirty faced, sickly looking youngest Moriarty up and down the walks of the great park, while fussy old ladies would ask if 'twas "his youngest," and naughty boys would call him "nurse maid." But Art flushed a little, and said quickly:

"I never thought of that, but I will, if Little Mum's willing."

"And you might write it up for the *Journal*," continued Hal, without a thought that his brother was earnestly considering the suggestion.

"Perhaps I might find something there that would bear writing up for the literary number, maybe," said Arthur thoughtfully.

Then Hal awoke to the fact that his brother was really in earnest.

"You don't mean to say that you would take that dirty, ragged youngster out there! You—"

"Here comes Little Mum!" interrupted Art, at that moment looking out and catching sight of a figure far down the street. Leaving the window he rushed out of the room and precipitated himself down the five flights of stairs, endangering his own life and limb as well as the comfort of every one he met. Hal followed more slowly, not forgetting to close and lock the door behind him.

When the elder lad reached the street door, his mother had already

arrived, and Art had unburdened her of all her parcels and already was mounting the stairs. Hal offered his arm to her with the quiet, courteous manner which was characteristic of him.

"Come on," called Art, from the top of the first flight. "There's a letter for you, Little Mum, and I'm just wild to know what's in it."

The little room which we would have before thought plainly, if not scantily furnished, seemed transformed as soon as Mrs. Blaisdell entered it. Her sons' pet name, "Little Mum," seemed to fit her stature precisely; for she was a slight, delicate looking lady, hardly up to Arthur's shoulder. But her sunny temper, motherly face and sweet voice seemed to fairly radiate the cheerfulness which was in her, until in a moment the room seemed filled with it.

The boys, who had secretly thought the place particularly barren and ugly that morning, immediately lost sight of the staring walls and common furniture. It was *home* to them, now that Little Mum was here. One would never think, to look at her smiling countenance, that she had been walking up and down the city streets, in and out of the great stores in search of work, receiving rebuffs at every hand—for it was at a time when work was scarce and wages exceedingly low, when the poor were suffering in the great cities, and even the rich were being bent by the breath of the panic.

With all the eagerness of a girl, and before removing her bonnet and shawl, Mrs. Blaisdell broke the seal of the letter Arthur handed her. She read it through, and a slight cloud crossed her face.

"What is it, Mum?" asked Arthur, eagerly leaning over the back of her chair. "Has Mr. Olney found us any place?"

"Here is the letter," replied his mother. "Listen."

PROVIDENCE, R. I., June 10, 18—

MY DEAR MADAM:

I take the earliest opportunity to inform you that pursuant to your request, and because I feel a deep interest in the welfare of yourself and your two sons, I have used all the influence in my power with Mr. Davidson, of the *Journal* Co., and he has at last found an opening for one of your sons on the regular reportorial staff. I am grieved to state that I have been unable as yet to find a position at all suitable for the other boy, and must say that the prospect looks exceedingly dark. Men are being discharged, not hired, in these times.

But do not be discouraged; a way may be opened yet. Let your son who is an aspirant for reportorial honors call at my office Monday morning next, at nine.

I remain, madam, as ever, your obedient servant,

ALBERT H. OLNEY.

"That's only for one of us," said Arthur, disappointed.

"And that means you, Art," cried Hal generously.

"Oh, I should so like to take it," said the younger lad, looking at his mother wistfully. "What do you say, Little Mum?"

"I say you must not be so quick," returned his mother, laughing.

"Here is a note Mr. Olney added, evidently as an after thought."

She read:

P. S.—I have just received a call from a friend of mine—Hiram Hart by name—who runs a dairy farm just outside the city, and he tells me he wants a smart, intelligent lad to assist him on his milk route. The boy will have to live at Hiram's place, and the wages will be merely nominal; but if either of your boys will accept the offer it will certainly relieve you to some extent.

"No, thanks! I'm no farmer," exclaimed Hal, in disgust. "Olney can keep all his places if they're like that."

"Hush, my son! that isn't right," said Mrs. Blaisdell. "It was meant kindly enough. Mr. Olney reached his present position by hard work, and with little or no education, and therefore he does not see why an educated young man should expect a better position than an ordinarily smart one."

"Well, Little Mum, you would not expect me to accept that, would you?" asked Hal.

"No, Hal, I should not. You are fitted for some position better than one on a milk farm; but—"

"You think I ought to take it until I can find something else?"

"Perhaps it might be best."

"I could never do it, no, never!" exclaimed Hal. "What could I do in the country?"

"You couldn't expect Hal to take it, mother," interrupted Arthur. "What is the use of a fellow's having an education if he must spend all his life milking cows? I wish there were two openings at the *Journal* office, Hal."

"I wish so, too," said Hal bitterly; and retiring to the window he picked up his book again.

Mrs. Blaisdell rose with a little sigh.

"It's all for the best," said she. "Even Arty's being at work will help us wonderfully just now. I never did see times quite so hard before."

"I wish I could do more for you," cried Arthur, throwing his arms about her neck.

"Yes," said Hal maliciously, from the window, "Art was going to hire himself out as a nurse maid, and take the Moriarty young 'un out to the Park this afternoon."

"There, I'm glad you reminded me of that, Hal," rejoined Art coolly. "I did think of taking that poor little thing out there after dinner. It looks so thin and sick, and the air would do it so much good."

"Oh, mother!" cried Hal, jumping up. "You won't let him take that brat out! For pity's sake, how it would look."

"Mayn't I, Little Mum?"

"Do you mean it, dear?" asked Mrs. Blaisdell, following Arthur to the other window.

"Of course; why not?"

Little Mum looked out across the street to the weary little face at the pane opposite, and her eyes were just a little moist as she replied:

"If you think you can attend to little Jimmy, and Mrs. Moriarty will trust him with you, I see no reason why you cannot."

"I'll go right over and find out," said Arthur, picking up his cap and darting out of the door, leaving Hal a picture of speechless indignation.

CHAPTER II.

THE EXPLOSION ABOARD THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

THE representative family of the clan Moriarty occupied rooms on the fifth floor of the block opposite the one in which the Blaisdells resided. Art dashed down the stairs, rushed across the street, dodging under the very noses of a pair of dray horses, and tore up the five flights to the Moriarty abode.

"Och, Misthur Arthur, is that you?" cried Mrs. Moriarty, opening the door. "An' how's yer mother the day?"

"She's well, thank you. How is Jimmy?"

"Coom in an' sit down," said the lady, wiping off a chair with her apron and offering it to her visitor. "Jamesey, poor bye, isn't as well terday as he was. It's a bad place fur him here, I s'pose—an' him ailin', too."

"He does look bad, that's a fact," said Arthur, stroking the head of the dirty faced little fellow who tottered to his knee and leaned against him. "How are you today, Jimmy?"

"Now do yez spake to the gentleman pretty," admonished Mrs. Moriarty, looking fondly down upon her youngest. "That's the bye."

The little one lifted his face and puckered up his lips, and Arthur submitted very gracefully to being kissed square on the point of his nose by "Jamesey."

"It's too bad you couldn't get him out in the country somewhere for a couple of weeks," suggested Arthur.

Mrs. Moriarty shook her head sadly.

"It's too bad intoirely. It's wishing we was beck in the old country, I am, ivry blessed day. For we had a bit of a garden, an' a pig—yes, two of them—an' a cow we had part of the toime. Micky remembers it an' often spakes of it, poor bye; but the little one was borned in this country."

"If you can trust Jimmy with me this afternoon," said Arthur hesitatingly, "I'll take him out to the Park for a little while."

"Och, now, would yez!" cried Mrs. Moriarty, clasping her hands and almost crying for pleasure. "Is it thrustin' ye, I'd be? Sure yez c'd take him all day if yez so felt loike. And will yer mother be willin'?"

"Perfectly."

"Och, it's a dear good woman she is, Heaven bless her! And what toime be's yer goin'? I'll have Jamesey all ready, so I will."

"Well, let's say one o'clock," said Arthur, rising.

"Thin I'll have him ready. An' it's sure yer are ye'd just as live's take him?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the lad heartily. "Jimmy and I always get along well together."

"Do you intend taking that brat with you, Art?" asked his brother, when Arthur returned.

"Of course. I don't mind taking the little beggar. And he'll enjoy it so much, too."

"I don't think you ought to let him do it, mother," said Hal.

"To hear you talk, Hal, one would never think that you were the boy who gave old Meg, the apple woman on the corner, every cent you had last week because she was too ill to sell her wares," said Mrs. Blaisdell, with a quiet smile.

Hal blushed like a girl at this.

"Oh, Art!" he said. "Why did you tell?"

"Well, I really couldn't keep it from Little Mum, you know," replied Art, a little shame faced. "She does get things out of you so, without a fellow's knowing it."

"Well, any way, that was different from this," said Hal, cooling off a little. "I didn't do it openly; just gave her the money, you know. But this—taking everybody's and anybody's young ones out walking like a nursemaid or the keeper of an orphan asylum—"

"Oh, Hal, Hal," interrupted Mrs. Blaisdell, "you were never meant to be poor, I'm afraid. You give in a princely, off hand way; Arty comes down to the people whom he helps. A kind word or act goes farther than money sometimes."

"But it does no good for us to associate or fraternize with these people about us. We are entirely their superior—"

But Art had heard all he wanted to on the subject, and dived under the table, where he declared he would stay until Hal stopped "fring off" his big words and expressions.

"Oh, come out. Don't act so foolish," said Hal.

"Not until you promise to drop it," returned Art inelegantly, sitting Turk fashion under the table.

"Yes, I will drop it!" acquiesced Hal. "You can take the whole Moriarty family to the Park if you want to. Only I hope to goodness you won't meet any one you know."

"Well, we don't know many people in this city," said Art, crawling out from under the table. "Wish we did."

"I don't wish so," returned his brother. "Suppose our Boston friends knew where we were living."

"Come, boys, dinner's ready," said Mrs. Blaisdell, interrupting their conversation.

As soon as dinner was disposed of Arthur set out once more for the Moriarty apartments. Mrs. Moriarty had washed and dressed Jimmy, and he sat up straight in a little chair by the window patiently waiting for Arthur.

"There he is all ready, bless his heart!" cried Mrs. Moriarty, when Arthur made his appearance. "He's been on the watch for yez this half hour. Now do yez be a good bye, Jamesey, an' moind the gentleman."

"Come on, Jimmy," and catching up the little fellow, Arthur bore him down stairs and out on the noisy street.

Soon they turned off into a more quiet thoroughfare, and in the course of ten minutes reached the great square, where they boarded a horse car for the Park. The car was already quite full, but Arthur found a place and squeezed in beside a young man on one of the front seats, and held Jimmy in his lap.

The young man attracted Arthur's attention almost immediately. He was dressed in a black coat, buttoned up to his chin like a clergyman's, an immaculate linen collar and a white tie, black trousers and low shoes, and crowning all, a ministerial looking, low crowned, soft felt hat. His face was pleasant, although having a somewhat meek and mild expression which reminded Arthur, as he afterward said, of mutton. The young gentleman's dignity was rather marred, however, by a downy brown mustache which adorned his upper lip.

Little Jimmy seemed to interest the clerical young gentleman exceedingly, and he finally asked Arthur, in a solemn voice, in keeping with his appearance, if the child was his little brother. Art grinned broadly as he thought how horror stricken Hal would have been were he present, and replied:

"No; this is Jimmy Moriarty. His folks live near us, and he's been sick, poor little chap. I'm taking him out to the Park this afternoon for a breath of fresh air."

"He is an—er—offspring of the poorer class of this great and wicked city?" inquired the young man.

Arthur replied that the child's parents were in rather straitened circumstances.

"And you are giving this little fellow pleasure from a purely charitable impulse?" exclaimed the young man, clasping his hands together.

"Why, yes, I suppose so," replied Art, in surprise.

"Ah, here is true charity!" murmured the stranger, gazing dreamily off across the fields they were passing.

He remained silent a few moments, and, then turning toward Arthur again he handed him a delicately engraved card upon which the boy read "Joel Audubon Webb."

"That is my name," he said, with solemn dignity. "I am glad to have met you, Mr.—er—"

"Mr. name is Arthur Blaisdell," said Art, quickly coming to the young man's relief.

"Ah, yes; Mr. Blaisdell. You have given me an incident with which I shall illustrate my first sermon—'True Charity,' I intend calling it. Had more of us your spirit of love for our fellow creatures this would be a better world—a better world."

"You are a—minister, sir?" questioned Art, at a loss to know how to converse with this overpoweringly dignified personage.

"No—only a student, only a student. I am as yet but slightly advanced in my calling. Theology has been my study for some time past; but I consider myself to have made but little progress in such a great and noble profession."

"Yes?"

"However, before long I expect to occupy a desk. Ah, we have arrived at our destination."

The young man stepped from the car and walked away with all the dignity of a patriarch, while Arthur moved off in another direction with his young charge. Jimmy was at once eagerly interested in all the sights and sounds—in the trees and flowers and shrubbery, the birds and animals, in the pony carriages and the people about him.

He behaved very well indeed for so small a child until he saw a peacock strutting about with his tail spread to the best advantage. Then he wanted one of the creature's handsome feathers, and as Art of course refused him, the youngest descendent of the Moriarty clan lifted up his voice and wept.

The more Art tried to buy him off with sugar coated promises the more Jimmy cried, until the boy was in despair. But just here rescue appeared in the shape of a portly, elderly gentleman, who halted beside them and stooping down inquired in a fatherly tone:

"What's the trouble, my son?"

Arthur told the little fellow's grievance, and the gentleman chuckled good naturedly, as he said:

"Crying for the moon, like the rest of us, eh? Well, we all do it from the cradle to the grave, I suppose. But sometimes something a little smaller than the moon satisfies us," and, drawing a handful of change from his pocket, he selected a bright penny from among the other pieces, and gave it to the sobbing child.

"I never knew it to fail," said the donor of the penny, as Jimmy received the coin with a funny little nod of his head which meant "thank you," and immediately hushed his sobs. "No, sir, I never knew it to fail. I always carry some bright pennies nowadays, to give to crying children. It's worth a great deal more than the coin to see the sunshine through the rain," and he walked away, leaving little Jimmy clutching the penny tightly in his hand.

"Thank you, sir," said Art, before the gentleman was out of hearing. "I don't know what I should have done to stop him if you hadn't happened along."

Jimmy had apparently forgotten all about his previous trouble, and he allowed Arthur to again take his hand and lead him down toward the lake.

"I seem to fall in with cranks today," thought Arthur, "and both the old gentleman and the young minister were full fledged ones. I rather like the old fellow, though; but as for Joel Audubon—well, I suppose there's a use for such people in this world."

The lake was a good sized one—in fact it was two or three lakes joined together. Arthur and his young charge walked slowly through the boat house and out upon the platform. Here lay a little steam launch, hardly twenty feet long, called the Lady of the Lake, which made the round of the lakes every half hour, and was just preparing to cast off its moorings and start on a trip. Arthur looked at the little fellow beside him, whose eyes eagerly rested on the craft, and said, under his breath:

"I declare, I'll do it! The poor little beggar'll be tickled almost to death, and I don't believe I shall need the money."

"Going, sir?" inquired the boatman, with the painter of the launch in his hand.

Art passed over his two dimes and carried Jimmy aboard, where he found a seat in the bow between—who but his two acquaintances, the benevolent old gentleman and the clerical young man!

The latter bowed solemnly, and the old gentleman said "Hullo!" to

Jimmy in a very undignified manner, and pinched the little fellow's cheek.

"So you're going to give him a ride, eh?" asked the old gentleman—"Is it your little brother?"

"No, sir—no relation," replied Arthur.

"He tells me," said the theological student solemnly, breaking in upon the conversation, "that the child is, in fact, from the lower orders of society, and that he has brought him here from a purely charitable motive. In fact, it is an excellent illustration of what true charity is, or should be."

"H—m, ah, yes, I guess so!" returned the old gentleman gruffly, eying the speaker as one would a new specimen in the natural history world.

"Yes, sir," continued the young man, "this world would be much better was there more genuine charity in it. Our young friend here should be an example for us all."

The thought that he was an example for the whole world to follow was rather overwhelming to Arthur, and he really did wish that the theological student would keep still. The old gentleman looked wrathfully at the speaker as though he did not enjoy his remarks, but the look was lost on Joel Audubon, as he was gazing meditatively across the lake.

"Ever been on this thing before?" inquired the old gentleman of Arthur, by way of changing the conversation.

"No, sir."

"Well, I came out here to try it today. My little girl's been on it, and she wants one like it to sail this summer down the river. Our summer place is right on the shore of the bay."

"I should think it would be very nice," suggested Art.

"She seems to think it would be. But I wanted to see if 'twas safe."

"My dear sir," broke in the voice of the theological student, "have you counted the cost of such a step?"

"What do you mean?" angrily demanded the old gentleman, turning very red in the face.

But Joel Audubon was not one whit abashed.

"I mean what I say, sir. Have you counted the cost of this? Do you not realize that the amount of money you will spend for this toy for your child could be converted into untold enjoyment for poor children like this one?" pointing to Jimmy. "I feel it my duty—"

"And I shall feel it my duty," cried the old gentleman, jumping up in a rage, "to pitch you overboard if you don't shut up! Do you hear?"

He was saved the trouble of carrying out his threat. The little engine stationed in the center of the launch had been running badly all day, and at that precise moment decided in its mechanical mind to end its existence by blowing up.

It was not a very dangerous explosion; but it served every purpose. The engineer had allowed too much steam to accumulate, and just as the old gentleman sprang up the entire top of the engine blew off.

The theological student had risen in very undignified haste at the old gentleman's exclamation, and even Arthur arose, still bearing little Jimmy in his arms. At the first warning of the explosion the boy sprang backward into the water, landing safely upon his feet. But the shock threw both his strange acquaintances heels over head into the lake.

The elderly gentleman, whose wrath had been thus summarily quenched, fell within Arthur's reach, and the boy assisted him to his feet. The water was hardly up to their waists, yet they presented a comical appearance standing in the center of the lake.

"I'll bet I don't buy one of these pesky things for Flossy!" was the exclamation of the old gentleman, blowing the water from his mouth.

"Who'd have thought it would have blown up?" said Art, rather dazed at the unexpected accident.

"Nobody but the man who invented it," returned his companion crustily. "Here, bub, give us your hand and let's wade ashore. I expect we'll be the laughing stock of the whole crowd."

Arthur gave him one hand, and still clasping Jimmy Moriarty with the other, he waded towards the bank.

Oh Hal, if you could but see your brother now!

CHAPTER III.

FOR LITTLE MUM.

THE explosion on board the Lady of the Lake occurred not far from land, and Arthur and the old gentleman had little trouble in wading ashore. Not so Joel Audubon Webb. That dignified young gentleman had floundered about in the water some few mo-

ments before he regained his feet, and was now a fearful and wonderful object to behold.

His coat was split up the back, and his trousers were streaked with fantastic stripes of muddy water. His choker was wilted and his tie, becoming detached in his furious struggles, had floated away along with his soft felt hat. Indeed he was the most bewildered looking individual one ever saw.

With the assistance of a rescuing party in a rowboat he was finally towed ashore and fell gasping on the bank. The crowd which had gathered paid little attention to him, however, except to laugh at his appearance. A policeman who evidently knew the old gentleman, hurried him, and Arthur as well, into a waiting room near by where they removed their outside garments and wrung them comparatively dry.

"Here! what time is it?" suddenly exclaimed the old gentleman. "My watch has stopped."

"Quarter to three," replied the officer, who had stayed to assist the "shipwrecked" couple.

"Good! I can get down to the office in time for the last edition. How I wish I could write this thing up decently."

"One man can't be expected to run both the business and the literary end of a newspaper," said the officer with a smile.

Arthur began (figuratively speaking) to prick up his ears. He wondered with which of the city dailies this gentleman was connected.

"Is there time to get down street before the last edition of the evening papers?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, if you go down in my carriage," said the old gentleman. "And by the way, Jeffries," he added, turning to the officer. "I wish you would call John to the door here. I'll take you and the youngster home, young man."

"Oh, thanks!" cried Art. "If you'll just wait five minutes for me," and he was about to dash out of the door in his usual impetuous manner.

"Hold on, hold on!" said the old gentleman. "What's the matter?"

"Well, you see, I write for the *Journal* some, and I'd like to get a few points about this explosion, if it won't conflict with you, sir."

"Well—I guess it won't," returned the old gentleman, in a rather surprised tone, as Arthur darted out.

Fortunately, the young reporter had not been wet above his waist, and his note book was perfectly dry in his inside jacket pocket. He obtained the names of the engineer, the place where the Lady of the Lake was built, and the company who built her, the name of the engine, and other minor facts.

Then he hurried back to where his elderly friend was waiting.

A carriage with a liveried coachman on the box stood at the door.

"Your five minutes is up, young man," said the old gentleman, when Arthur made his appearance. "Get right in. I'll bring the child."

Jimmy, who had quietly fallen asleep in a corner of one of the settees, was carefully lifted into the carriage, and the old gentleman took the seat beside him and opposite Arthur, who was already busily engaged on his account of the accident for the *Journal*.

The coachman drove away at a rattling pace, and the young reporter found it difficult to write; but bracing his knee firmly he turned off page after page of his copy in a large, plain handwriting, with visions of a half column article and "space rates" dancing before his mental vision. The old gentleman took each page as it was completed, and read it with apparent interest.

Finally Arthur came to the list of names of the passengers aboard the Lady of the Lake, and stopped a moment to look at his elderly friend, as he said:

"Do you object to having your name put in this list of passengers, sir?"

"Me? Oh, no, I don't object—It'll be a good advertisement, and I believe in advertising."

"Well, will you please give me your name?" asked Arthur, after waiting a moment.

"Oh, certainly. Henry Davidson—of the *Journal*."

"The proprietor of the *Journal*!" cried Arthur, in open eyed surprise.

"Of course. Come now, stop staring like an idiot, and finish your article," said Mr. Davidson testily. "I'll see that it has a good position on the local page."

Thus admonished, Arthur went back to his writing, and completed it just before they arrived at the *Journal* editorial rooms.

"Here, I'll go in with it," said Mr. Davidson, springing nimbly out of the carriage, and added, as Arthur passed him his manuscript:

"What's your name, young man?"

"Arthur Blaisdell, sir."

"Blaisdell? All right."

Fifteen minutes later Mr. Davidson re entered the carriage, and told Arthur to give directions to the coachman to drive to his home.

"I don't want to bother you, sir," said the boy, "and Jimmy and I can walk."

But the gentleman was obdurate, and Arthur gave the coachman the necessary directions.

"You're not on the regular staff of the *Journal*, eh?" inquired Mr. Davidson.

"No, sir. Once'n a while I get in fugitive matter—for the literary edition, usually."

"H—m. Well, the editor says he likes your stuff, but there's no opening on the staff just now. There was a chance, but Al Olney has a fellow for the place."

"Albert H. Olney?"

"Yes—the oil merchant."

"Then I guess I'm the one he wanted the place for. He wrote to us about it this morning."

"Ah—h!" exclaimed Mr. Davidson, with evident satisfaction. Then, after a moment's silence: "You're pretty young, aren't you?"

"I'm sixteen, sir."

"Sixteen, eh? Don't suppose you know anything about the trade—about printing?"

"Not much, sir."

"Well, you ought. I think a journalist, whether he intends running a newspaper, or writing for one, should serve his time at the case first. I did."

"Yes, sir."

"But every one to his taste and opinions. Still, you're none too old to learn the trade now. I was eighteen when I commenced, and we served four years in those days."

"I couldn't afford it, sir, for I have to help my mother all I can. Reporting will pay me much better than apprenticing myself to the printing trade."

"Yes, that's so, that's so. Ah, is this the place? Shouldn't advise you to live here any longer than you can help."

"Don't intend to," replied Arthur, with a blush, as he prepared to step out of the carriage. "But this is the best we can do at present, the times are so hard."

"H—m, yes. Well, I'll keep an eye on you, Blaisdell," said Mr. Davidson, as the equipage rolled away, leaving Arthur and his young charge standing on the curbstone.

But the next day the hot weather drove the old gentleman from the city and down the bay to his summer residence, and for the time he entirely lost sight of Arthur Blaisdell.

Arthur carried Jimmy up stairs to his mother, and rushed down and up to his own home without waiting for Mrs. Moriarty's voluble thanks.

"Well, how do you like baby farming?" inquired Hal, when Art entered.

"Have you had a pleasant afternoon, my boy?" asked his mother. "First rate!" replied Arthur. "I've been blown up by an engine, got acquainted with the proprietor of the *Journal*, had a drive in his private carriage, and written up half a column about the accident."

"For mercy's sake, what are you talking about?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaisdell, while Hal appeared too greatly surprised for utterance.

"Yes, sir, I have," said Art; and he sat down and recounted his afternoon's adventures in full.

"Of all the fellows to get into awkward scrapes, you are the worst, Art," said Hal. "Just to think of taking that Moriarty young'un into Mr. Davidson's private carriage!"

"Mr. Davidson took him in himself," returned Arthur, "and he didn't kick about it, either."

"Is 'kick' a proper expression, Arthur?" asked his mother. "Especially in reference to Mr. Davidson?"

"No, ma'am, I don't suppose it is. He made no objection to it, any way."

"Well, you're sailing right into smooth waters, Art," said Hal, with a sigh. "I wish I was, too. We'd have Little Mum out of here in short order, and get a tenement somewhere else."

"All in good time, my son," said Little Mum cheerfully. "Our sky is already growing brighter."

"The sun isn't rising very rapidly," grumbled Hal.

"Well, here's one son that will rise and give another his place," cried Art, whisking his brother out of his seat and taking it himself. "It's your turn to make the fire for tea, old fellow."

"Don't get discouraged, boys," said Mrs. Blaisdell. "I think that better times are coming."

"Bless you, Little Mum!" exclaimed Art, jumping up and giving her a hug such as only a boy or a bear can give. "We'd all have gone to pieces long ago, if it hadn't been for your always seeing something bright ahead."

Indeed, what he said was very true, for by her cheerful disposition Mrs. Blaisdell made many burdens light, and their trials appeared small beside their blessings. Since her husband's death, two years before, she had done all in her power to support her boys, but reverses followed reverses until they were at last forced to leave their Boston home, and move to their present one in Providence.

Mr. Blaisdell had been a fairly well-to-do merchant, but lost his fortune just before his death, leaving his family almost destitute. Hal and Art did all in their power to assist their mother; but that was not much, in times when boys as smart and well equipped as themselves were plentiful.

Both had good educations, and Arthur possessed more than an ordinary talent for writing and composition. Early in life he had decided upon a journalistic career, and since his father's death had availed himself of every opportunity to practice his chosen profession. Lately he had done considerable "fugitive" writing for the daily papers.

Hal rather inclined toward the bar, and had he been enabled to complete his college course, as his father had intended, undoubtedly would have followed his natural bent. Finding this impossible, he followed Arthur's example, and did some little journalistic work, although with less success than had attended his brother's efforts.

It was therefore very grateful news to all three when Mr. Olney (who had been a friend of Mr. Blaisdell) wrote that he had obtained an opening in *Journal* office for one of the boys. By mutual consent it seemed that Arthur was to be the fortunate one, and some few moments before nine on the following Monday morning he started for Mr. Olney's office on South Water Street.

Mr. Olney was a portly, pleasant faced gentleman of about fifty years of age. He had sat in his greasy little office at one side of his warehouse, surrounded by all sorts and conditions of oil for so many years, that his clothing and features seemed to fairly shine with oily opulence, and even his voice and manner were bland and oily, too.

"Ah, this is young Blaisdell?" he said, when Arthur presented himself. "Good morning, sir."

"Good morning," returned Arthur politely.

"Let's see," said Mr. Olney, looking the boy over thoughtfully. "I expected rather an older lad than you appear to be. How old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Sixteen—yes. And how old is your brother?"

"Eighteen."

"And you are the only one inclined towards a journalistic career?"

"Well, sir, we have both done some writing for the *Journal*, but I have had the most success in that line," said Arthur modestly.

"That's good. Well, I have finally persuaded Mr. Davidson to make an opening for you. You will fill the position to the best of your ability, I know, if you are your father's son," said Mr. Olney. "The compensation, Mr. Davidson tells me, will be eight dollars per week at first."

"Yes, sir; I understand that."

"Well, there is this other matter. Mr. Hart wants a young man on his place, and though of course he could get a score of good ones, he said he would take one of you on my recommendation. Would your brother take it?"

"I—I don't know," said Art doubtfully. "What—what does Mr. Hart want a boy for?"

Mr. Olney looked at him keenly for a moment before replying, and then leaned forward slightly, resting a hand on each knee, as he said:

"Now, let me tell you how 'tis, young man. Times are hard—mighty hard—just now. I know of hundreds of boys in better circumstances than you who would jump at the chance to get this position with Hiram Hart. Of course the hours are long—always are in the country. But he'll pay you four dollars a week and your board. Now, I advise that one of you take it, for your mother's sake, at least. That's all."

"Well, sir, if you'll give me a few minutes to think about it, and perhaps see my brother——" began Arthur.

"All right. Come back as quickly as you can."

Arthur bowed himself out and hurried away—not towards home. He knew very well that Hal would never accept such a position as this Mr. Hart offered. But how much it would help Little Mum if both her boys could care for themselves and help her. His paltry eight dollars a week from the *Journal* would hardly support them. But with four dollars more!

"I'll do it!" he said aloud. "It's for Little Mum, and I can't do too much for her. Grandfather used to say, 'Never let a good pear rot on the tree,' and so I won't give myself a chance to go back on this good resolution; but I'll act on it at once."

Wheeling about he started for Mr. Olney's office again, walking more rapidly than before. He burst impetuously in upon the oil merchant, hardly giving himself time to close the office door, before saying:

"I've decided to take your advice, sir. If you'll get Hal the position on the *Journal*, please, I'll work for Mr. Hart. I'd do anything for Little Mum!"

(To be continued.)

BRAD MATTOON; OR, LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.*

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

HOSMER HALL is a select boarding school for boys, managed by Dr. Hope, who is much thought of by his pupils. Here arrives Brad Mattoon, a fellow quite different from the others. He wears a corduroy suit, and is inclined to be somewhat nautical in his talk, and right at the start is snubbed by Sidney Ivers, whose father has fallen heir to the Hosmer estate, and tries to make things as unpleasant as possible for Dr. Hope. The bad blood between Brad and Sidney does not tend to improve matters. Sidney lays a trap for Brad, but thieves fall into it. Brad captures them, and Sidney is expelled.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. HOLLIS UNBURDENS HERSELF.

THE boys filed out in silent amazement; but no sooner was the passageway leading to the Hall reached than the tongues were loosed, and exclamations of surprise and curiosity filled the air. What could be the matter? What had George Ivers done to merit so severe a punishment? What would happen to the Academy when Sidney's father learned of it? These and similar questions echoed back and forth without eliciting any more satisfactory responses than a few conjectures as wild as they were unfounded.

Of one thing all were convinced, that Sidney's offense must have been an outrageous one to have driven Dr. Hope to such extreme measures. The peace and welfare of the academy were nearest the doctor's heart, as all the boys knew; and they also knew how much that peace and general welfare depended upon the preservation of amicable relations with the present owner of Hosmer. They were aware, too, that these relations had been none too pleasant of late, owing to a variety of trivial causes, and that Dr. Hope, feeling the delicacy of his situation, had carried himself as cautiously and with as much gentleness and tact as possible. It must, therefore, have been some extraordinary provocation that determined Dr. Hope in suddenly assuming so decided an attitude, but what this provocation could be none were able to guess.

The lavatory was full of boys, and the excitement and conversation were at their height, when Perry Landon, who stood at the door leading to the back stairs, caught Brad's eye, backoned to him, and, turning around, hurried up the steps. Brad followed him at once, unnoticed by the rest; and in a few moments the two boys found themselves in their room.

Immediately Perry closed the door.

"Now then, Brad," he said, looking his companion in the face, "what do you think of it?"

"Well, I'm on my beam ends just at present, but I'll get right in a minute and then I think I can give you the points of the compass."

"Why, you haven't any doubt about the matter, have you? It isn't hard for us to guess the trouble, knowing what we do," said Perry.

*Begun in No. 436 of THE ARGOSY.

"Oh, of course we can guess," answered Brad. "Suppose you tell me your guess, and let me see if it's the same as mine."

"It's plain enough to me," answered Perry. "Dr. Hope has discovered evidence that proves Sidney Ivers the writer of that forged note—"

Brad nodded and was about to speak when the door suddenly opened and Mrs. Hollis entered. She was evidently under the influence of some unusual emotion, for her lips were trembling and her eyes were red and wet from weeping. Mrs. Hollis had acquired from long experience a habit of reticence, but she was evidently carrying at this moment a burden of information too heavy for her to bear. So, in spite of the power of past habits, she found herself unable to keep silence when she met the questioning gaze of the two boys. For a moment she struggled to contain herself: then all barriers gave way.

"Dearie, dearie, mercy me! but it's a sad day for the academy," exclaimed the old lady, shaking her head dolefully. "And all to have come on us so sudden. I don't know where I stand. What with Mr. Sidney expelled, his father half mad with rage, Dr. Hope in for a mess of trouble, and the school all upset with the news—what will become of us? And to think that it should all have started with that little tiff of yours, Mr. Mattoon—oh, didn't I warn you at the time to leave Mr. Sidney alone?"

"What makes you think that?" asked Brad uneasily.

"Why, bless me! haven't I heard the whole thing down in Dr. Hope's library this morning—"

"You were listening?" interrupted Perry.

"And how could I help it," protested the old lady, "caught as I was in the little conservatory beyond? I was in there dusting when into the library came Dr. Hope. He never noticed me, for I closed the door, as I always do, and I paid no attention to him until I heard voices so loud that I couldn't miss a thing that was said. I wouldn't have noticed that, but in a few minutes I could see there was trouble—Mr. Sidney Ivers was in the library with the doctor, and the doctor was talking to him in a tone I've never heard him use—no, never, and I've been here many a year."

"What was he saying?" asked Perry, his curiosity getting the better of him.

"Well, I wouldn't tell you young men of it, so I wouldn't, for I suppose I had no business to hear it, but I take it you both know a good deal about it already. You see, the doctor came back from the trial last night, and it seems Dick Barney had confessed and told all about his turning thief, and among other things he said that when he and the other thief were hanging around the garden waiting for us to go to bed he saw Mr. Sidney working away at something under the passage-way. He was pulling up the planks that covered the old cesspool—"

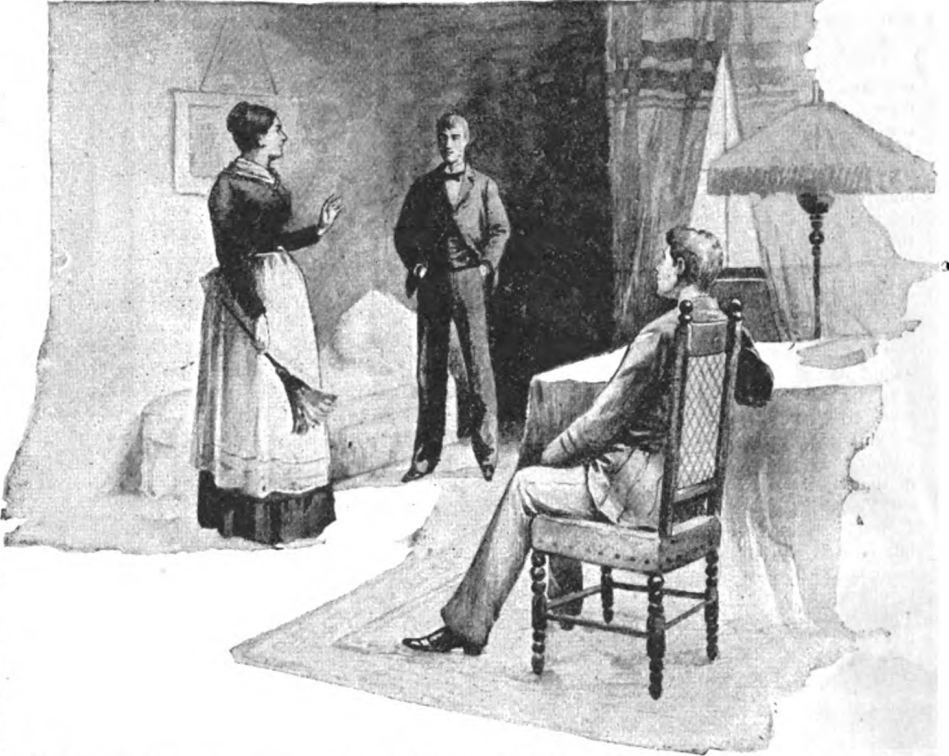
Bang! came Brad's fist down upon the arm of his chair. Mrs. Hollis paused a moment and looked at him inquiringly.

"Go on," said Brad.

"Well, of course Dick Barney didn't know what Mr. Sidney had been doing till he fell into the hole—then he wished he had found out sooner. Dr. Hope was telling Mr. Sidney this, and then he began talking about several letters that he had in his hand. I never saw the doctor so angry. There wasn't any use in Mr. Sidney's trying to dodge. He squirmed all around, said lots of things that didn't agree, and then when Dr. Hope pushed him with questions and mixed him up, he would make it worse by telling more lies. At last the doctor cornered him so he couldn't turn any way, and then—well, it nearly took my breath away to hear his impertinence. He told the doctor that he wasn't afraid, and that he didn't care what the doctor or the boys

thought, that he made it a rule to do as he pleased, and so on through a long string of bad language, but before he could finish, the doctor brought him up sharp by giving him his walking papers right then and there.

That settled Mr. Sidney, who whisked up his hat, slapped it on his head and bounced out of the room, saying he was going to tell his father how things stood. I knew what this meant and I trembled. I was fit to drop down in a faint on the floor with fright, but I couldn't move, for there sat the doctor with his head in his hand looking at the floor. He never budged for several minutes, and then he only got up to walk up and down. By and by I heard a noise in the hall, and be-



"IT'S A SAD DAY FOR THE ACADEMY," EXCLAIMED THE OLD LADY, SHAKING HER HEAD.

fore I could gasp for breath, in burst Mr Ivers, Mr. Sidney's father, with a face on him like old Nick on a bad day.

"Then such a scene as took place—the doctor trying to keep cool, but sticking to his point like a soldier, while Mr. Ivers cut him right and left with words like daggers. Oh, the insulting language he used to the poor, dear old doctor, who stood there looking him straight in the eye and quivering as if he was being struck with a lash. Nothing that Mr. Ivers said could make the doctor alter his purpose. 'Had your son been entirely innocent, instead of guilty, of what the law considers a crime, his language to me this morning would have decided me in expelling him,' said the doctor. Then Mr. Ivers began to threaten all sorts of things. This started the doctor off, and he told Mr. Ivers in plain language what he thought of the way he had been treated of late years. 'If you don't like it, no one compels you to remain here,' said Mr. Ivers, 'and that brings me to my point. I give you the choice now of recalling your decision or leaving the academy. Which do you choose?'

"Then you ought to have seen the old doctor fire up. 'I choose neither,' he said. 'You have not the authority to offer me such a choice, Mr. Ivers. Remember, sir, this academy and the ground it stands on belong to the trustees, and it is to be managed according to the provisions of Mr. Hosmer's will. I am here by the authority of that will and the trustees—you have nothing to do with the matter. Until the trustees unseat me, my authority here in Hosmer Hall is final.'

"Mr. Ivers stood looking the doctor in the face for several seconds without saying a word, but his lips were twitching and his pale cheeks

had turned a sort of gray color. I was on the point of screaming, for, from the way he clinched his hands, I was mortally afraid he was going to strike the doctor. In a minute he spoke: 'Very well, then, the trustees shall settle the matter; and I will see that they do so in accordance with my wishes,' he said in a low, hard tone, as he put on his gloves and buttoned them up with a jerk. 'I will await their decision,' answered the doctor quietly. 'In the mean time,' said Mr. Ivers, opening the door, 'see that you and your cubs keep close to your academy property. I give you fair warning if I catch any one of your select young men trespassing on my estate, I'll thrash him within an inch of his life.' Then he left the room, and the doctor, after a few minutes, went down to the school building. That let me out, more dead than alive, and I've been wandering around ever since like I was in a dream, going over it again and again, and wondering what is coming to the Hall."

"Phew!" exclaimed Perry, taking a long breath. "It is more serious than I thought. Things certainly do look black, especially for the doctor, and yet I don't believe Mr. Ivers can do him any harm, beyond making himself ugly, as he has heretofore. I would advise you, Mrs. Hollis, not to speak of this to anybody else."

"Oh, bless you, no; not a word. I feel better now I've told somebody, but I wouldn't have told you if I hadn't thought you knew how the land lay. I know enough to hold my tongue—here come some of the young men now, so I'd better get to my room and wash the fright off my face if I can."

Here Mrs. Hollis hurried out just as a group of boys passed the door.

"Brad," said Perry, when she was gone, "what do you think of Sidney Ivers now?"

"I simply have to give it up. It seems impossible to believe that he would play me so dastardly a trick merely on account of a spat."

"You don't know Sidney as I do. He never forgets a slight, and he is terribly malignant and vindictive in pursuing his grudges—all of which I think he inherits from his father, though Mr. Ivers is much keener and shrewder than Sidney. I suppose it makes you hot to think of that cesspool."

"Yes, it does," answered Brad; "and under ordinary circumstances I would look that sneak up and choke him till he was black in the face, but here I don't want to do anything, for I know it will only make more trouble for Dr. Hope. I am thinking more of him than myself. Confound it, I seem doomed to bring trouble here. I'm a regular Jonah, and I'm beginning to think it would have been better for me to have been dropped overboard from the omnibus before I arrived. Everything has gone wrong since."

"Oh, you needn't worry about that," said Perry, smiling at Brad's concern. "Things are not so bad, and I think the affair will blow over all right. I can't for the life of me see what possible influence Mr. Ivers can have with the trustees. None of them like him. Still, only time will tell. They meet now very soon."

At this moment the bell rang for lunch, so Brad and Perry made a hasty toilet, and joined the other boys, who were on their way down stairs.

As they passed through the lower hall, Brad, who was one of the last, saw the library door open and Dr. Hope come out. His face was somewhat pale and worn, but quite composed, and he greeted Brad with his customary gentleness and sweetness of manner. Detaining him in the hall behind the rest, he said in a low voice:

"After our conversation of the other night, you doubtless are not surprised at the announcement made by me this morning."

"I have had my suspicions all along, Dr. Hope," said Brad.

"And your suspicions were correct—that is all I wanted to say; and to add that I would prefer that the details of the affair remain a secret. It would only create unnecessary trouble if your companions knew them. You understand me."

"Perfectly," answered Brad; "and you may trust me to add no more trouble to what I have already caused."

"It was not your fault, Bradley. It was bound to happen some time. I could see it coming," said Dr. Hope gently, as they entered the dining room.

CHAPTER XI.

BRAD COMES TO A DETERMINATION.

FOR the next week Sidney Ivers's expulsion formed a frequent topic of conversation among the boys, but the whole truth of the matter never leaked out. To them the removal of the planks ever remained a mystery, and was generally attributed to the mis-

chievous Samuel, who was supposed to have done it for a practical joke and then been frightened into a denial and silence by the seriousness of the results. During the week Clarence Bliss and Brayton Arkell saw Sidney Ivers several times in their walks to town, but the latter showed no disposition to gratify their curiosity to know the true inwardness of the affair. The failure of the trick he had attempted upon Brad was reason enough for him to keep silence; so no amount of questioning succeeded in drawing the story from him, and only elicited a vehement repetition of his father's threats against Dr. Hope and the academy.

The generally accepted solution of the matter, therefore, was that Sidney had been called to account by Dr. Hope for some misdemeanor, and had used such insolent language to the doctor that the latter had expelled him on the spot. As to what the results of the affair would be the boys remained doubtful and apprehensive. And well they might; for, while Mr. Ivers did not own that portion of the estate on which the academy stood, he was in a position to make things very disagreeable for the occupants of Hosmer Hall.

Of his ability to do this he had shown ample evidence in past days, and now, with so good an excuse as the expulsion of his son, he would lose no opportunity to show the cloven hoof. As to the full extent of his power the boys knew little, but they believed that his influence went a great way with the trustees of the academy—with two of them, at least, Judge Carter and Mr. Norris, both prominent citizens of Bramford, and both apparently on excellent terms with Mr. Ivers. The third trustee was Mr. Raymond Parker, whom the boys knew less about, except by reputation, for his visits to the academy were few, and made for the most part only on the occasions of the stated meetings of the board. Such a meeting was to take place now in about ten days, so the boys looked forward to that date with some misgivings. Their uneasiness, however, was considerably relieved by the tranquility of Dr. Hope's manner, which seemed to indicate an absolute confidence on his part in the full support of the trustees. Had the boys known the whole enormity of Sidney's offense, as Brad and Perry Landon did, their doubt in reference to the action of the trustees would have been still further lessened; but as it was, they could only await hopefully the issue of events.

That Mr. Ivers would do everything in his power to unseat Dr. Hope was plain to all who knew him, for he had always displayed a feeling of bitter chagrin and disappointment at being deprived of the academy property, and had manifested from the beginning a spirit of resentment against Dr. Hope, as representative of the late Mr. Hosmer's will. By what means he could effect his purpose it was impossible to say, but the boys knew that he would leave no stone unturned.

In the meantime, Dr. Hope took occasion to caution the boys about trespassing upon Mr. Ivers's land, and thus giving possible cause for unnecessary trouble. This cramped them somewhat, for they had always been allowed to roam freely about the estate, and it had formed a vast playground for them. The restriction, moreover, put them to serious inconvenience, for the shortest path to the lake, their favorite resort both in winter and summer, lay directly across one of Mr. Ivers's meadows, and to avoid this they were compelled to walk down the main road some distance, then approach the lake in a roundabout manner, covering almost three sides of a square, where before they had but one.

This led to such a general feeling of annoyance that a protest was soon made by several of Sidney's particular friends—a protest which resulted in Sidney's securing permission for the members of the "upper four" alone to cross the fields. This only angered the other boys more, while Eugene Clifford, for his part, refused to accept the privilege on such terms. And so, for the present, the matter rested—the boys angry, Sidney Ivers sullen and silent, Mr. Ivers busy with his mischievous plans, and Dr. Hope quietly awaiting results.

It was on Tuesday night of the next week that Brad and Perry Landon were in their room talking over the coming event of the winter—the great skating contest—and discussing Eugene Clifford's chances of repeating his former successes.

"I hear," said Perry, "that there are a number of young fellows in town who have developed wonderfully this season, and, to judge by the rumors, I should say that Eugene was going to have a harder time than he ever had before. One thing is certain: the contest is going to be a more brilliant affair than in past years, both on account of the number of contestants, and by reason of a new feature in the form of a race in fancy skating between young ladies—"

"Young ladies, eh?" answered Brad. "Do the girls here skate well?"

"Yes; several of them, very well, especially Miss Lena Carter. She is the daughter of Judge Carter, one of our trustees, you know, and as nice and pretty a girl as there is in Bramford. She is sure for the first prize, from all accounts."

"Is it settled when the contest is to take place?" asked Brad.

"The first Saturday in February, weather permitting," answered Perry. "At least so one of the members of the skating club told me this morning."

"Do you know," said Brad, after whistling softly to himself for several minutes, "do you know, Perry, I've a great notion to go into that contest myself?"

"You!" exclaimed Perry, looking at him in astonishment.

"Yes; why shouldn't I?"

"Well, of course there is no reason why you shouldn't; but I didn't know you could skate. You never told me so."

"Haven't I?" answered Brad smiling. "Well, I must have overlooked that. *N'importe*, as we used to say in France."

"But can you really skate?" asked Perry, looking at him doubtfully.

"Why, certainly. I guess I didn't spend a whole winter in Holland for nothing," answered Brad.

"But I mean, can you skate well enough to enter a contest like this?" persisted Perry.

"Well, I'm willing to take my chances," rejoined Brad modestly. "I've been watching Clifford carefully since I first saw him practicing, and if he is likely to be the best skater, I don't think I'll be ashamed of my showing. At any rate, I'm going to try my hand at it—or rather my *foot*. Of course I'm out of form, but a little practice will get me into shape again."

"And how about skates?" asked Perry.

"Oh, my skates are in my big box in New York?" answered Brad.

Perry Landon rose from his seat, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and set himself deliberately in front of Brad, looking him squarely in the eye.

"Look here, Brad Mattoon," he said, "I have heard you allude not less than fifty times since you have been here to a certain 'big box,' which you have led us to believe contained everything worth having in this world, and which you have said each time that you intended sending for. But the 'big box' has never come. Now, let me tell you what I think. I think it is all a ghost story. There is no 'big box,' and of course it never will come. If your entering the skating contest depends on that 'big box,' all my interest in the matter is at an end——" and here Perry sat down again in amusing disgust.

Brad burst into a hearty laugh.

"Well, I don't blame you for your doubts, but wait a little and see what happens. The 'big box' shall come, and then you shall be sorry for what you've said."

"All right," responded Perry; "but I'll wait till I see the box."

"I'll write for it tomorrow," said Brad. "So you may look for it sure this time."

CHAPTER XII.

WARFARE IN THE SNOW.

THE next day Brad wrote a letter to Mr. Parker, in which he stated his intention of entering the skating contest, and requesting the latter to send him the big box which contained his skates. This letter was mailed Wednesday noon, so Brad looked for his box to arrive not later than Saturday.

The skating for a week or so had been excellent, and the weather remained clear and cold. But on Thursday afternoon heavy snow clouds began to obscure the sky, and by sundown light flakes were falling.

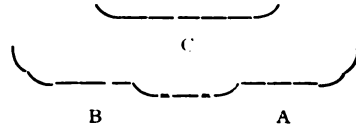
The next morning the boys arose to find the weather clear again, but the ground covered with snow to the depth of almost two feet. It was the only heavy fall of snow during the winter, and the boys welcomed it gladly. The half hour before lunch was spent in friendly bouts in deep drifts before the Hall, which recalled to some of the older students occasional exciting battles with the town boys in past days. It was in pursuance of this spirit of rivalry that some four or five of the fellows gave chase to three Bramford boys that chanced to be passing the gate. Of the results of this little skirmish, Brad only learned late Friday afternoon, when he was attracted by the sight of Dan Ellis, the leader of the morning's pursuit, busily engaged with two other boys in erecting a formidable looking snow fort at the side of the road, on the crest

of the hill on which the Hall stood, and almost immediately in front of the gateway.

"What is that for?" asked Brad.

"I don't know. Of course they wouldn't say, for they want to surprise us; so I am going to be on the watch, and I flatter myself they won't be able to do much with this fort."

Brad could not help admiring Dan's skill and judgment in fort building. It was constructed on truly military principles, and presented a very imposing front. It was about three feet thick, five feet high, and was provided with small apertures, through which the movements of the enemy could be observed, and with pockets intended to hold snowballs. The shape of the fort may best be indicated by the design below, A, B



being the main wall, while C is a smaller barrier constructed inside, for a refuge in case the enemy gained the outer wall. The work was truly admirable in its plan and conception and its construction had occupied Dan Ellis and his zealous companions the greater part of the afternoon.

"There!" said Dan, as he put on a few finishing touches. "Now we'll pour some water over it, and tomorrow morning it will be frozen as hard as rock. Then we'll be ready for the whole of Bramford."

The next morning the boys were on the watch for signs of the attacking party. Eugene Clifford was in command, and kept several boys on guard in the fort ready to give the alarm at once if necessary.

For a while the boys were content with drilling and mock fighting, but as the noon hour dragged away and the Bramford gang did not appear, interest began to flag. After lunch, duty in the fort was resumed, but half past two o'clock came and still no enemy. Taking it for granted that they would not put in an appearance that day, Brad, who was anxious for his skates, accompanied by Perry Landon and two other boys, who were eager to see the "big box" and its contents, walked into Bramford. Brad was confident of finding his box at the express office when he called there, and was, therefore, very much surprised when, in answer to his inquiry, a small package was handed to him.

Upon opening it a letter fell out. This Brad immediately read. It came from Mr. Parker, and said that he had looked up the box, but found the skates rather old fashioned, so he took the liberty of buying Brad a new pair of the same size and of a style much better suited for a participant in a prize contest, and sent them with best wishes for his success.

Brad's face flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, aren't they beauties?" he exclaimed, as he unfolded the parcel still further, and revealed a handsome nickel plated pair of club skates of the latest style.

"Yes," answered Perry Landon, with a quizzical smile, as the boys stood admiring the skates; "but I haven't seen that 'big box' yet."

"Well, I'm sorry to say you'll have to wait a little while longer," answered Brad. "So take my word for it this time."

Their errand over, Brad and his companions started for home. It was about quarter past three, and they were within a short distance of Hosmer, when mingled shouts and cheers greeted their ears. Perry Landon started forward in surprise.

"Hurry, fellows," he exclaimed. "That noise can only mean one thing. The Bramford boys must have come."

At this moment a small figure appeared on the brow of the hill that faced them. It was Rob Wilton, the "little dommie," running toward them with all his might. They hastened forward to meet him.

"Quick, quick!" exclaimed Wilton breathlessly, as he came up. "Clifford sent me after you. Don't lose a moment. The Bramford fellows are here, and our boys are outnumbered and getting the worst of it."

(To be continued.)

FLOORING CHOLLIE.

"WHAT would do if you were a man, Ethel?" asked Mr. De Sappy.

"I'd work as hard as I knew how for the good of my country. What would you do if you were a man, Mr. De Sappy?"—*Exchange*.



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NEVER before in its history has THE ARGOSY been freighted with such rich treasure in the shape of stories as at the present time. And the near future will see still richer additions to its cargo. Mr. Edward Stratemeyer will be represented by one of the best serials he has ever penned, a thrilling Indian story by a new writer will shortly follow, and still other most attractive features are now being created for the delectation of our readers.

* * * *

BASEBALL to the fore again! What thrills of anticipated pleasure stir the pulses of Young America as daisies begin to dot the meadows and the robins build their nests! But the thrill is not induced by these harbingers of spring; they are only reminders of the fact that the season is now at hand when the diamond on the green is of more moment to the small boy than a diamond on the finger when the whirr of the bat through the air is sweeter music in his ears than the songs of the birds, and even the circus is deserted for the bleaching boards at the opening game of the season.

* * * *

"DROP a penny in the slot and get your morning paper," or at least something like it, is soon to be the order of the day in Paris. The company that controls the cab system of the city is arranging to issue a periodical devoted to their business, copies of which are to be placed in each carriage, obtainable in the manner described.

All this is very convenient, to be sure, and is capable of almost indefinite application, but when, oh when are we to have the slot machine that will relieve mankind of the most monotonous process with which he is afflicted—that of dressing and undressing himself three hundred and sixty five times a year?

* * * *

"HE that is born to be hanged will never be drowned," runs the old saying. This may be a consoling thought to a man when he falls overboard; still, a plain rope at hand would be more appreciated, without the accompanying anticipation of one with a noose in it later on.

And yet things do not always turn out according to the proverbs' forecasting. Indeed, as we all have occasion to experience, at times, it is the unexpected that happens. Here, for instance, is an aeronaut in Illinois taking his life in his hands, as one may say, at every ascension, only to die at last from a blow dealt him by a hack driver on commonplace *terra firma*. From this, therefore, we may all learn a lesson of equanimity, and not die a daily death in the fear of a sudden drop because we run a hotel elevator. We can console ourselves with the reflection that we are just as liable to be killed by a tumbling brick from a chimney top.

GEORGE W. PECK.

JOURNALIST AND GOVERNOR.

AS the glorious sun lights up the world with its radiant beams, so a cheerful disposition brightens everything around us and strengthens our love for mankind. The world is surfeited with dismal yarns. It mourns too much and laughs too little. There is the true ring in the rhymester's comment that

Care in our coffin drives the nails, no doubt,
While Mirth, with merry fingers, plucks them out.

Endowed with the happy faculty of seeing the funny side of things,



GEORGE W. PECK.

George W. Peck is liked by the people for his good humor and "rib tickling" stories. His highly colored recitals of the "Bad Boy's" mischievous propensities, and the scrapes into which "His Pa" fell, have made thousands smile. But there is a strong business side to Mr. Peck's character, as is shown by his rapid advancement to political fame.

New York State claims the birthplace of this distinguished American. Born in Jefferson County, September 28, 1840, he resided there three years and then moved to Wisconsin. At the age of fifteen his school days were ended. The printing press had a charm for him, and he began, as an apprentice in a country newspaper office, to learn the trade. It was at this early period of his career that he picked up the primary knowledge of journalistic work which afterwards fitted him so admirably for the more important office that he was destined to fill in the newspaper world. From an ordinary printer's "devil" in the Whitewater *Register* office, he rose step by step to higher positions.

While setting type in the Madison *Journal* office the Civil War broke out, and young Peck enlisted as a private in the cavalry. When peace had been declared, he returned home, wearing the badge of second lieutenant. For several years after that he followed the profession of journalism in various newspaper offices, finding time, while in La Crosse, to perform the duties of Chief of Police.

In 1878 Mr. Peck established the *Sun* in Milwaukee. That was one of the greatest strokes of his life. The munificent profits gleaned from this enterprise afforded him many comforts without the inconvenience of being a millionaire.

His latest achievement is fresh in the memory of the country. As the candidate of the Democratic party Mr. Peck was elected Governor of Wisconsin. His wide experience in dealing with men and affairs qualifies him thoroughly for the trying position of chief executive of a great commonwealth, and his countrymen will respect him in the years to come as they do now for his invincible energy and versatile talents.

WILLIAM J. BAHMER.

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

WHILE traveling with his parents on the limited express from Chicago to St. Louis, Dashwood Dykeman is made an orphan by the killing of his father and mother in a collision. He is sent for by his paternal grandfather, who educates him, and who, when he loses his money five years later, informs Dash that the latter's name is not Dykeman, and that he, his grandfather, does not know what it is, as his son married a widow, with one child, against the wishes of his parents. After several vain attempts to secure a position, Dash falls in with Tom Tickmore, a young telegraph operator whom he had met on that ill-fated train years before. Through his influence, Dash gets a chance to learn telegraphy, and finally obtains a situation with the railroad company that employs Tickmore. He is suspended, however, for sixty days, on account of a mishap for which he is not wholly responsible, and determines to go to St. Louis and look up his relatives. He travels part way as rear brakeman, manages to save the train from a disastrous collision, and, after an unpleasant adventure with tramps, receives a present of \$60 from the superintendent, and a pass to St. Louis. The train he takes passes through a town where a large hotel is burning. Dash gets off to look at the fire, and is left behind.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DARING DEED.

THE flames had got beyond the control of the far too weak and inadequate fire department. The ladders were too short for any service above the fourth floor, even had they been able to use them, but the bursting flames, with their scorching heat, rendered them useless for any height.

The agonizing cries for succor from the poor victims appealed to Dash's most heroic instincts, and he involuntarily started forward toward the burning building, with the idea that he might do something to save a human life.

At the same moment, the shrill clang of an engine bell arrested him momentarily, and he turned his eyes toward the other end of the station building. His train had pulled out, and the red lights on its rear car were just disappearing around a curve.

"I'm in for it again," thought Dash, but he consoled himself with the thought that it was not so bad as it might have been, had he been left without money or a pass.

The conductor had not taken up his pass since leaving Pittsburg, and he would have no difficulty in getting his satchel again on arriving in St. Louis. Without further thought of self, he turned again to the burning building.

A most thrilling sight now met his view, which he watched with breathless interest, his heart throbbing with almost painful intensity. Some one was lowering a woman from the sixth story with a rope tied under her arms. They had selected the window with the least fire bursting from those under it.

Just as the burden had passed the fourth story coping, a sheet of flames shot out of the window and enveloped the rope in its scorching folds. Mingled cries and groans of horror went up from the spectators, as they saw the rope burned, strand by strand, and many of them closed their eyes or turned away, as they waited for the poor woman to be dashed to her death almost at their feet.

As Dash watched, with horror-stricken gaze, the helpless woman at the end of the dangling rope, which was slowly but surely being eaten away by the fierce flames, his busy brain tried to devise a means of rescuing her from the fatal fall that seemed inevitable.

As his eye scanned the face of the burning building, he noticed some projecting ornamental work that ran along the whole front, on a line with the third floor. It appeared to be a continuation of the cornice of an adjoining building, the

roof of which reached to the third floor of the hotel; or the two buildings may at one time have been all a single three story structure, and the hotel part afterward extended upward four additional stories. At any rate, the ornamental work suggested to Dash a means of possibly reaching the



DASH WATCHED THE SLOWLY MOVING ROPE.

woman before the rope suspending her was severed by the flames.

There was comparatively little smoke, and no flames, issuing as yet from the third floor windows, and could a per-

*Begun in No. 434 of THE ARGOSY.

son reach a position under the woman before the rope parted, he could catch her and lower her to the ground.

The only question was, could she be reached before the rope parted, and would she be near enough to be grasped?

If she was still too high when a rescuer reached a position on the projecting work to assist her, and the rope separated, she would most likely carry him to the ground with her. The person who was lowering her from the sixth floor was evidently ignorant of the deadly peril that was menacing his charge, for the rope crept slowly downward, seeming to the transfixed spectators hardly to move.

These observations and thoughts passed almost instantaneously through Dash's brain, and then he sprang forward through the dense crowd of spectators and firemen, making his way toward the entrance to the building next to the hotel.

No one had any idea of his intentions, or they would doubtless have restrained him; as it was, a fireman stationed at the doorway tried to prevent him from entering the building.

Dash broke from the latter's grasp, and was soon rapidly mounting the stairways amid a mass of choking smoke. He quickly reached the roof of the building adjoining the hotel, and, drawing in a deep breath of fresh air, prepared for his arduous undertaking.

As he stepped out on the cornice, which seemed little more than two feet wide, though it was all of three, encouraging shouts came from the crowd below, as they comprehended his intentions. Hugging the wall closely at his back, he crept forward as rapidly as he could with safety.

He had to pass two windows, out of which the smothering smoke was now pouring; but, drawing a deep breath each time, he pushed past them in safety.

Then he looked upward for the object of his heroic venture. She was still hanging there, slowly descending, but was yet too far above him to be clasped in his arms. Would she reach him, so he could sustain her weight, before the rope parted, or would she be launched against him? He knew that, even though she was only a few feet above him, the impetus of her body, should she fall, would surely carry him with her to the pavement below. But he bravely placed himself directly beneath her, and watched the slowly moving rope.

Even in this trying position, when his nerves were strained to their utmost tension, he noted that the woman was small, and this discovery encouraged him to believe he could probably withstand the shock of her falling body. The red glare lighted up her pale face, and as she made no motion or outcry, she was no doubt unconscious, which Dash considered another fortunate circumstance.

When her feet had reached and passed his head, Dash extended his hands upward to grasp her under the arms. A few more inches downward she came, and then the rope noiselessly parted.

The helpless burden sank into Dash's arms as if it was so much lead. He secured a firm grasp upon it, but he staggered from the shock. A chill shot over him, as he felt himself borne over backward toward the street. He threw out his left hand, supporting his burden with the other, and clutched desperately at the empty air.

Fortunately, he encountered a projecting shutter, and his fingers closed over the outside frame through the spaces for the blinds. He quickly regained his equilibrium, and, as soon as he could turn around, started to return along the cornice. A loud cheer broke from the assembled spectators which gave him new encouragement.

If it had seemed precarious to make his way along the

projection alone, it was now doubly so with his helpless burden. Slowly he moved along, keeping his feet as far out on the edge of the cornice as he dared, with his back braced against the wall. The first window, with its volumes of blinding smoke, was safely passed, and he was preparing to run the gauntlet of the other, when a sheet of flame shot from it, and his retreat was cut off.

Dash staggered back, and his heart sank within him. It seemed hard to perish, after his brave efforts, when they were so near safety. His arms ached fearfully from supporting the unconscious woman, and his lower limbs trembled from the strain that had been put upon them.

He could see no possible means of escape, and he could only maintain his position until the flames and smoke, or his failing strength, compelled him to fall into the street. He rapidly became weaker, and felt that he was losing his senses. He thought he heard encouraging shouts from the crowd below, his burden slipped from his grasp, and he became unconscious.

When his powers of mind and action returned to him, Dash found himself stretched on a cot in the station waiting room, and he raised himself to look about the apartment. There were numerous other cots scattered around, on which were many poor, suffering victims of the fire. Doctors and nurses ministered to their pain and agony.

Dash stretched out his limbs to determine if he had been injured; but, beyond a little weakness and a soreness of his muscles, he felt he was all right, though some of the doctors had evidently been working over him, as he detected the smell of drugs about his face and hands. A strong odor of smoke permeated his clothing.

His first thought, after these investigations, was of the woman he had tried to save, and then how he himself had been rescued from his perilous position. Dash disliked exceedingly anything like notoriety, or being made a lion of; so, without waiting to ask for information upon the two points, he reached for his hat, which was lying on the floor.

As the people in the room were very much engaged on a particularly distressing case, he gained the door and passed out unobserved by them. His eyes naturally turned first toward the burning hotel. It was a mass of smoldering ruins within the four blackened and dismantled walls, upon which the firemen were still pouring streams of water.

As he stood gazing at the wreck and devastation, and wondering what he should do till he could resume his journey, he overheard a conversation between a group of men standing near by.

"I tell you, he was a plucky one. If he hadn't hung on to the woman, one of them would have been killed sure," observed one.

Dash instinctively realized that he was the "plucky one" referred to, and he felt his face flush. He inferred from the remark that the lady was alive, and probably uninjured, which was gratifying information.

"But they got that ladder up there just in time, for Walker says just as he reached the cornice the young fellow gave a gasp and fell over into his arms, still hanging to his burden," added another.

"Does anybody know who he is?" asked a third.

"No; nobody who has seen him so far knows him, and he hasn't come to to answer for himself," replied the first speaker.

It was with much satisfaction Dash told himself the man was mistaken; that he had "come to," but he did not mean to "answer for himself" if he could help it. He moved away from the group, for if his praises were to be further sung, he did not care to hear them.

He now felt that he was weaker than he had at first realized, and was in need of rest and sleep. He was about to ask to be directed to a hotel or boarding house, when a train pulled into the station. This suggested a plan that would preclude a possible chance of any one finding him out and subjecting him to the "lionizing" process.

"How far from here is the next station of any size?" he asked one of the brakemen standing near the steps of a car.

"About fifteen miles."

"Do you stop there?"

"Yes."

"Is there a hotel or boarding house near the depot?"

"There's a good hotel right at the station."

"Thank you," said Dash, and he boarded the train, deciding he would go on to the place mentioned.

As the reader will remember, the lines of the company Dash had worked for only extended to Pittsburg, and therefore he was not familiar with the names of the stations and their location; and for the same reason he did not know any of the trainmen.

The reader will perhaps think Dash took an unusual precaution, and put himself to considerable trouble to escape his "meed of praise." But he was an unusually modest young fellow, and argued that it would have done no good to be thanked and lauded. It certainly would be distasteful to him, and he further feared an effort would be made to reward him, which would be still more repugnant. So truth compels us to tell of his fleeing from the fame of his heroic deed, and in viewing his action it should be remembered that one half of heroism is bravery, and the other half modesty.

Half an hour later he was asleep in a comfortable bed, having decided to rest till the following night, and then take the through west bound sleeper.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOROTHY ORLOFF.

AFTER a refreshing night's rest, which was extended well into the morning hours, Dash rose, feeling little the worse for his trying experience of the night before, with the exception that his muscles were still sore. When he had disposed of a bountiful breakfast he declared that he felt "as good as new."

One of the first things he did after his morning meal was to telegraph the sleeping car office at Pittsburg to reserve him a berth to St. Louis on the night express. Then he looked about him for some diversion that would serve to make the time pass quickly and pleasantly till the hour of his departure. But there was positively nothing to be done but to walk about the town, or settle down to reading a newspaper or a paper novel. He divided his time between the two, though he found the latter more enjoyable.

The burning of the hotel in the neighboring town was the chief topic of conversation with everybody, and not infrequently Dash heard references to his participation in it, and his mysterious and total disappearance from the cot where he had been left unconscious. But no one suspected his identity, and he did not care to enlighten them upon the subject.

The night express steamed into the station on time, and Dash boarded the through sleeper. On presenting a reply to the telegram he had sent that morning, reserving the lower berth of section six, he was shown to his seat.

"Baggage, boss?" said the colored porter inquiringly.

"No," replied Dash shortly, in some embarrassment, and then, to explain its absence, he went on to tell how he had been left by the express the night before. It was hardly

necessary, for it was no unusual thing for a traveler to make a single night's journey with no baggage.

With a profusion of unnecessary and unintelligible apologies, the porter left him, and Dash looked about him.

Most of the berths had been made up, and curtains drawn, as if the occupants had retired. They were no doubt passengers who had come through, or got on at Pittsburg.

In the seat facing Dash, and in the same section, were seated a middle aged lady, of small and delicate frame, and a young girl fourteen or fifteen years of age. The former appeared to be pale and weak, as if just recovering from an illness, while an expression of anxiety rested on the face of the young girl. As he glanced at the latter, Dash thought she reminded him of the portrait of a Puritan maiden that hung in his grandfather's parlor. She still wore short dresses, reaching to her shoe tops, and had not quite reached that interesting age when she could be declared a young lady in the full sense of the term; she was

"Standing with reluctant feet,

Where the brook and river meet."

Dash instantly wondered if they were to occupy an adjoining section, which was not yet made up. He did not imagine for a moment that they might have engaged the berth over his.

"Oh, sir," ventured the girl, as if she had been gathering courage to speak, "are you the one who has engaged the lower berth in this seat?"

Dash gave an affirmative reply, and he could not hide the admiration that must have shown from his eyes as he gazed upon the fresh, girlish face, suffused in blushes, rendered more attractive by the play of features in talking.

"I really don't know what we will do," she went on, in a hesitating way; "we tried to get a lower berth, but couldn't. Mamma is so weak and nervous she never could climb into an upper berth. The conductor said perhaps you—"

"Certainly, with pleasure," interrupted Dash promptly, as he quickly anticipated her request.

"I hope it will not inconvenience you," she said, in soft and solicitous tones.

"Not at all. I shall sleep like a top up there," Dash hastened to reply.

"You are very good."

"I am only too glad to be of service to you. Is there anything else I can do to make you comfortable?"

"No, sir, thank you; I think not. We have been through such a dreadful experience last night, I fear neither one of us will sleep very much. I suppose you heard of the burning of the hotel at Marshall."

"Yes, I was there," admitted Dash.

"Oh, yes, I forgot; I did hear you tell the porter you got left by your train there. Well, we were stopping at the hotel, and hadn't retired very long when the fire broke out. Our room was filled with smoke, and we were almost suffocated, when some one broke in the door and carried me out. Mamma was lowered from the window by some one, and if it hadn't been for a brave, noble young man, she would have been killed or maimed when the rope that held her was burned in two."

"A thrilling experience, surely," commented Dash, as he felt a hot flush sweep over his face, and his heart beat faster, at hearing words of praise for his deed from the beautiful girl, and realizing that the person he had saved was before him. "I saw the rescue of your mother—and it was a narrow escape for both of them," he added, with a calmness that even surprised himself. He felt he would not have her know he was the rescuer for the world.

"Yes; and I should never have gone through it, and been as well as I am now, if I had not been mercifully deprived of consciousness," observed the mother.

"But the strangest part of it all," continued the girl, "is that the young man who risked his life for mamma disappeared very mysteriously from where he was taken while unconscious, and nobody could find any trace of him. Mamma would dearly love to tell him how grateful she is for his brave service, and I would thank him ever so much."

"Indeed I would," added the mother. "A mother should be proud of such a son, and I know his is, if he has one."

This profusion of praise was getting decidedly embarrassing to Dash. He felt that he was amply rewarded for what he had done, though he expected nothing, and had run away to escape even an expression of gratitude.

It seemed odd to him that the reward of thanks had overtaken him, in spite of his efforts to avoid them, and that he was listening to praises of himself as if he was a third person.

The reference to a mother appealed strongly to his tenderest feelings, and for a moment he was almost tempted to confess he was the rescuer. If he had done so then, he might have learned something about his own affairs that would have spared him much harassing doubt and painful uncertainty in the near future.

As it was, after a few moments' silence he changed his mind and ventured to ask:

"Are you going farther than St. Louis?"

"Yes; we are going on to Madrid," replied the girl, ingenuously; "we are to live there with mamma's sister."

"If I can be of any service to you when you change cars in St. Louis, I hope you will call on me," said Dash, rising to his feet as they murmured their thanks.

"And now I suppose you would like to have the berth made up as soon as possible," he continued. "It will be much more comfortable, even if you feel you cannot sleep."

Dash hunted up the porter, and, upon exhibiting his berth check, the latter went to work turning the section into beds, while the ladies occupied the only remaining section that was not yet made up, which was evidently being held for some traveler who would board the train still further on. Dash remained in the smoking room long enough to give them ample time to retire, but even then he felt wide awake and little inclined to go to bed.

His wakefulness may have been occasioned by the unexpected meeting with the lady he had assisted in saving from the burning hotel, or the vision of a fair young face with a pair of bright eyes; but as he told himself several times over that "she was a decidedly pretty girl," we are inclined to believe it was the latter. At any rate, he felt that she pleased him better than any girl he had ever seen. She seemed to remind him of his mother, for he opened the locket attached to his watchchain and gazed upon the features within.

When Dash came forward, prepared to mount to his elevated bed, he was surprised to find the young girl seated in the vacant section, while the drawn curtains of his own seemed to indicate that the mother had retired.

It cannot be denied that he noted with pleasurable anticipation the opportunity for further conversation with the young girl, or that his heart beat a little faster, but he could not have told why.

"I beg your pardon; I thought you had retired," he remarked, as he seated himself opposite her.

"I wasn't sleepy, and I told mamma I would sit here a while till she got settled nicely in bed," she responded. "Don't let us keep you up, though."

"You are not, I assure you," smiled Dash. "I am not sleepy, either; I only came in to see if you had been comfortably stowed away."

"Thank you," laughed the young girl; "we will do nicely, thanks to you."

And then, after a pause, she said in a hesitating way:

"Mamma said she wished she had asked you your name, so as to remember who was so kind to us, as we might not have an opportunity in the morning."

"Certainly," responded Dash readily; "my name is Dashwood Dykeman."

"How odd; and yet, do you know, I think it is real pretty," she remarked artlessly.

"Thank you; and now I suppose you will favor me with yours," responded Dash, with a flush of pleasure.

"Oh, yes, certainly. Ours is Orloff."

"And yours, in full," persisted Dash.

"Dorothy Orloff."

"I can return the compliment, Miss Orloff; but your name is more *pretty* than *odd*," retaliated Dash, and he felt that he had turned a neat speech.

"And do you know," he went on slowly, as he puzzled his brain to think where he had heard the name Orloff before, "it seems to me I have heard your name somewhere."

"I am sure we never met before, Mr. Dykeman."

"I have it," exclaimed Dash, as his memory carried him back to the tragedy that had robbed him of his parents; "the conductor of a train out in Illinois, which was wrecked, and killed a lot of people, was named Orloff. Was he any relation of yours?"

"No; my papa died over six years ago. He had only one brother, and he was lost at sea."

Dash little realized in what connection, and how soon, this last piece of information would be recalled to him.

After some further conversation, during which they found many congenial topics to talk about, Miss Orloff retired.

Dash followed suit soon after, but before he sank to slumber he briefly went over in mind the odd meeting with the lady he had saved, and the fact that her name was Orloff. Then his mind was devoted exclusively to a fair faced young maiden, with long braids of golden hair, and we have no doubt she was carried into his dreams.

If any one had told Dash that he was in love, he would have indignantly denied it, for he had not yet received the first touch of the tender passion, and did not know what it was. All he knew was that Miss Orloff was a decidedly handsome girl, and that her presence had a strangely exhilarating effect upon him. What pleasant dreams he had, if he had any, were destined to a sorrowful awakening by a most unexpected and sad event before morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SAD EVENT IN THE SLEEPER.

MISS ORLOFF did indeed play a prominent part in Dash's dreams that night, but not in a manner that was conducive to his peaceful and restful slumber. After behaving in an erratic and most extraordinary manner, in a number of odd and exaggerated scenes, she appeared at the end of the dangling rope instead of her mother, and Dash's experience at the hotel fire was re-enacted. She seemed to pass unscathed through the sheets of flame pouring from the windows, and the rope did not appear to be affected by the fire. When she reached him, and Dash put out his arms to her, she drew back. He sprang forward to grasp her, when she gave a scream and leaped into the fiery furnace within, while he missed his footing and went down, down, as he thought, to certain death. He felt

the breathless sensation of falling through the air, and even wondered that it took so long to strike the earth.

Then he awoke with a convulsive start, to find that a portion of his dream at least was true. A number of suppressed screams, mingled with convulsive sobbing, were heard, and appeared to come from directly under him. Then several other voices were audible, which sounded subdued, but agitated.

With the liveliest apprehensions that something had happened to Mrs. Orloff or her daughter, Dash sat up and parted the curtains.

A number of persons were gathered in the aisle, among them the conductor and porter, and there was undoubtedly something wrong in the berth below him.

"What is the matter?" he asked at random, addressing no one in particular.

"We think the lady in the berth below you is dead. A doctor is now examining her," responded the conductor, in low tones.

Dash was inexpressibly shocked at this announcement, and hastened to don the few clothes he had taken off, to descend from his berth. This was quickly done, and he went down the stepladder the porter had placed for him. When he reached the aisle the examining physician announced that Mrs. Orloff was undoubtedly dead, and had expired several minutes before he had been called.

"It is without doubt a case of heart disease," he concluded, with a professional air. "She would have probably died long ere this had she received any severe shock to her nerves."

"Then that is what killed her now," added Dash; and he imparted the details of Mrs. Orloff's rescue from the burning hotel the night before, taking care to conceal his identity as the one who had assisted her.

"You are undoubtedly correct, young man," commented the doctor.

Dash hardly heard him, as he thought how strange are the freaks of fate, that the lady should have passed safely through the fiery ordeal only to die on a railroad train. Then he turned toward the bereaved young girl, who was in the section that was still unoccupied, where several ladies were trying to assuage her grief by consoling words.

Dash hesitated for a moment to intrude himself upon her in her deep sorrow. But as he watched her, his heart went out to her in deep sympathy. She vividly brought before him the scene, and his intense anguish, accompanying the death of his own mother, when he, too, was left an orphan.

"Oh, Mr. Dykeman!" cried Miss Orloff, as soon as she saw him; and the sight of him effected what the kindness and sympathy of the ladies failed to accomplish—she became more composed and tractable.

"Isn't it dreadful? What shall I do?" she concluded, with a suppressed sob.

Dash half seated himself on the cushioned arm of the seat opposite and hesitated a moment, as he thought how inadequate any words of his would be to soften the blow of her affliction.

"In the first place, you must try to be calm, Miss Orloff," he returned soothingly, "so that you may decide what is to be done."

"But oh, it is so terribly sudden, Mr. Dykeman," sobbed the young girl.

"I know it; but wouldn't you rather have it so than for her to have perished in the flames last night? I'm sure One who watches over us all knows best."

"That's just it, Mr. Dykeman. It seems so cruel to take her after escaping the fire."

"It does seem hard; but an all-wise Providence probably knows best, and we should strive to think so, at least."

Then, in an effort to take her mind from her troubles, and to convince her that things are never so bad that they cannot be worse, Dash related how his own mother and stepfather had been snatched from him without a moment's warning in the horrors of a railroad collision.

If our pleasures are only relative, so also are we consoled in our sorrows by hearing of greater ones, and Miss Orloff became more calm and resigned.

"Mr. Dykeman, how will the—the—mamma be taken to Madrid?" she inquired, still with a tremor in her voice.

"That can all be attended to on our arrival in St. Louis," replied Dash, though he had never been concerned in such a sad business before, and did not exactly know how it could be arranged.

"Will you attend to it, Mr. Dykeman?"

"Certainly, if you desire it."

"I would be so glad if you would. I'm so glad we met you."

"Thank you. I'm glad, too, if I can do anything for you."

"But, Mr. Dykeman," she began slowly, in an embarrassed way, "we had only enough money with us to pay for our meals on the way, besides our tickets, and surely it will require quite a large sum."

This was something Dash had not considered before, his thoughts having been principally devoted to "ways" rather than to "means." He hesitated for a moment; but the bereaved and helpless young girl appealed to his innate chivalry, and he quickly decided that the full amount of his available capital should be at her service.

"Don't worry about that, Miss Orloff," he responded. "It will all be provided."

Miss Orloff accepted the assurance without question. Whether or not she had any curiosity as to how and by whom it was to be provided, is doubtful. Probably, owing to her affliction and inexperience, she did not consider the matter at all, being simply content to trust all to her new found and stronger friend.

Dash soon left her to consult with the sleeping car conductor. As this was not the first case of the kind the latter had had, he was quick to advise. Ordinarily, in such cases, a casket would be provided at the first stopping place of any size, but as the night was more than half gone, it was decided to carry the body on to St. Louis, where they would arrive early in the morning.

Telegrams were sent from the first telegraph office reached, making all arrangements for the care of the remains, and notifying Mrs. Handiford, the sister of the deceased, at Madrid, of the sad event. The balance of the night was spent by Dash in sad vigil with the bereaved young girl. To the latter sleep was of course an utter impossibility, until tired nature should succumb, while Dash had no inclination to close his eyes, so shocked had he been by the unexpected and sad event of the night.

The two young people, drawn together in sympathy, became better acquainted in those lonely morning hours, and they declared to each other that they felt as if they had been friends for years. They found a melancholy pleasure in each other's words, for sympathy is sweet in the hour of sorrow.

The gray dawn was just chasing the black shadows of night before it when they crossed the great bridge spanning the Mississippi River, which served as the gateway for all the great trunk lines east of the river to enter St. Louis. Then they moved quickly through what seemed an endless tunnel, and finally rolled into the Union Depot.

Everything was ready for the care of Mrs. Orloff's remains. Dash left the young girl in the waiting room of the station, while he looked after the details of the forwarding of the body. When it had been placed in the express car of the train that was to leave for Madrid in a few minutes, and he had secured the necessary papers—a receipt and a doctor's certificate—he conducted Miss Orloff to her train.

When he handed her the papers her eyes were almost filled with tears as she said:

"Oh, Mr. Dykeman, I don't know how I can ever thank you enough. But surely you haven't paid for having all this done?"

Dash nodded his head affirmatively, and with a smile, as he felt already rewarded for what he had done, said:

"I took that liberty, Miss Orloff."

"You are so kind; but you shall have it back as soon as I reach Aunt Helen's. What is going to be your address in St. Louis, so we will know where to send it?"

As he knew no one in the city, Dash gave Mr. Hummon's address, to whom, it will be remembered, he had a letter of recommendation from Mr. Tickmore.

"There is no hurry about it, Miss Orloff," he continued; "but there is something that would please me more to receive than the money."

"What is that?"

"A letter from you."

"You shall have it, Mr. Dykeman, but only on one condition," with a faint smile; "and that is, that you will be sure to answer it."

"I will be sure to do that, or I wouldn't have asked you. And I have a further request to make, that you will please address me as Dash. I haven't been 'Mistered' long enough to get used to it yet," he returned with a slight laugh.

"I will, if you will address me as Dorothy. I haven't quite reached the dignity of a young lady, and Miss Orloff seems quite strange to me."

"It's a bargain, Miss—Miss—Dorothy," agreed Dash, and he thought it was the prettiest name he had ever heard.

"Yes, Mr.—Dash."

They were only two little words, but they sent a strange thrill over Dash, and were treasured for many days after.

In a few minutes the great gong in the station gave the signal of departure, the final good by was said, and the train pulled out.

Dash watched it till it disappeared in the labyrinth of tracks and cars just outside the depot. He then turned about, and naturally directed his steps toward the telegraph office. His thoughts were pleasant, and he was rather amused to remember that in her solicitude that he should be reimbursed, Miss Orloff had failed to ask him how much he had expended in her behalf, and would find it rather difficult to return the amount till she heard from him.

This suggested that he cast a balance to find out his exact financial condition. He knew he had had something over ten dollars in change after paying all bills, but had not ascertained the exact amount. He put his fingers down into his vest pocket, where he always carried his money, and brought out a five cent piece. A hurried search of the rest of his pockets failed to reveal another cent. Dash was finally reluctantly compelled to conclude that he had been robbed, and that five cents was the extent of his capital. As he had not yet had any breakfast, the prospect of satisfying his appetite with that amount did not seem bright.

And the future beyond his breakfast, however slim, seemed more dark and doubtful. It was true he had a letter, with which he expected to secure employment. But how was he to live till he had earned something? And sup-

pose the gentleman to whom the letter was addressed had nothing to offer him just at present?

(To be continued.)

DIGGING FOR GOLD.

A STORY OF CALIFORNIA.*

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

GRANT COLBURN'S mother has married a miserly farmer—Seth Tarbox—who treats Grant very meanly. But Grant is fortunate enough to save a train from going through a bridge, a purse is made up for him by the passengers, and with this money he decides to try his fortune in the California gold diggings. He starts overlaid with Mr. and Mrs. Cooper and their son Tom, meets with various adventures, and when their provisions run out and they fear that they must kill and eat their horse Grant discovers a hermit living in a log cabin, whom he takes back with him to the camp. This is Giles Crosmont, a wealthy Englishman, who is traveling over the world to try and forget the disappointment a vagabond son has caused him. He joins Mr. Cooper's party, and supplies them with all his provisions, so that the journey is continued with comfort. On arrival in Sacramento Mr. Cooper buys out a blacksmith's shop and resumes work at his old trade, which is here very remunerative. Tom starts for the mines, and Mr. Crosmont goes to San Francisco, while Grant secures a position as waiter in Mr. Smithson's restaurant at a salary of three dollars a day and board. When he has saved up enough to take him to the mines, he joins Tom at Howe's Gulch. But their claim here does not pay well, and they pull up stakes, going to a locality of which Grant has been informed by an old man whom he has befriended. They obtain board with Mr. and Mrs. Paul Crambo, and in the course of a few weeks have nearly one thousand dollars in gold dust put away in a chest in their room.

But now the Crambos receive a new boarder into their home, who proves to be none other than Albert Benton, who was waiter in the Sacramento restaurant with Grant, where he was detected stealing money from the cash drawer. He now determines to rob the young miners; but Paul Crambo suspects his intention, and puts the boys on their guard.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BENTON OPENS THE TRUNK.

SOON after supper Albert Benton went to the village, and this left Grant and Tom free to transfer their gold dust to a trunk in Mr. Crambo's chamber. When the change had been made, Grant said in a satisfied tone: "Now Benton can open the chest and welcome."

"I'd like to be present when he is doing it," said Tom Cooper.

Albert Benton was anxious to obtain a key that would open the chest. He scraped acquaintance with a clerk at the village hotel, and casually remarked: "I'm in a bad fix. I've got a trunk at home that I can't open."

"Why not?" asked the clerk.

"I haven't a key that will fit it. You don't happen to have any keys, do you?"

"I've got half a dozen," said the clerk, taking a handful from his pocket. "They are keys that I picked up about the hotel."

"Will you lend them to me?"

"Certainly. If you find one that suits, you can have it."

Benton took them, well pleased. From the size it seemed to him probable that one of them would fit the chest.

"Thank you," he said. "I will return them to you tomorrow."

"Oh, don't be in any hurry. They are of no use to me."

He left the hotel, and it chanced soon afterward that Grant and Tom entered it. Tom was in search of a cigar, for he was a confirmed smoker.

"I just had a call from one of your fellow boarders," remarked the clerk, who knew both Tom and Grant.

"Benton?"

"Oh, is that his name? I only knew that he boarded at Paul Crambo's. Seems a sociable sort of fellow."

"Quite so," answered Tom dryly.

"He is talking of buying a restaurant in the village—the one kept by Hardy."

"I heard him mention it."

"He says he was in that business in Sacramento."

"Yes," said Grant; "I knew him there."

"I did him a favor tonight—lent him some keys," continued the clerk.

As may be imagined this announcement was of great interest to Tom and Grant.

"What did he want keys for?" inquired Tom.

"He said he couldn't open his trunk. He thought one of those I lent him might do."

* Begun in No. 430 of THE ARGOSY

Tom and Grant exchanged glances. They understood very well what it was that Benton wanted to unlock.

"Did he think he would raise the money to buy the restaurant?" inquired Tom.

"Yes, he said he was negotiating for a loan."

Meanwhile Benton had observed Tom Cooper and Grant walking together. He had the keys in his pocket, and was anxious to test the question whether one of them would fit.

"Why shouldn't I try this evening?" he asked himself. "It is a fine night, and Grant and Cooper will probably stay out some time. If I could only get the gold dust and settle the matter about the restaurant tomorrow. Hardy won't keep it for me very long. He is likely to meet a man with money any time."

Benton kept on his way, and, seizing his opportunity, stole up stairs quietly and, as he thought, unobserved. But Mrs. Crambo saw him and suspected his purpose. When two minutes later Tom and Grant entered the house, she remarked: "Mr. Benton has just gone up stairs."

"I expected he would. He has borrowed some keys in the village."

his feet in confusion, and tried to push his way out of the room. But at a signal from Tom, Grant closed the door and sat his back against it.

"Now, Mr. Albert Benton," said Tom Cooper sternly, "what are you doing here in our room?"

In spite of his assurance Albert Benton did not know what to say.

"I—I was in search of some old linen to wrap round my ankle," he stammered.

"And so you entered our room, and broke open my chest?"

"I hope you will excuse me, I was indiscreet," muttered Benton.

"That is a very mild way of putting it," retorted Tom. "Benton you are a thief."



"NOW FOR IT!" BENTON MUTTERED IN A TONE OF EXULTATION.

Tom removed his shoes, and went up stairs softly. He saw at once that the door of his chamber was open. He approached quietly, and looked through the crack. There was Benton on his knees before the chest, trying one key after another.

At length he succeeded. The last key fitted the lock, and he raised the lid eagerly.

"Now for it!" he muttered in a tone of exultation.

When the lid of the chest was opened, a pile of shirts and under clothing was revealed. It is hardly necessary to say that Benton did not care for these. He was in search of something more valuable.

Eagerly he took out the clothing and piled it on the floor beside the chest. Then he looked anxiously for a box containing gold dust, for it had occurred to him as probable that the two friends would keep their gold in a tin box. But to his deep disappointment no box was visible, nor any other receptacle for the coveted dust.

"I was on a false scent!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Where in the world do they keep their gold?"

He was beginning to replace the clothing in the chest, when the door was opened and Tom Cooper and Grant entered. Benton sprang to

"Do—you—mean—to insult me?" asked Benton.

"Yes, if the truth insults you. Shall I tell you what you were after?"

Benton did not reply, and Tom Cooper resumed: "You thought we kept our gold dust in that chest."

"Upon my honor!" protested Benton.

"The less you say about your honor the better," returned Tom, with contempt. "Grant, what shall we do with him?"

Benton began to be alarmed. Tom Cooper was a young giant. He had been brought up to his father's business, and his muscles were as firm and strong as steel. Benton knew very well that he would be like a child in his grasp.

"Spare me," he said, "and I will not trouble you any more."

"I don't think you will if you know what is best for yourself. But you deserve to be punished for what you have already done. Grant, open the window."

"What are you going to do?" asked Benton in alarm.

"I'll show you."

Tom seized the thief and bore him in his strong arms to the window.

He held him outside, making a futile resistance, and then dropped him.

The distance to the ground was only fifteen feet, and Benton landed on all fours, a little jarred, but not seriously hurt.

"Now," said Tom, leaning out, "you had better leave this neighborhood as expeditiously as possible, or I will brand you as a thief, and let the citizens take what course they choose."

Benton knew very well that in California at that time thieves were not tolerated, and were often strung up to a tree without ceremony. He felt that he had better not stand upon the order of his going, but go at once.

"Let me go into the house and get my things," he said submissively.

"Have you settled up your board bill with Mrs. Crambo?"

"I have only five dollars!" he pleaded.

"Let the board go!" said Mrs. Crambo, who was on the stairs.

"All I ask is that he shall go himself, and never come back."

Benton crept up stairs, and, getting his small satchel, left the house. Where he went Tom and Grant did not learn, nor did they care.

"That fellow will never thrive," said Tom. "He has made a bad beginning. Any man who wants to get rich by appropriating the property of another, is sure to come to a bad end."

"I guess you are right, Tom," said Grant. "I am relieved to have Benton out of the house."

"You have lost your boarder, Mrs. Crambo," said Tom. "How much board is he owing you?"

"About five dollars."

"We will pay that; won't we, Grant?"

"Certainly," answered Grant.

"I won't accept it," said Mrs. Crambo decidedly. "It isn't your fault that Mr. Benton came here. As for the small sum he owes me, I can get along without it. It won't break me. I don't believe you and your friend have any money to spare."

"We have been doing pretty well, Mrs. Crambo. We have no cause to complain."

"I am very glad to hear it, for you are likely to stay here longer. You have been working hard, and you are entitled to all you have made."

"Have you really been doing well, Mr. Cooper?" questioned Paul Crambo.

"Yes, Mr. Crambo; we haven't made a fortune, but we have been very well paid for our work. Would you like to buy a share in the claim?"

Paul Crambo shook his head.

"Digging for gold doesn't agree with me," he said. "You are young men, and can stand it, but I have a pain in the back if I work over an hour."

Tom Cooper anticipated this reply, or he would not have made the proposal. He preferred to have Grant for his sole partner. Nor did he care to have any third party know how rich the claim really was. Notwithstanding the hint he had given, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Crambo had any idea what a bonanza the boys had struck.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LETTER FROM MR. CROSMONT.

FOUR more weeks passed. The claim continued to yield richly, and at the end of this time the two partners reckoned that they had somewhat over two thousand dollars.

"I wish we could sell the gold dust, and invest the money where it would be safe," said Tom thoughtfully.

"If we were in Sacramento, we should be able to send it by express to San Francisco."

"True; but we have no means of doing it here."

"There are plenty who would undertake the job," suggested Tom.

"Could we find one that we could trust?" asked Grant shrewdly.

"That's the question," said Tom.

That same evening brought a solution of the problem. A man who had just arrived from San Francisco called at the house.

"Does a boy named Grant Colburn live here?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I have a letter for him from San Francisco."

Grant was summoned, and in some surprise received the communication.

"It is from Mr. Crosmont," he said joyfully, as he opened the letter and looked at the signature.

He read it aloud. It ran thus:

DEAR GRANT:

It seems a very long time since I have seen you, and I am in the dark as to your successes and prospects. As you know, my principal business is to look for my wayward son Gregory, who I have reason to think is in California. Now all visitors to California come sooner or later to San Francisco, and it is for this reason that I have established myself here. Thus far I have not seen or heard of Gregory, but this is not at all surprising. He may be somewhere in the interior, and in that case there would be little chance of my hearing of him.

Meanwhile, I confess that I feel lonely. I am not a man to make many friends, and I have met no one in whom I feel an interest since I parted with you. I begin to think that I should like to have you with me, and I will promise that you will lose nothing by transferring yourself to San Francisco. Will you, on receipt of this letter, arrange to join me as soon as you can? I am the more anxious to have you do so, because I have not felt very well of late, and if I should fall sick I should like to have with me a tried and faithful friend whom I can thoroughly trust.

I don't know how you are situated. You may be in need. I therefore think it best to send by the bearer fifty dollars, which will pay your expenses to this city. You will find me at the Alameda Hotel in Stockton Street.

Though I am doing no business, I have made some investments in town lots which I think will pay me handsomely. I have bought two lots for you, which are recorded in your name. I look to see the present village of San Francisco become a large, populous, and influential city. I may not live to see it, but you assuredly will. If you need more money, let me know. Let me see you soon.

Your old friend,

GILES CROSMONT.

"Well," said Tom, after the reading was ended, "one question is settled."

"What is that?"

"We needn't look any further for a messenger to take our gold to San Francisco."

"You mean that I am to take it?"

"Yes."

The two partners realized that Grant's mission would involve some risk. Californian routes of travel were in those days infested by robbers and road agents, who preferred making a living in a lawless way to the more creditable and less hazardous paths of industry. How to reduce the danger to a minimum was a subject of anxious thought.

"You had better not send all the gold dust by me, Tom," said Grant. "Then, if I am robbed, it won't be a total loss."

This plan seemed wise, and Grant set out with about fifteen hundred dollars worth of gold. He carried it in a valise, and, the better to divert suspicion, wore an old and shabby working suit.

"I am not proud of my appearance," he said, as he took a position in front of the mirror in their chamber. "What do I look like?"

"A healthy young tramp," answered Tom, laughing.

"I agree with you."

"However, there is one comfort; no one will think you have anything of value with you."

"What will Mr. Crosmont think when I make my appearance in San Francisco?"

"That you are down on your luck. However, you can explain to him."

The next morning Grant set out on his way to Sacramento. Tom Cooper accompanied him as far as the cabin of the old man to whom they owed their present good fortune. It was a long walk, and the valise, with its weight of gold dust, was no light burden.

When they reached the cabin, they found Mr. Gilbert—for this was the old man's name—sitting on a chair in front of it. His face was naturally grave, but it lighted up when his glance rested on the two newcomers.

"I am glad to see you," he said; but, as his glance dwelt on Grant in his shabby attire, "you don't seem to have prospered," he added.

Grant laughed.

"Appearances are deceitful, Mr. Gilbert," he said. "I am in disguise."

"I don't understand you."

"Do I look as if I were worth robbing?"

The old man smiled.

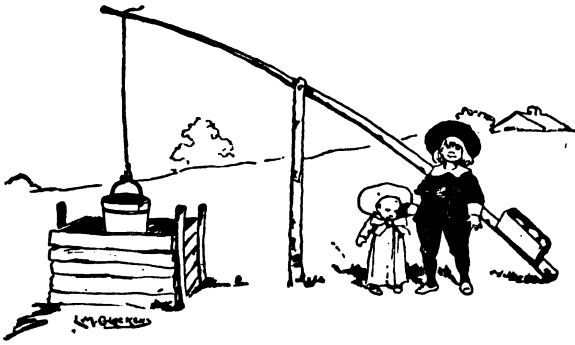
"You look," he said, "as if you had just escaped from a poorhouse."

"Then the disguise is effective," said Tom. "The fact is, my young partner is going to San Francisco, and this valise which he is taking with him contains fifteen hundred dollars in gold dust."

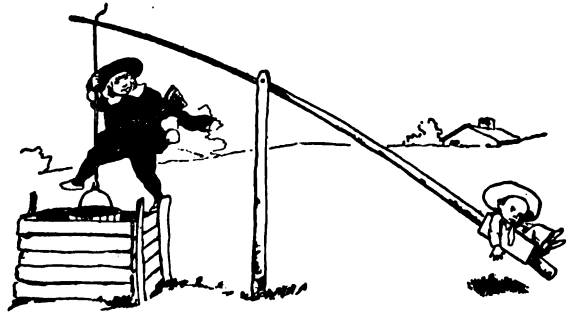
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THE ARGOSY

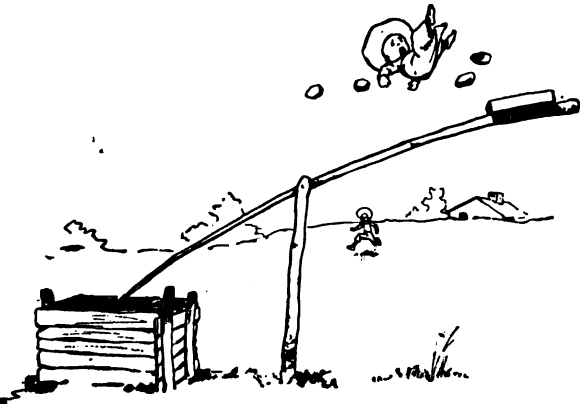
FAUNTLEROY IN THE COUNTRY.



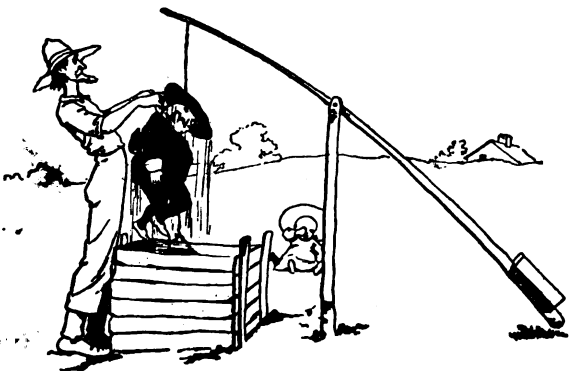
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"DRS. STARKEY & PALEN, No. 1529 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa.

"Since using your Compound Oxygen Treatment I am very much improved. I have gained twelve pounds since using it, and never felt better in my life than I do at present. I have been afflicted for fourteen years with dyspepsia, but now I hardly know I have a stomach.

"ED. W. S. HOWARD.

"BELLVILLE, CAN., Jan. 16, 1889.

"DRS. STARKEY & PALEN, No. 1529 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa.

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NO DOUBT OF IT.

BRIGGS—"It will be on top now."
 QUIMBY—"What?"
 BRIGGS—"The spring bonnet."—*Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph.*

NOT THE GIRL FOR HIM.

"YOUR father refuses his consent to our union?"
 "He does, Percy."
 "Nothing seems to be left for us then except elopement. Do you think, Nellie," said the young man, swallowing a sob, "that you could leave this luxurious home, forfeit all the enjoyments of wealth, banish yourself forever from your parents' hearts and go away with a poor young man to enter a home of life-long poverty?"
 "I think I could, dear Percy."
 "Then you are not the practical girl I have always taken you to be," said Percy, with deep dejection, as he rose up wearily and reached for his hat.—*Chicago News.*

TIME FOR HIM TO GO.

MR. STAYLATE—"I hear your mother's step on the stairs, and I shall be able to bid her good night."
 SLEEPY BEAUTY (wearily)—"It can't be mother. She's a late sleeper. Probably it is the girl coming down to start the fire."—*New York Weekly.*

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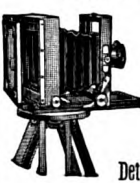
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