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WHOLE NO. 441.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.*

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

CHAPTER VII.

A SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL long remembered that first Sunday in the country. Hiram Hart made two trips to the city on Saturday, instead of running Sunday morning, winter and summer. As soon as they arrived home from the morning run preparations were made for the second trip, and they left about three o'clock. It was nearly midnight when they returned.

Arthur was tired enough when he turned in; but he was up in good season the next morning, and helped Hi about the barn. The roan mare was taken out and rubbed down until her coat was as sleek as silk, and Hi's buggy washed and cleaned. After breakfast there was a general cleaning up and putting on of best clothes all over the house. Even Louey was captured by Mrs. Hart, washed, dressed in some whole trousers and a clean, starched waist, his feet incased in shoes and stockings, and with sundry injunctions to keep his clothes clean, was allowed to go out and wander about the doorway until Mrs. Hart should be ready for church.

The child was an unfailing source of amusement to Arthur, with his queer antics and funny remarks. He was plainly neglected, for Mrs. Hart had little time to attend to him, and his father, a city merchant, seldom evinced any interest in him excepting to pay his monthly board bill and supply clothes when needed. So the poor little fellow lived on with the dogs.

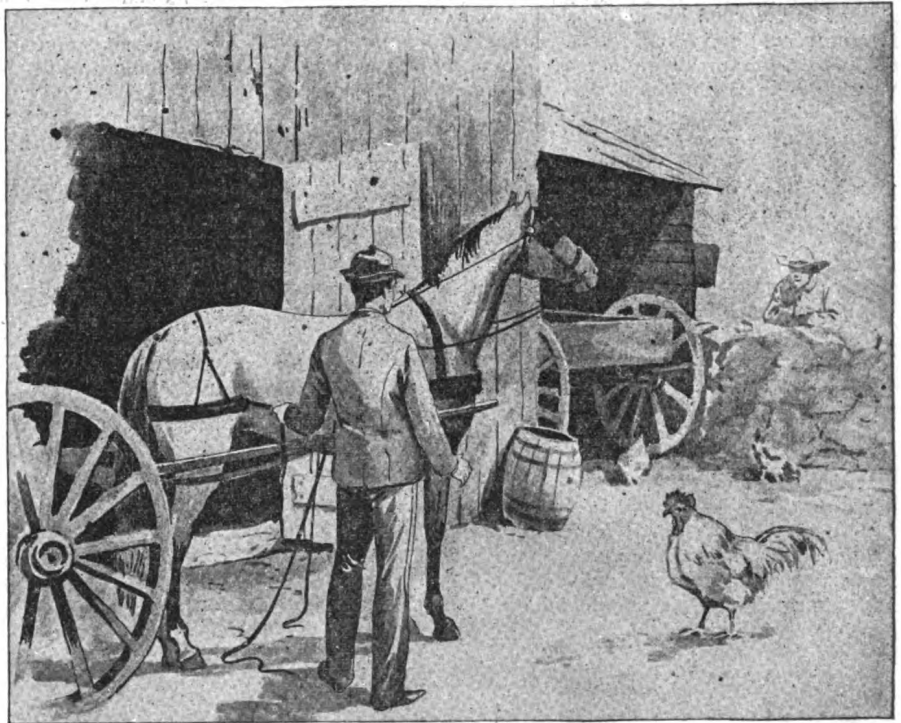
When Mrs. Hart had finished her toilet she took Louey over to her sister's, and rode to church with Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter in their two seated carriage. A little later Hiram and Art set out in their buggy, and old Mr. Hart was left alone at home.

*Begun in No. 439 of THE ARGOSY.

"We've got lots of time," said Hi, as they started, "and the mare feels first rate, so I'll take you the long way 'round and show you some of the country."

As they passed Mr. Pegrim's door a light carriage stood there, and Mr. Pegrim was just helping his wife in. She was a tall, angular woman, with a long nose and a sort of vixenish look that was exceedingly unpleasant. Mr. Pegrim was also very tall and very thin, with light gray whiskers and a very sanctimonious cast of countenance.

"They don't go to our church," volunteered Hiram, as



A HEAD POPPED UP BEYOND THE BOUNDARY WALL OF THE PEGRIM ESTATE.

they drove by. "They go to some sort of a Universalist chapel down in Watchemoket. Pegrim's what the Methodists would call an exhorter—he preaches whenever they let him."

"Where do you go?" inquired Art.

"To the Congregational, at the Center."

Arthur enjoyed the ride. The mare, as Hi had said, felt pretty good, and carried them along at a rattling pace. The road passed through woods and fields, by farmhouses and cultivated gardens, and finally they reached the square,

plain, white painted church. It stood just opposite the cemetery, and some distance from any dwellings. Behind and at one side it was surrounded by sheds for the convenience of the carriages, and into one of the vacant places Hiram drove.

Arthur had been brought up to attend church and to listen to the sermon with respectful attention. He usually found something of worth in the discourse, and he was not disappointed this time. The pastor, although a very young man, was an able speaker, and Arthur liked him very well.

Sunday school followed the preaching service, but Hiram and Art did not stay, and as Bill Olney, who was present, expressed his intention of going home they took him with them in the buggy.

Dinner was not served at the Hart house until the middle of the afternoon, and after the meal Arthur went out for a walk.

The remainder of the long afternoon dragged slowly by, and Arthur was glad to tumble into bed before it was hardly dark; and he told himself, as he dropped off to sleep, that he had never passed such a lonesome, disagreeable day in all his life.

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In less than a month from the commencement of his duties Arthur had learned his employer's route so thoroughly that Hiram trusted him alone. Besides selling the products of his dairies, Hiram always carried a quantity of all kinds of vegetables in their season, and the disposing of these, of course, added greatly to Arthur's work. Quite frequently it was past noon when he arrived home.

The ride from the city in the hot sun was anything but pleasant in an open vehicle, and finding an umbrella in the barn, Arthur rigged it up on the wagon. Lying on the seat in the shade of this one day, while the horse took his own gait towards home, Arthur overtook a figure plodding slowly along the road in the same direction. It proved to be a young man, very carefully dressed, although pretty thoroughly coated with the dust of the country road. As the wagon reached him the young man turned his face towards Arthur, and he recognized the features of his clerical acquaintance—Joel Audubon Webb.

Arthur brought the horse to an immediate standstill as the young man accosted him.

"Are you journeying my way, my friend?"

"I guess so. Will you ride?" returned Arthur.

"Thank you, I should be greatly pleased," replied Mr. Webb, climbing carefully up to the seat. "It is an exceedingly warm day," he said, wiping his dust begrimed face with his handkerchief. "I should either have started earlier or waited until the cool of the day for my ramble."

"Yes," acquiesced Arthur.

"Have I not had the pleasure of meeting you before?" inquired Joel.

"I think you have," returned Arthur, restraining with difficulty his desire to laugh at the remembrance of the accident to the Lady of the Lake.

"Let me see—you are not the young man whom I met at the Park one afternoon a month ago?"

"Yes, I am Arthur Blaisdell."

"Indeed! I am happy to meet you again, sir—how do you do?" and Joel shook hands with more animation than Arthur had thought him capable of expressing. "As long as I live," continued the young man, "I shall never forget the danger and terror of that time, and often have I wished to meet again with those who suffered in common with myself on the doomed boat."

Arthur almost choked himself in suppressing a laugh as he thought of the dimensions of the "doomed boat."

"I shall never forget the time myself," he said.

"But do you know, I have often thought that it was a just retribution to that man who made himself so exceedingly obnoxious to us both. Why, if you remember, he was about to attack me when the explosion took place!"

"Yes, I remember," said Arthur, a little indignantly. "Do you know who that gentleman was?"

"No, I have often wondered," replied Joel. "He was a perfect bore, don't you think so?"

"No, I do not. That was Mr. Davidson, of the *Journal*."

"Indeed!" cried Joel, in unfeigned surprise, but nowise abashed by the discovery. "Ah, that simply shows what I have often declared—how arrogantly the rich carry themselves."

Arthur made no reply, and Joel continued, interrogatively:

"But I understood you were a reporter, Mr. Blaisdell?"

"Not a regular reporter," replied Arthur. "I am working for Hiram Hart just now."

"Ah, is this his team?" cried Joel. "That is just where I am going. I am Hiram's cousin."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, indeed. I often spend a few days there or at Mr. Carpenter's. It is so quiet that it rests me, and I have ample time to compose. I have often tried to move Hiram to some thoughts of a better existence, but he is hardened, I fear."

For the remainder of the ride Joel discoursed on theological questions of which Arthur understood but little, and of which he suspected Joel himself knew even less. Their arrival at the Hart place cut short his remarks, and while Arthur unharnessed, the theological student entered the house.

As Joel disappeared, a head popped up behind the boundary wall of the Pegrin estate, and Bill Olney's voice drawled out:

"Sa—ay! what d'ye wanter bring that half baked critter aout here agin for? We none of us have no peace till he's gone. I'd a knocked him on the head and dropped him inter the brook if t'd been me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

JOEL AUDUBON DECIDES UPON A CHANGE OF PROFESSION.

JOEL had hardly gone in at the the front door when Hiram came out of the back one, and, as he helped Arthur unload, he said:

"Where under the canopy did you pick Webb up?"

"Oh, I met him on the road and took him in," returned Arthur.

"Well, the next time you see him on the road, drive right over him! I'd rather see the small pox 'round than him."

Arthur laughed.

"I don't see anything very terrible about him," he said. "He seems harmless."

"Harmless!" repeated Hi, with disgust. "He's a perfect fool! I don't get any peace while he's about—that is I haven't had lately. His last cranky notion is studying for the ministry—the worst one yet."

"Is he taken often with such ideas?" asked Arthur. "What's the matter with him—isn't he bright?"

"Oh, he knows enough, if he'd a mind to use it right. He's had a pretty good education—just enough to turn his brain. He has an income sufficient for his support without working, and so he hasn't anything better to do than to get cracked on every new idea that comes along. The last thing

he harped on before he began to study for the ministry was the newspaper business. He used to haunt the newspaper offices, and was the plague of the editors' lives."

Arthur recounted the story of the explosion on the Lady of the Lake, which amused Hi immensely.

"Too bad he hadn't been on top of the boiler, and been blown to the moon. I'd rather have him there than 'round here," was his comment.

The divinity student attached himself especially to Arthur during the remainder of the afternoon, and made his life generally miserable, until he no longer wondered at Hi's remarks on the subject. Arthur looked for relief when the time came to drive around to the dairies; but no, Joel Audobon must needs go too.

"Do you know," said Mr. Webb, suddenly breaking off in the midst of a long dissertation on the beauties of the sunset. "I find my studying is a great strain upon me. What should you advise me to do, Mr. Blaisdell—continue in theology, or turn my attention to physic?"

Arthur was too greatly surprised to answer for a moment, and Joel, noticing his astonishment, continued:

"You seem astounded, Mr. Blaisdell, but it is not a question on which I have not reflected. My nerves are sensitive to the slightest shock, and it needs a firm hand and an even temperament to guide the people of any considerable pastorate, and of course I would accept none other. I have considerable confidence in your judgment, and I should like your candid opinion."

"Of the two *professions*," returned Arthur quickly, putting considerable stress on the word, for he knew very well that Joel's interest in the ministry was simply cant, "of the two *professions*, I should advise you to take up medicine. I think you are better fitted for that than for the ministry."

He could say this with impunity, as he felt sure that Joel could do less harm as an M. D. than as a minister, provided he was ever allowed to enter a pulpit.

"That coincides with my own opinion exactly," said Joel. "Not but that I am interested in this noble calling, yet what is more noble than the curing of ills to which human flesh is heir?"

Arthur encouraged him in his intention of studying medicine, but he did not realize at the time what he was bringing upon himself. However, after going to bed (Joel slept with him, there being no other room vacant in the house), Arthur was kept awake until after midnight by his bed fellow's conversation in relation to his future as an M. D.

Mr. Webb only stayed a day or two at the farm, and his departure was a relief to everybody in the neighborhood. Before leaving, he informed Arthur that upon mature reflection he had decided to try medicine in lieu of theology.

On the morning Joel returned to the city, Hiram requested Arthur to drive around by the post office at the Center on his way home. Usually either Hi or his father went to the office once or twice a week, and Arthur had never before been at the Center, excepting on Sunday.

The post office was presided over by the village store keeper, and a corner of the store was partitioned off for the postal department. The building was wide and rather long, only one story in height, and had a piazza in front running the entire width of the structure. On this piazza the village loafers usually congregated, when nothing of especial interest called them elsewhere.

But on the morning in question only one person occupied the piazza—an old, white haired man, who sat bowed forward, with his chin resting on his hands, which clutched the top of a knotted staff. He paid no attention to Arthur, who hitched his horse and ran up the wooden steps to the door.

Over the doorway hung a sign on which was painted, "Russell Arnold, Groceries and Provisions," and at the moment of Arthur's entrance the proprietor sat behind a little window through which the mail was delivered, reading the local paper. He was a man past the middle age of life, of medium height, and with a brush of thin, iron gray whiskers bordering his face. His countenance was good natured, and his little black eyes twinkled shrewdly as he peered through the window at Arthur.

"Be you related t' the Harts?" inquired the postmaster, while searching through the letters.

"No, I work there," replied Arthur.

"I wanter know!" returned the man, with lively interest. "Hart must hev hired ye lately, eh? He said as haow he needed another hand last week when he was daown here."

"Oh, I work for Hiram," said Arthur, smiling. "Mr. Hart does want another man, I believe, to work on the farm."

"Ye work for Hi, hey? Why, so ye do," he said, craning his neck forward, the better to view the milk team. "Hain't been with him long, hev ye?"

"Not more than a month," returned Arthur, rather more amused than angered by the man's curiosity.

"Haow d'ye like the business? Hi's a purty good feller to work for, ain't he?"

Arthur ignored the first question, and replied:

"Yes, I find him a very good fellow indeed."

"I wanter know! Wal, there don't seem ter be anythin' here for 'em—but hold on, what's *your* name? P'raps there's suthin here for you."

"Arthur Blaisdell."

"Blaisdell—Blaisdell, eh?" repeated the postmaster, turning over the letters in his hand, as though looking among them for something addressed to Arthur, although he very well knew there was nothing. "I don't s'pose ye're none related ter them Blaisdells 't useter live a piece daown the road here, 'bout twenty year ago?"

"I hardly think so."

"Wal, now, come ter think on't, p'raps 'twarn't so long ago after all. Le' me see—I hain't got much of a mem'ry fr' sich things, but—father! I say, father, come here a minute."

At his call the old patriarch on the piazza awoke from his doze, and hobbled hastily into the store.

"What d'ye want, Russy?" inquired the old man, in a rather squeaky voice.

"Say, father," said the younger Arnold, who had now come out into the store, and stood leaning his elbows on the counter, "d'ye remember them Blaisdells 't useter live daown ter Sary Remington's haouse years ago—when was it?"

"Blaisdell—le's see," said the old man, pursing up his lips; "Blaisdell? Why, 'twas about twenty five year ago near's I kin jedge."

"Twenty five! Oh, you go on, father; 'twarn't more'n fifteen."

"'Twarn't twenty five year ago? I *know* 'twas," returned the old man indignantly.

"Air yew sure?" said his son doubtfully.

"Sure! don't I tell ye I *know*?" returned the old man querulously. "I don't b'lieve I shell ever forgit the year they moved here—we had a turrible September gale that year. The wind come d'rect from the saouth, an' blew so hard, b'gosh, that it blew the salt water clean up here!"

Arthur could not suppress an involuntary exclamation of surprise at this statement.

"B'goshi, it's a fact!" exclaimed the old veteran, turning upon Arthur fiercely. "Don't hev no sich gales nowadays."

Why, I 'member," he went on, sitting down upon the edge of a barrel and bracing his stick out before him, "I 'member Seth Remin'ton hed a peach orchard over there where the Meth'dist church stands, an' 'twas kinder low ground there so's the water stood there a foot deep all through that storm. Seth, he had a master big crop o' peaches the nex' year, ev'ry one on 'em's big ez that," and he measured his hands to about the size of a thrifty pumpkin, "an' knowin' I was a good jedge o' sich things he wanted I sh'd come over an' take a look at 'em jest about the time they was ripenin'. So I went over. While we was walkin' through the orchard Seth found a peach on the ground—a master big 'un—an' he cut it in two an' give me half.

"'Jest eat that,' says he, 'an' ye'll say ye never eat a peach afore.'

"An' when I bit inter it, b'gosh, 'twas so salt I couldn't eat it."

"Why, how was that?" inquired Arthur.

"Wal, we kinder thought 'twas only 'cause it had lain on the ground where the salt water stood the year afore. But when Seth come ter harvest 'em there warn't a peach in the lot, b'gosh, 'twas fit to eat, they was so salt!"

Arthur began to look slightly incredulous, and the old man, noticing it, continued:

"Wal, sir, o' course the whole crop was a dead failure, an' all Seth c'd do was ter feed 'em ter the hogs—he had a master good **drove of porkers**. An' when he come ter kill 'em in the winter he didn't hev ter cure 'em a might—they'd got so salted eatin' of them peaches! We had a purty warm spell of warm weather that winter, too."

"My gracious!" thought Arthur, as he climbed into the wagon and drove away; "of all the old liars I ever heard of, I guess this is the champion!"

As he rode off, laughing to himself over the old fellow's story, he saw two young girls approaching along the dusty road. It was a rather lonely spot, there being no houses in sight. One side of the road was bordered by a heavy growth of pine woods, while the fence on the other side was overgrown with bushes and vines, screening the road completely from the fields beyond.

While yet Arthur was some rods away, he was startled by hearing the girls scream and saw them running towards him. For a moment he could not discover what had caused their fright. Then the bushes beside the road parted, and a man came out, as though in pursuit of the fleeing figures.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH MR. HART HIRES A NEW HAND AND ARTHUR ATTENDS AN EXCITING MEETING.

ARTHUR instantly drove forward towards the two girls. One was tall and angular, and evidently considerably older than her companion, who was short and plump, and had a rather pretty face. Yet they looked enough alike to be two sisters. The elder girl appeared to be the more frightened, and had done all the screaming, for although she appeared a little excited, the younger girl did not seem greatly terrified.

"What's the matter?" inquired Arthur, drawing rein as he reached them.

"Oh, that horrid fellow?" cried the elder lady, pointing towards the man who had made his sudden appearance at the roadside.

"Why, what's the matter with him? He looks harmless."

"He came out of the woods so suddenly that he alarmed us," said the other lady, "and we thought he was about to follow us."

"I guess he's all right," rejoined Arthur, looking towards

the subject of their conversation, who stood a short distance away, gazing at them.

"I guess you don't know, sir," returned the other girl, pursing up her lips and looking vindictively back at the cause of her fright. "He almost caught Annie by the arm."

"Oh, I don't know about that, Sadie," interposed her companion. "Perhaps we only thought so."

"You can't tell me!" snapped her sister. "He wasn't hiding in those bushes for any good purpose."

"Well, he will not molest you now, at least," said Arthur, preparing to drive on.

"It was very providential that you were coming along," said the elder sister. "I should have died of fright. I know I should, if I had not seen you."

Arthur drove on, while the two girls hurried away in the other direction, the elder casting suspicious glances now and then over her shoulder at the man who stood beside the road.

"I say," exclaimed the stranger, when Arthur arrived within speaking distance, "what's the matter with those girls, any way? Is there anything about me to make 'em run like scared rabbits?"

Arthur scrutinized the man more closely before he replied. He was neatly dressed, though his clothing was shabby, and the stout stick and bundle he carried swung from it, denoted that he had been walking some distance. He was young, evidently about twenty five, with a smoothly shaven face, with the exception of a thin mustache, light brown in color. Altogether, he was not a very formidable looking specimen of the *genus* tramp, if, indeed, he belonged to that great and ever increasing class.

"I don't really see why they should have been very much scared at your appearance," said Arthur smiling; "but I suppose your stepping out of the woods so suddenly startled them."

"They ran as though I had the smallpox," said the stranger, still gazing with an amused smile after the retreating females. "Well, so much for being a tramp, I suppose."

"If you are going my way I can give you a lift," suggested Arthur.

"Well, I s'pose I may as well go your way as any other," returned the young man, climbing into the wagon. "It doesn't much matter where I go as long as I keep going. I don't suppose you know of anybody who needs help about here—any one who wants to hire a fellow about my size."

"Why, I don't know but I do," returned Arthur. "The folks where I board need another hand on the farm. How would that suit you?"

"Right down to the ground!" exclaimed the stranger with enthusiasm. "What's the name?"

"Hart."

"Is that so? A man down to the grocery told me that they wanted somebody last week, but he supposed they'd hired some one before this."

"Well, Mr. Hart is rather hard to suit," said Arthur.

"Particular who he hires, you mean?"

"Well, no; he isn't so hard to suit as the men are who work for him. He doesn't pay very high."

"He'll give me my board; won't he?" inquired the stranger good naturedly.

"Oh, yes, and something more besides; but not very much."

"So he's stingy, eh? A regular old skinflint. I've seen lots of 'em. They're thicker'n hops in New England."

"Well, I'll let you judge for yourself when you get acquainted with him," said Arthur, with a laugh.

During the remainder of their ride Art learned that his new acquaintance had tramped it from Boston, and that his name was Ben Norton. He stated that he was alone in the world, his only living relative being an older brother, who was married, and who lived in Newton, near Boston, and likewise that he and his brother's wife did not get along very amicably together, so he (Ben) had struck out for himself.

Arthur found him rather pleasant company. He was well informed, talked intelligently, and appeared to be considerably above his present position in society.

Old Mr. Hart hired him at once when he heard that he was willing to work cheaply, and Mrs. Hart partitioned off one end of the upper hall with a thick curtain and made up a single bed for him in the tiny room thus formed.

Late that afternoon Bill Olney called to Arthur as he was walking along the road past the Pegrin estate.

"Sa-ay, Artie, come over here, if ye ain't got nothin' better ter do," said Bill, leaning on his hoe handle.

Arthur climbed over the wall at the invitation and approached Bill, who was working among some young berry plants.

"How air ye?" inquired Bill, extending his hand. "I hain't seen ye to speak to for an age."

"I'm first rate, Bill," returned Arthur, taking his proffered hand. "I meant to have been over to see you before; but I thought you were always busy at work."

"That don't make a mite of difference. I do 'bout as I please here. Pegrin ain't half a bad man to work for. There's always plenty to do, but I kin work and talk, too. Help yourself to them raspberries over there. They re nice 'uns. Oh, don't be scar't," he added, noting Arthur's hesitancy in accepting the proffered fruit. "Pegrin won't object at all. I'm going to give ye a basket of them when they git more plenty ter take inter your mother. She'll like em, I know."

"Well, that's real kind of you, I'm sure," replied Arthur warmly, for any one who expressed a kindness towards Little Mum immediately rose in his estimation.

"How d'ye like this part of the country?" inquired Bill.

"First rate," returned Arthur, his mouth full of the luscious fruit. "I've found some pretty spots in the woods and fields around here."

"Ye're kinder taken up with pretty things in the line of landscapes, eh? Wal, you ain't the first one that's praised this section of the State. Some of the neighbors 'round here take boarders summers; the Wilmarths and the Pecks always have a lot through the warm weather. Then in the fall there's some game in the woods. Soon's the law's off I'll borrrer a gun for ye an' we'll go huntin' some day. Ever done much in that line?"

"Never fired a gun in my life," admitted Arthur.

"Ye don't say! You'll wanter practice up a little then aforehand."

"I think I should like it. What sort of game is there here?"

"Oh, quail an' partridge, an' plenty of rabbits and squirrels. Say, ye ain't got much 'quainted daown ter the church, have ye?"

"No; I don't know very many people."

"Hain't 'quainted with many of the girls, be ye?"

"Don't know any of them. Never spoke to any of them—oh, yes, I have. This morning I spoke to two who I think go there," and he related the circumstance of his meeting with the two young ladies and Ben Norton.

"I guess those two were the two Remington girls—Annie and Sadie. Sadie, she's a regular old maid. Must be 'bout

thirty, and she follers Annie 'round like a bulldog an' keeps off all the fellers. Annie would be a pretty nice girl if she didn't allus have her sister 'round with her."

As Arthur made no reply, Bill continued:

"Say, ye don't want ter go down ter the Center with me tonight to the temperance club?"

"The temperance club! I didn't know you had one here."

"Oh, yes: it's a great thing," replied Bill. "All the fellers and girls go."

"Do you belong?" inquired Arthur.

"Yes; I believe I do. Any way I signed suthin' or other once, an' I allus go. It's great fun. The school teacher sort o' leads it, an' they have lots o' singin' and speakin' an' sech like. Won't ye go?"

"Why, yes; I think I'd like to. They'll let strangers in, will they?"

"Of course; they'll be glad ter have ye. If ye'll be 'round 'bout seven o'clock I'll be ready."

"I'll get a little fun out of it any way," thought Arthur, as he made his preparations for going that evening. "If I can meet as many queer characters as I have so far, it will pay me to go, I think."

So, after the night's milk was packed down in the ice box, he and Bill Olney started to walk to the Center. It was quite a little jaunt, and Bill enlivened the way by bits of gossip about the various people or farmhouses they passed.

"This 'ere school teacher," said Bill, "ain't been here very long, an' some of 'em don't like him very well. He's a young feller—not more'n twenty five—an' he was so young some of the biggest chaps thought they could run the school last spring. But he's a plucky one, an' he licked most of 'em and turned Bob Harris, the head one, out o' school. Since the teacher's got ter runnin' of the temp'rance club Bob and three or four of his friends hev kicked up sights o' trouble—stoned the schoolhouse and blew fish horns outside, and all sorts of didos."

"Why don't the authorities stop it?" Arthur inquired indignantly.

"Oh, the s'lectmen won't pay no 'tention to it till some one gits hurt. I seen Bob and two cronies of his'n a-talkin together Sunday behind the church shed, and I shouldn't be surprised if they cut up some capers amongst 'em tonight."

"Well, that teacher must be a plucky one," said Arthur admiringly. "I should think the decent people who attend the meetings would stand by him and make those fellows behave themselves."

"Oh, wal," returned Bill coolly, "taint our 'fair exactly, an' I don't see but he'll have ter fight it out himself."

Arthur thought this was rather a small view of the matter; but their arrival at the schoolhouse cut short any remarks that he might otherwise have made on the subject. The schoolhouse was a wide, one story building, with a peaked roof and a great chimney built outside at one end.

Inside the appearance was as old fashioned as the outside. A low platform, upon which was the master's desk, occupied the side nearest the door, and rows of rude desks and straight backed, uncomfortable looking forms filled the space before it.

In times past there evidently had been an open fireplace in the room, but a stove now stood before the chimney, although the fireboard had been removed, disclosing to the gaze the wide and deep brick fireplace. The other sides of the room were hung with maps and blackboards, and a rather more intellectual looking company than Arthur had expected to see filled about half the seats.

Bill conducted him to a place at one side near the door,

and as Arthur sat down, he was conscious of every eye in the room, not excepting the master's, turned curiously upon him. The master was a sparely built young man, with clear complexion and a high forehead. His hair was black and just a little wavy, and his face was adorned with a mustache and thin side whiskers.

"I heard Templeton was goin' ter be here, but I don't see him nowheres," whispered Bill, craning his neck on every side to assist him in his search.

"The minister?"

"Yes, he kin usually keep Bob and his crowd quiet."

Just then the master arose with the evident intention of opening the meeting, and the whispering and gigling ceased, while all in the room turned their eyes upon him.

"I expected Mr. Templeton would be here to address us tonight," began the master in a pleasant voice, "but perhaps we shall be disappointed. You see," he said with a smile, directing the attention of the company to the open fireplace, "we have better ventilation tonight than usual, as somebody entered the room since school closed and removed the fireboard. But for that we can thank our friends, as it is an exceedingly warm evening."

At that instant a noise overhead caused every one to look upwards, and the next a shower of fine ashes was poured down into the open fireplace.

The audience rose to their feet, some laughing, and some screaming, while those nearest the chimney began to cough and sputter as the cloud of ashes and soot filled that part of the room. Simultaneously with the fall of the ashes a great hammering with rocks and clubs was begun upon the building. The master hurried down from his desk and opened the door. But he was met with such a shower of missiles from outside that he was forced to shut the door.

He looked around appealingly to the company, but no one offered to help him. Suddenly Arthur Blaisdell sprang forward to the master's side.

"Look here!" he exclaimed, in a voice plainly audible above the din, "shall we sit here and allow this sort of work to go on and not try to stop it? Seems to me there ought to be enough of us here to get away with half a dozen rowdies."

"Tain't our row," exclaimed somebody.

"I'd like to know why it ain't," returned Arthur. "We came here to enjoy a pleasant evening together, and I, for one, don't propose to have it spoiled by these fellows."

"And I'm with you," exclaimed a tall young farmer, who, with a very pretty girl, occupied one of the back seats, and he strode forward to Arthur's side. "I rayther guess we shan't find any trouble in settling those chaps. Here," he exclaimed, reaching for a long stick which stood in the corner and which was usually used to open the windows, "this is about the handiest thing we kin use," and placing it across his knee, he broke it in the middle.

"Take this," he said, handing one piece to Arthur. "Ye don't look very rugged, but yer've got pluck enough to make up. Now, sail in!"

Throwing open the door he sallied forth, with Arthur close behind him.

A shower of missiles greeted them as they opened the door, but fortunately both escaped being hit by anything harder than mellow potatoes. A crowd of half a dozen figures scattered at their appearance and the young farmer pursued two of them while Arthur followed the others.

The boys, however, soon seeing that they were attacked by but a small force from the schoolhouse, turned on their assailants and drove them back towards the door.

(To be continued.)

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT IS THE UNEXPECTED THAT HAPPENS.

DASH never could understand what had induced him to make such a bold, not to say impudent, speech, as that recorded in the last chapter, for it was entirely foreign to his nature. He would never have done it if his circumstances had not seemed desperate. He was sorry for it as soon as he made it, and he thought how silly it was to think he could force a man to give him employment.

He confidently expected to be shown to the door by a porter, or some attaché of the office, who would use force if necessary. But he was prepared to go quietly, and was heartily ashamed of himself.

A young man came from the telegraph office in answer to Mr. Hummon's ring.

"Ellis, didn't that night man at Madrid say he wanted a leave of absence?" asked the superintendent.

Dash was as much surprised at the nature of the question as he was to hear the name of the place to which Dorothy Orloff had gone. A hope that he would be sent there flashed into his thoughts, only to be dispelled the next instant.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "he did; but he says he has changed his mind."

"That settles it, Dykeman," said Mr. Hummon, turning to Dash, as the young man retired; "that was the only possible place I knew of where I could place you at once. I admire your audacity and determination."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hummon; I was so disappointed I hardly knew what I was saying," returned Dash, in confusion.

"That's all right, Dykeman; I understand how you felt about it, and forgive you, but I advise you not to try it on other officials, as they may not take it as I do," said the superintendent, and there was a twinkle of good humor in his eye.

"Thank you; I will not, I assure you. I'm surprised that you didn't have me ejected, for I expected it."

"I've been one of the boys myself," laughed the official, "and I'm sorry not to be able to give you work just now."

"Isn't there a chance of getting a place in some other branch of the service?" asked Dash, as a last effort.

"Do you mean in the transportation?"

"Yes, sir; anything, anywhere."

"Well, I'll give you a note to our master of transportation of the St. Louis & Pacific, and maybe he can use you."

"Thank you; I would be very much obliged."

The note was written in a few minutes, and, as Dash was leaving, the superintendent said:

"If you get anything, and find you don't like it, come back to me in a week or ten days, and I'll have something."

Dash replied that he would certainly do so, and was soon upon the street again, inquiring the nearest way to the St. Louis & Pacific Railroad yards.

He found them to be a considerable distance out in the southern suburbs of the city, only to be reached by a long, tedious journey on a street car, or by walking. Reluctant to part with his last cent, Dash tramped the whole distance

*Begun in No. 434 of THE ARGOSY.

It was late in the afternoon when he presented himself at the office of the superintendent of transportation.

"Have you had any experience?" asked Mr. Rodway.

"Very little; only as flagman on passenger," replied Dash.

"What road was that on?"

"The Pennsylvania Central."

"Have you worked on any Western roads?"

"No, sir."

The superintendent gave a sort of grunt of approval, looked keenly at Dash, and then asked:

"Do you think you could brake on a local freight?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dash, though he knew the position was a hard and trying one physically. "I could try, at any rate."

"I could give you the easiest position on the train rear, or caboose brakeman."

"I'll take it, though I can't promise to stay with you."

"You will not need to stay long if you are able to do the work. I have a special duty for you to perform, which I could not intrust to any one who by any chance would be known to our train men."

"What is it?" asked Dash, with curiosity.

"I have been informed that there is some sort of crooked work going on on the local freight on our southern division. I don't know what it is, and I want you to find out."

This was extremely vague, and Dash did not know whether he relished the undertaking or not.

"Haven't you any idea of the nature of it?" he asked.

"Well, yes. There has been a great deal of lost freight reported on that division unaccounted for, and it is believed that the company is not getting all the revenue it should from the business."

"And you think the trainmen are concerned in it," suggested Dash.

"Yes; and particularly the conductor, who, from your position in the caboose, you can watch closely. I will give you a note, telling him you are well qualified to help him in the clerical part of his work, such as making his reports and checking freight."

"Don't you think he will suspect me?" asked Dash doubtfully.

"That all depends upon yourself. You will be paid considerably more than a brakeman's wages, but you must take care to let no one know it. Will you undertake it?"

"Yes," decided Dash, though he had no taste for the business.

"Then report here at nine o'clock this evening, and I will deadhead you down on the night express to Joyville Junction, the northern end of the southern division. The local freight leaves there at seven in the morning."

The superintendent turned around to his desk, as if he had nothing more to say. Though he had been considering whether he would ask the official to advance a portion of his salary to meet his present needs, Dash's courage failed him, or his pride was still too sensitive, and he accepted the action as a dismissal, and left the office.

In his present circumstances it made little difference whether he stayed where he was or returned to the city. The prospect was equally gloomy in either place. But he

felt that the noise and lights of the metropolis would be preferable, though he was too utterly worn out to walk back.

The impulse to return, however, was so strong that he recklessly decided to spend his last five cents in a car fare back to the city. He was soon glad that he did so, and he always believes his good fairy impelled him to the act.

During all his embarrassment and anxiety from lack of



A NUMBER OF GHOSTLY LOOKING FORMS WERE CROSSING THE TRACK.

funds, Dash had not once thought of the resource of pawning his watch. The sacred memories attached to the time-piece would make such an expedient seem to him a sacrilege; he would as soon beg for alms as to part with it, even for a short time. He had never had any dealings with the gentlemen of the three balls, or known any one who had, and any resort to them seemed to him to be something to be ashamed of.

When he reached the city, Dash experienced the recurring pangs of hunger, and for once in his life he felt it was a disagreeable thing to have a healthy appetite. The restaurants seemed more numerous than he had ever noticed them before, and his hungry eye never failed to discover every one of them.

He was walking up Fourth Street, when he paused before one of these gilded dining halls. A gentleman was just coming out, whistling a gay tune, and tossing a coin into the air. As he passed Dash, the coin slipped through his fingers and fell through a grating in front of the restaurant door. Merely glancing down at the spot where it had disappeared, he sauntered off.

"Aren't you going to try to get it?" interposed Dash.

"No; it was only fifty cents. You can have it, if you want it," laughed the gentleman, as he continued on his way.

"Only fifty cents" seemed a good deal to Dash just then, and, hesitating a moment, he stepped into the restaurant.

"Fifty cents of mine has gone down the grating in front of your place; can I get it?" he asked of the man at the cashier's desk, who was evidently the proprietor.

"Yes, if you want to take the trouble of opening a door

leading to the area that has been nailed up for three or four years."

Dash replied that he didn't mind, whereupon he was furnished with a hatchet, and a waiter showed him the way. The door yielded but slowly to his hammering and prying, and finally, when it was opened, he felt that he had earned his fifty cents.

Lighting a match to prosecute his search, he was astonished to first discover a silver dollar instead of the coin that had just been dropped. Looking further, he found the half dollar, and numerous other smaller coins, which had been lost in the same way. When he was satisfied that there was no more of this unique treasure trove, he found he had something over four dollars, and returned to the restaurant above.

"Did you find it?" asked the good natured proprietor.

"Yes, sir, and something more," replied Dash, as he laid all but the fifty cents on the desk.

"Well, I didn't know we had a silver mine on the place," laughed the proprietor, and he looked his surprise as he counted the coins; "but keep it. Findings's keepings, you know."

"But——," began Dash in protest.

"You've earned it by opening that door. Now we'll have that place cleaned out."

"Thank you; then I'll take something with you on the strength of it," laughed Dash, as he went over and seated himself at one of the tables.

He gave his order, and thought to himself if there was such an avocation as opening unused cellar vaults, which would pay as much as this one had, he would follow it. Four dollars was not such a splendid increase in his capital, but it was better than nothing. It would insure meals for several days, or a week at least, and lodging could be had in a railroad caboose.

On finishing his repast, Dash directed his steps towards Mrs. Fedmore's. He stopped on the way at the Union Depot and got his satchel from the sleeping car company's office. Then, feeling the urgent necessity of having some more suitable clothing for the work he was about to undertake, he decided he would pay the express charges on his trunk, and have it sent to the boarding house, where it could remain until he knew where he would be finally and permanently located.

Mrs. Fedmore was as pleased and proud to see him again as if she had not already thoroughly discussed the mysterious complication of the past. Dash passed a very pleasant evening, and found that Miss Fanny Fedmore was a much pleasanter young person than he had at first supposed, judging from her reception of him.

He waited anxiously for the expressman to come with his trunk, but it did not arrive until a few minutes before it was time for him to start for the St. Louis & Pacific yards. Dash quickly opened it to get an old suit of clothes and a blue flannel shirt to take with him, when he was confronted with a letter addressed to him, pinned to some clothing.

Recognizing his grandfather's writing, he quickly opened it, and twenty dollars in new, crisp bills, was in his hands. He read the note which accompanied them, and the words of love and admonition made his heart ache and the tears come, as they carried him back to the old home, with its tranquil life and fostering care. He accepted the money for his present needs with a mental reservation that it should be returned from the first he could spare from his earnings.

He wrapped the necessary clothing in a bundle, and with his small satchel was at Mr. Rodway's office at nine o'clock. At nine thirty he was on the south bound express, with a

pass to Joyville Junction, and a letter to conductor Cupples, of local freight No. 29.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE LOCAL FREIGHT.

THE night express arrived at Joyville Junction at six in the morning, which was its schedule time. Dash felt far from rested or refreshed by his nine hours' ride. His bones ached from many efforts to find an easy position to sleep in within the limits of a coach seat, and now he felt as if he had not slept at all.

Very few people were moving about the depot when the train arrived, except the station employees who had to meet the express. Dash went to the waiting room to make inquiries at the ticket office. Here he learned that the train master's office for the southern division was in the second story of the station building.

Noticing a lunch counter in the waiting room that had just opened up for business, he fortified himself with a cup of hot coffee and several sandwiches. He then went to the train master's office and asked the dispatcher where he could find conductor Cupples.

"He boards just across the way, but he will be here in a few minutes, as he goes out on the local freight," was the reply.

Dash decided to wait where he was, and amused himself studying the bulletin board, whereon were posted orders and special notices, and incidentally listening to the words that were clicking from the telegraph instruments behind the railing.

In a few minutes a smooth faced, blue eyed man, of something over forty years of age, came in.

"Good morning, Mr. Rushmore," he said to the dispatcher. "How many have you got for me this morning?"

"A heavy run, Cupples; two local cars from the north, and twenty five solid loads for nearly every station on the division," was the reply, and he went on giving some further instructions.

As soon as he had heard the man's name, Dash rose to his feet and advanced toward him. When the dispatcher had finished, he tendered the letter from Mr. Rodway.

"Mr. Cupples, I believe," he said at the same time.

For an answer, the other took the letter, and after opening and perusing it, said, as if it had not been unexpected:

"So you're the man Mr. Rodway wired me about yesterday. I suppose you're all ready to go out this morning."

"Yes, sir," replied Dash, and as he met the clear and searching gaze of the conductor, he could hardly believe that he was dishonest. Those large blue eyes seemed to speak only of moral integrity.

"Then you'd better get your things into the caboose as soon as you can and report here. Have you got any baggage?"

"Only these," replied Dash, indicating his bundle and satchel.

"By the way, you can take this book along and jot down the numbers of the cars in the train," continued conductor Cupples, as Dash started for the door.

"Where will I find it?" asked the latter.

"On track ten, in the lower yard."

This was rather indefinite, but on getting outside Dash inquired of a switchman and soon located his train.

Depositing his belongings in the red painted caboose, and only taking a hasty survey of his surroundings, he proceeded to perform the duty assigned to him, though he had never done anything of the kind before.

But the train book was ruled in columns with headings to

guide him. First came the space for the car number, then its initial, loaded or empty, seals right and left, contents, and finally the station taken at and delivered to. He could readily fill out all the columns except those of "contents" and "destination," as that information was only to be had from the way bills accompanying each loaded car.

All loaded box cars, except those containing freight of great bulk or of little value, are sealed; that is, a wire or strap of tin is passed through the hasp and staple, or lock, as the case may be, in such a way that the car door cannot be opened without breaking it, and its ends are secured by a piece of lead, which has been pressed flat by a seal press, which leaves a raised figure, or series of figures, designating where sealed, on the leaden surface. Each station has a seal press and a separate number of its own; so also has each conductor. This method of sealing cars is used to detect where a car is broken open, and also to protect the agents and conductors when there is short freight reported.

Dash passed up one side of the train towards the engine, taking down carefully the numbers and initials, and inspecting the seals, which he also recorded. He then returned on the other side to get the seals there.

When he had finished, he went back to the office, where he found conductor Cupples examining some way bills. The latter inspected Dash's work without comment, from which the latter inferred that it was satisfactory.

They then checked up the numbers of the cars with the way bills, inserting the contents and destination in the appropriate column.

When a train is made up at a terminal, solid cars are put in a train, beginning with the engine, in the order of the stations at which they are to be set off, thus avoiding unnecessary switching; then follow the local cars and empties.

Solid carloads are each furnished with a single bill, while cars of mixed freight generally have two or three to a score or more. These latter are generally what are called local cars, because they contain small lots of freight for various points on the line. A local car is also used to pick up freight on the road. All of this local freight has to be handled by the crew of the train.

Bills were found for all the cars, including what Cupples called a "stack" for two local cars.

"We've got a hard run this time, Dykeman," said the conductor, as they finished their task.

"You've never run freight before, have you?" he continued, glancing significantly at Dash's soft hands, which he had been regarding for some time.

"No, sir; but I think I've got enough here to pull me through," laughed Dash, indicating his biceps. The conductor glanced over Dash's sturdy frame, and said he believed him.

It was now only a few minutes to leaving time for the local, and they hastened to the caboose. Here Dash met the balance of the crew, three brakemen. They were rather rough but good hearted young fellows, and considerably below Dash in the scale of intelligence and refinement. But Dash put on no airs of superiority, and met them on their own level.

By the time he had put on the blue flannel shirt and other clothing he had brought with him for his labors, there were two short blasts of the whistle of the engine, and his companions sprang for the tops of the cars to throw off any brakes that were set. They cleared the yard in a few minutes, and were soon rolling through an undulating country dotted with farmhouses.

Then Dash had an opportunity to inspect more closely the scene of his labors.

Conductor Cupples was at his desk assorting his bills and arranging the local ones in the order of the stations for which they were destined. A leather cushioned seat ran the whole length of the car on each side, except the space taken up by two wide side doors. These seats were for occasional passengers, and were utilized as beds by the crew when they laid up at the end of a run. They contained under them long lockers, in which were stored tools, lanterns, links and pins, etc. At one end of the car was a water barrel and a closet, while at the other was a locker and a raised top desk. In the center was a box-like wood stove, which was at present not being utilized. A row of a half a dozen small windows was on each side. There was a musty tobacco smell about the place, but it was uniformly clean and comfortable.

The run to the first station was quite a long one, and as Dash sat, with one elbow out of a window, watching the landscape, he thought he was having an easy time of it. But it was only the breathing spell before a long and arduous day that lay before him.

It began with a heavy lot of freight to be unloaded at the first station, the throwing out of two solid cars and taking on two more, and a lot of switching getting the two latter and placing cars at the freight depot platform for the agent.

Dash worked with a will, and, as he was quick and lively, conductor Cupples was more than pleased with him. One moment he was between the cars making a coupling, and the next up the ladder on a box car, like a monkey, and swinging to the brake with all the power of his muscles. In it all was an element of danger that only added zest to the work.

But by the time Dash had set and thrown off the caboose brake scores of times, helped to unload and load tons of freight, and climbed the sides of box cars till he was dizzy, he lost most of his pleasure, and came to the conclusion that a brakeman on a local freight was the hardest worked and poorest paid mortal in the service.

And there were added to his labors several hot boxes, which he, as caboose brakeman, had to attend to. They are treated with a preparation called "dope," and black oil, to cool them, and when he had finished his task his own grandmother wouldn't have known him. The oil and grease were smeared all over his face and clothing in black and shiny spots.

The last stop before reaching the terminal had been made, and Dash had stretched himself in utter exhaustion on the cushioned seat. Conductor Cupples was forward on the engine, where he had gone at the last station.

Dash was just telling himself that he had not discovered the slightest clew that anything was wrong on the local freight, when suddenly there was a call for brakes from the locomotive. Then there was a bumping of the box cars and a jerking of the caboose that showed the engineer had applied his steam brake.

Dash felt like doing anything else just then, but he sprang to his feet and swung to the caboose brake with all the strength left in his tired body. As the train slowed up, there came the call for the flagman, and Dash felt particularly disgusted and disheartened as he noticed it was raining hard outside. But he was well aware of the great importance of protecting the rear of his train, and had no thought of disregarding the signal.

He had no rubber coat, so, pulling his collar up about his neck, and making sure he had some torpedoes in his pocket, he grasped his red flag and swung down from the rear platform to the track. He pushed through the driving rain, which raised a mist from the smoking earth.

When he had gone back several hundred yards, he could not see his caboose. He stopped, stuck his flag in the center of the roadbed, and fastened a torpedo to the rail.

Then he looked about for a place of temporary shelter from the cold rain till he should be called in. A projecting boulder stood near at hand, and he crawled under it.

It was a dreary scene before him, and the monotonous splashing of the rain made it seem more so.

He looked up the track away from his train, and as he did so he saw something that filled him with astonishment and fear.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MYSTERY OF DEAD MAN'S CUT.

A NUMBER of white shrouded and ghostly looking forms, which looked positively gigantic through the rising mist, were slowly crossing the track in single file, not twenty yards from the young brakeman. Dash rubbed his eyes to make sure it was not an optical delusion, but when he looked again they were still there, marching in solemn procession.

He was about to cry out to them to decide if they were really men, when he saw a sight that made him dumb with horror. The last man was apparently without any head, the place where that member should have been being red and gory.

Dash was paralyzed with amazement, from which he was aroused by four sharp blasts of the whistle from his engine, calling him in. He snatched his flag, and raced down the track at the top of his speed, not stopping once to look back.

As soon as he reached the caboose and mounted the rear step, the next brakeman forward signaled the engineer to go ahead. Two more toots of the whistle, the brakes were thrown off, and the train was under way.

Dash sank on the cushion of the side seat, out of breath from his exertions, and with a pale face. He did not believe in the supernatural, but the horrible and weird procession had appeared so suddenly, he had not had time to reason that it must be the result of natural and easily explained causes. In spite of the unearthly appearance of the figures, particularly the last one, he felt certain their aspect and movements could be ascribed to human agency, though he could not explain how.

"Who told you to go back with that flag?" demanded conductor Cupples, in some excitement, when he came back to the caboose over the tops of the cars.

"No one," replied Dash, astonished at the question; "but I obeyed the engineer's call for a flagman."

"Oh," ejaculated the conductor in some confusion, "that's so. But what's the matter with you? You're as white as a sheet."

Dash briefly told what he had seen, just as they appeared to him.

"They're ghosts as sure as you live, Dykeman," said Cupples earnestly. "That's Dead Man's Cut, where you were. A bad collision happened there several years ago, killing nearly all the passengers, and the country people about there tell some strange stories of ghostly processions such as you saw, but I never believed them until now."

"And I wouldn't believe them now," added Dash.

"Why? What do you mean?"

"Because there are no such things as ghosts, and those figures were as much flesh and blood as you and I are."

"How are you going to prove that, Dykeman?" asked the conductor triumphantly.

Dash confessed his inability to do so, but stoutly contested that they were not specters from a spirit world. Cupples

clung just as tenaciously to the ghost idea, and strenuously endeavored to impress upon Dash that he had seen something uncanny.

Dash saw that he was very earnest about it, and wondered if his excited manner and strange question had been occasioned by a fear that the flagman had encountered the spectral procession. It was very odd that he should have asked the question under any circumstances, for he must have heard the signal calling for the flagman, and known that Dash would obey it.

The long shriek of the whistle, announcing the approach to the last station and the end of the run, was a welcome sound to Dash. As soon as they had come to a stop the yard crew took charge of the train, and the caboose was switched to a small siding with several others.

With a liberal use of soap and water, Dash removed the dirt and grease from his skin, and donned the unsoiled suit he had taken off. He then had supper at the eating house near the station, where the railroad men took their meals. Then he assisted conductor Cupples to make out his report, and afterwards sat in the office, or waiting room, listening to the talking of the trainmen till he became drowsy.

He thought it was strange he heard no reference to his experience at Dead Man's Cut, as he naturally expected to hear it commented upon, and have questions asked about it. But conductor Cupples had evidently said nothing about it to any one for some reason, and he decided he would not, either.

Finally he became so sleepy he concluded to seek a bed in the lodging house across the track.

"Off to bed, Dykeman?" said Cupples, who was in the room, as he arose to go.

"Yes," replied Dash. "Is that a good house across the track? Jerry, the forward man, said it was."

"It's about as good as any. All the boys sleep there."

With a parting good night, Dash was soon in the lodging house and being shown to a room.

A survey of the apartment was far from satisfactory, and a further investigation disgusted him. Dirt was everywhere, and the bed linen was anything but clean.

Though he was utterly worn out, and could have sunk to slumber on a board for a bed, he could not stand the dirt and possibly other disagreeable things. He returned down stairs and said he had decided to sleep in his caboose.

A short walk brought him to the track where it had been left, and in a few minutes he was stretched out on the long seat of the car, with his satchel, and a couple of coats found in the closet, for a pillow.

It seemed as if he had hardly dropped off to sleep when there was what seemed to him a terrible crash, that shook the caboose and made the windows rattle as if they had been crushed in. Dash awoke with a start and sat up. As nothing further followed, he decided that the commotion had been caused by another car being thrown on the caboose track and butting against the others. The sudden awakening had no doubt magnified the force of the blow and the noise. He looked at his watch by the light of the moon, which was shining brightly, and was astonished to see that it was a little after midnight.

He was about to lie down again when he heard steps on the caboose platform and the sound of voices. They were evidently two men, and the voice of one was unmistakably that of conductor Cupples. The other he did not recognize, though it was probably one of the other brakemen. The words were distinctly audible, and Dash could not help hearing what was said.

They were talking about a game of cards, and Dash was just dozing off into slumber again when he heard his name

mentioned. His eyes opened instantly, and he strained his ears to catch all that was said.

Conductor Cupples was telling about what he (Dash) had seen at Dead Man's Cut, and when he had finished the other voice laughed and said:

"Do you think he suspected anything?"

"No; but he don't believe the ghost racket, though he was considerably rattled."

"What does he think it was?"

"He said he was sure they were living men, that's all. But I wish he was anywhere else than on the caboose."

"That's so. It was a close shave."

These words were certainly mysterious and incomprehensible to Dash, and "suspected" and "close shave" were very suggestive of something underhand. What should he have suspected, and what had he missed discovering, he asked himself? He was convinced now, beyond a doubt, that he had not witnessed anything unearthly, and that Cupples did not believe he had, notwithstanding the latter's efforts to convince him to the contrary. The conductor wanted him to believe in the ghost theory for some reason. There was a key to the mystery, and he appeared to be very near it.

The voices ceased, and the knob to the door of the caboose was turned. Dash heartily wished he was "anywhere else than in the caboose" just then, for they would certainly know he had overheard them.

But he quickly dropped to a recumbent position and feigned sleep. Conductor Cupples entered the car—for it was he—and there was an exclamation of astonishment and anger from him.

The next moment Dash felt some sinewy fingers close about his neck and windpipe, and he was dragged to the floor.

He tried to cry out, but the grasp tightened, and his speech was effectually smothered. He felt that he was being choked to death, and struggled desperately to free himself.

His heart and brain seemed to be bursting, a deadly, nauseating faintness came over him, and a red mist obscured his vision. Even in the agony of his suffering he wondered, with a chill of horror, if the conductor really intended to murder him, and what dreadful mystery or crime he hoped to conceal by such a cruel deed.

(To be continued.)

SLIPS OF THE TONGUE.

OUR organs of speech sometimes play us strange tricks. Fully intending to say one thing, we find ourselves uttering another, like the young man rehearsing for his first appearance on the amateur stage, who, instead of imploring his love to come and hurry with him to the church, persists in adjuring her, "Come, let us fly to the church yard." Another amusing instance is printed by the *New York Evening Sun*:

Among the hymns to be sung at a church service was the one thousand and first. The minister considered for a moment whether he would announce that hymn as the 1,001st hymn or as hymn 1,001, and he arose with a fixed intention on that point; but presently as he stood in the pulpit he was surprised to hear himself say, "We will join in singing the one thousand and oneth hymn. Please omit, in singing, the third stanza." Of course, there was nothing to do but to let it go; it was one of those little blunders that are quite harmless if you let 'em alone.

BRAD MATTOON. OR, LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.*

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TIMELY INTERFERENCE.

FOR a moment or more Brad paused in amazement at the situation. Then the voice of Sidney Ivers rang out:

"So, you miserable, sneaking little cur, you didn't think my father meant it when he ordered you to keep off our grounds? Well, I'll teach you a lesson you'll not forget——"

"Oh, please, Sidney," cried Rob Wilton, piteously raising his hands, "I meant no harm—I never meant to trespass—I only sat on the bank to rest a minute, and I did not cross your fields——"

"Don't lie to me again, you little beggar," interrupted Ivers, tightening his grip upon the boy's shoulder.



BRAD KNEW NOT WHAT TO SAY OR THINK.

"It is true—it is true—I swear it is true!" answered Wilton, almost screaming with fear. "I have not crossed your grounds, and I will never set foot on them again——"

"Indeed you won't!" roared Ivers. "I'll see to that. And you'll lie on your back a week or two when I'm done with you——"

Rob Wilton uttered a sharp cry of distress, but it was drowned in an outburst of abusive and profane language from Ivers, who now raised his whip again. The brutal instincts of Sidney's nature were thoroughly aroused, and it was plain that he was bent on wreaking a cowardly revenge upon the poor, defenseless boy for the treatment he had received from the academy. It was the savage outburst of a bitter, revengeful spirit that had been impatiently biding a suitable opportunity and a fitting victim.

All this flashed through Brad's mind in an instant as he took in the situation, and, even tempered as he was, his blood fairly boiled. No sooner, then, had Ivers raised his arm than Brad, without even pausing to remove his skates, dashed up the low bank, and, tearing through the snow, where his skates impeded him but little, hurled himself with all his force against Ivers, who, having no intimation of his approach, was thrown violently upon the snow, dragging Rob Wilton with him. The latter at once broke loose from Ivers's grasp, and, quickly gaining his feet, stood in startled amazement at his sudden and unexpected release.

*Begun in No. 436 of THE ARGOSY.

Ivers lay for a few seconds completely dazed by the fierce onslaught ; then he sprang to his feet, and, recognizing his antagonist, and maddened beyond all power of expression by the unwelcome interruption, he rushed upon Brad, and aimed a terrible blow at him with his riding stock. Had the blow ever reached Brad's head, it would doubtless have struck him senseless, but the latter dodged quickly, and warded it off with one arm ; then, before Ivers had time to raise his riding stock again, Brad sprang forward like a young tiger, and closed with him. This deprived Ivers of the use of his whip, and immediately he found himself at the mercy of his opponent.

His efforts to free himself were utterly useless against Brad's superior strength, rendered doubly effective by the power of his passion. Struggling, kicking, and clutching in the air, Ivers was fairly lifted off his feet for a moment, and then dashed down to the ground with a force that drove all the breath out of his body. Then, dragging him to a kneeling posture, Brad held him firmly by the collar with one hand, and with the other wrenched the riding stock from his grasp, and, despite Ivers's struggles, laid blow after blow upon the fellow's back until his arm was tired.

"There, you contemptible coward !" he exclaimed at length, as he flung the riding stock away, and released his captive. "That squares everything up to date, but if I run across you playing any more of your dirty, mean tricks, or bullying any more small boys, I'll give you another dose."

When Brad first seized him, he had anticipated a sturdy resistance ; but Ivers, a genuine craven at heart, had been utterly cowed by Brad's summary action, and for several seconds after the latter had loosed his grasp, he crouched there motionless.

Brad viewed him with genuine contempt.

"Well, you're a worse coward than I thought," he muttered to himself ; "a stab in the dark is all you are capable of doing."

Ivers now gathered himself together, and, without looking at Brad, made two or three painful steps forward, and picked up his hat and riding stock.

At this moment Brad's eyes fell upon Rob Wilton, who had been standing silently by, a fearful witness of the stormy scene.

"Now, remember," he called after Ivers's retreating figure ; "if you ever lay a finger on young Wilton again, I'll thrash you till you can't stand."

Ivers paid no attention to this, but continued walking slowly away, and was soon lost to sight around a bend of the inlet.

As Brad stood gazing after him, he suddenly felt Rob Wilton's hands tightly clasp his arm, and, turning around, he found the young boy looking up into his face with tearful eyes and trembling lips.

"Oh, Brad !" he cried, "how good, how kind of you to help me ! How can I ever thank you enough. Oh, it is horrible to think what might have happened if you had not come"—and the boy shuddered.

"I rather guess you'd have fared badly," answered Brad sympathetically ; "but, still, what's the difference ? It's all right now."

"He would have killed me," continued Wilton ; "I know he would—he was so savage."

"Humph—savage enough when he has only a small boy to tackle," remarked Brad ; "but it don't take much to tame him if anybody of his own size heaves in sight. Look there," and Brad pointed to where Ivers for the last time came into view, limping slowly along the ridge of a rolling meadow. "There's nothing very savage about that, is there ?"

But Wilton was not so easily cheered, and his lip continued quivering.

"Did he hurt you much ?" asked Brad gently, as he felt of the boy's shoulders.

"A little—not much," answered Wilton, wincing perceptibly, "but he frightened me terribly. Oh, Brad," he went on, while clinging to his protector's arm, "I shall never dare to stir from the academy grounds for fear of meeting him."

"He won't touch you, youngster—he *shan't* touch you. I'll see to that," answered Brad reassuringly. Then, noticing how the boy still trembled, he continued : "Here, wait a minute till I take off my skates, and I'll go back home with you."

An expression of relief instantly came over Rob Wilton's face, as Brad walked to the bank, seated himself and started to unloosen his skates.

It was then that he suddenly became aware of two witnesses of the scene. Close together on the ice, not twenty feet from the bank, stood two stylishly dressed young ladies of about sixteen years of age, both with skates on, but both motionless, and gazing intently at Brad. Un-

der this embarrassing scrutiny the latter felt himself growing rapidly more awkward and confused. The skates slipped from his hands, and he sat there perfectly still, not knowing what to say or think of so unexpected and overwhelming an apparition of beauty.

Evidently bent upon relieving his embarrassment, the taller of the two girls, a handsome brunette, glided gracefully forward until she stood a few feet in front of Brad, who gazed at her as if spellbound. It was now her turn to grow embarrassed, and the natural color of her dark complexion became heightened.

"We have seen it all," she said in low, earnest tones, "and we cannot go without thanking you for taking that little boy's part so well against that cruel fellow. It was a brave and noble act."

Then, flashing her brilliant dark eyes upon him an instant, she turned quickly away, and, without another word, rejoined her companion. In a moment more the two were moving rapidly down the ice, and their gayly colored skating costumes soon disappeared from view among the trees.

Brad, utterly speechless, sat gazing after their retreating forms until they had passed completely out of sight, and even then his eyes remained fixed for several seconds upon the spot where they were last to be seen.

"Well, I'll be teetotally toted to Toteville !" he ejaculated at length, with a low whistle of astonishment, "I thought I'd never get my breath again. Why, where on earth did they come from anyhow ? I could have sworn the ice was clear two minutes ago—then all of a sudden, pop ! and up they bobbed—and as pretty as a pair of peaches, too. Say, youngster, do you know who they are ?"

"I know the tall one who spoke to you," answered Rob Wilton ; "she is Miss Lena Carter, the daughter of Judge Carter. He owns the land just over there across the inlet."

"Oh, then she's the crack skater Pery Landon spoke about."

"She skates very well, I know, and she is going into the contest this year. The other one is some friend of hers, but I don't know her name."

"Well, I'm glad to know they're real people," said Brad smiling, "for I thought a minute ago they were winter mermaids or ice fairies. Now, come on, youngster, let us hurry home before it gets too cold," and Brad, carefully wrapping up his skates, started off along the bank of the inlet, taking the roundabout way to the Hall by which he had come.

CHAPTER XVII.

ROB WILTON.

IMMEDIATELY on reaching the Hall, Brad insisted on Rob Wilton's coming to his room, where he examined his back and shoulders to see if he had sustained any severe injury. Only a few small bruises appeared, and Brad concluded that the boy had been more frightened than hurt by the rough handling he had received previous to his own interference.

"A little liniment will fix you up all right," he said, "and now tell me how you came to be down there by the inlet all alone."

Wilton looked a little confused.

"Well, to tell the truth, Brad, I—I went down to see you skate. You see I knew you had new skates, for I held them for you last Saturday afternoon, and, from the way you kept quiet about them, and slipped off this afternoon, I made up my mind you must be a good skater, and had a surprise in store for us."

Brad burst into a laugh, and sat down on his bed.

"Well, you're a cute one anyhow—so you set out to steal a march on me, eh ?"

"Yes—that is to say, I wanted very much to see why you kept everything so quiet, so I hurried off before you were out of the gate, and went around the other way, crossing Judge Carter's fields, and walking along the bank of the inlet, so as to reach the lake through the trees without being seen. That was the way I met Sidney Ivers."

"Well, then it seems I am responsible after all for the drubbing you got, so it was quite right and proper for me to come to the rescue. I wish I had known that. I would have had a little more fun with him while I was about it."

"But, oh Brad !" exclaimed Wilton, with a shiver, as the scene came back to him, "I am afraid you have brought trouble on yourself. Sidney Ivers will never cease hating you."

"Well, I hardly think I've lost much," answered Brad dryly. "He has never wasted any affection on me."

"But Sidney is so malignant. He is always seeking to do those he don't like an ill turn. He never forgets an injury."

"Yes, so Perry Landon said," muttered Brad, "and I can believe it; still, I can't help thinking that he will leave me alone after this afternoon. Did you notice he never threatened—never even looked back. Yes, I am sure he will not trouble me any more. I think I know him now. I've met his kind before, and I'm convinced that he is thoroughly cowed, and won't dare lift a finger—that is, unless he gets a chance to do some underhand work, and I don't think such a chance is likely to occur. And as for you, mind now, and tell me if he ever threatens to touch you again."

"I shall never get near enough to him to hear his threats if I can help it. It makes me shiver to think of him."

"See here, youngster," said Brad, settling himself comfortably in the low armchair before the small wood fire that burned cheerfully in the grate, "this is a strange place for you to be in—this 'select academy,' as they call it—as strange a place as it is for me. You don't seem at home here at all. Sometimes when I watch you slipping quietly around the halls and compare you, with your little, thin body, your timid manner, your pale face, and your great big eyes, with the other strong, healthy fellows, I begin to think you must be some sort of a restless spirit, like the one Bill Scott used to say he saw in the corridors of the Sailors' Home at Bombay—"

"Bombay!" exclaimed Wilton, his face lighting up joyously, as he dropped down on a stool by Brad's chair. "Have you been in Bombay?"

"Indeed I have. I spent two whole months there while Bill Scott was under the weather, and picking up strength. Do you know Bombay?"

"Know Bombay!" cried Wilton. "It is home—home to me; or nearly so, for I have spent many happy days there."

"Oh, to be sure. Perry Landon told me you were the son of a missionary. Do you come from India?"

"I was born there—in the Bengal province up towards the north, but while I was quite young, my father and mother moved nearer the western coast, and then we frequently visited Bombay. The missionaries met there, and my father always took me with him."

"Then you are a Maratha?"

"Yes. It is amongst the Marathas that my father works."

"How long since you left India?"

"A year and a half. Oh how long and dreary it seems! How I long to see my home again! Poor dear old *Bap*" (father) "what might not happen to him, so many thousand miles away, and I know nothing of it?"

Brad leaned forward and asked gently:

"*To Kiti warshantsa ahe?*" (How old is he?)

At the soft sounds of his childhood's tongue Wilton started forward with a glad cry, and the happy tears came to his eyes.

"Oh, Brad!" he exclaimed, "you speak Marathi!"

"Well, a little bit," answered Brad with a smile. "I couldn't help picking up some of it, but don't overwork me on it or you will find me weak."

"Never mind! never mind! Let me hear it again," cried Wilton. "It sounds like home."

"With all my heart," responded Brad, "but you must help me out when you find me struggling in deep water."

"Tell me first of all about your visit to India," said Wilton eagerly. "How long were you there, and where did you go?"

"Well, that is something of a story, and you will have to take it in English if you want to understand it," said Brad laughing.

Rob Wilton nodded and rested his elbow on Brad's knee, watching his face closely as he spoke. The flickering firelight alone relieved the growing darkness of the room, and softened the outlines of Brad's features as he gazed thoughtfully into the grate. In his whole-souled admiration of his protector Rob Wilton drank in every passing expression and assured himself that he had never seen anybody so handsome and manly.

"It was in July two years ago," Brad began, "that we reached Calcutta—I mean Bill Scott and I—for we had determined to take a trip through India and meet the Cinderella at Bombay. I will never forget that trip. It was one of the most delightful I ever took—such free, easy, careless days, and such curious and interesting adventures! Still, they would be nothing new to you. Well, after a short stay at Calcutta, we went on to Benares, and then to old Allahabad. There we made quite a visit, and enjoyed every minute of it. Our first plan had been to

hurry on to Bombay, but we couldn't resist the chance to go up to Cawnpore, and once there, bless me, we didn't stop sight seeing until we had reached Delhi, and we even ran up for a week into the mountains to Simla, the summer resort. We didn't enjoy that so much. There were too many English and native swells there, and we wanted to see the people in their natural state. We came back soon to Cawnpore. I could hardly leave that place. We made it our headquarters for quite a time, while we went frequently to Agra to visit the Taj Mahal. That was like treading in Heaven to us. It was a beautiful vision, and once, as we stood there feasting our eyes on that lovely tomb, Bill Scott whispered: 'Don't talk loud, Brad; I'm afraid it's only a dream, and you might wake me.' That was just the way I felt. Of course you have been to Agra."

Wilton shook his head sadly.

"No," he said with a shudder, "my father would never take me to Cawnpore or any place near it."

Brad did not seem to notice the boy's significant tone.

"Well, we had to had to get back to Allahabad at last, and then Bill Scott was taken down with chills and fever—you know what that is in India. After quite a delay, and careful nursing, he came around all right, though he was mighty weak, so I made up my mind that the best thing I could do was to move him as soon as possible to the Sailors' Home at Bombay, where we could see and explain our absence to Captain Bunn, and get a good rest. So when Bill Scott was strong enough to move, we took the great Indian Peninsula Railroad straight through to Bombay. There we put up at the Sailors' Home, and a pleasanter place I rarely ever struck. To our surprise Captain Bunn had not yet arrived, so we spent a jolly six weeks in Bombay waiting for him. Bill Scott got strong again, and I loafed around, seeing the sights, picking up curiosities, learning a little of the Marathi, and having a good time generally. It had to come to an end, however, and so one evening, just after sunset, as I was sitting out near the end of the Apollo Bandar pier, listening to the band—you know the pier is right next to the Sailors' Home—I thought I saw a familiar craft down in the harbor. I got my glass, and, sure enough, it was the Cinderella. Soon after I found Captain Bunn, and then our jolly days at Bombay were numbered. We set sail the next week. Now there's my trip to India in a nutshell."

Then followed a host of questions and answers, part in English, part in Marathi, and comparisons of reminiscences such as travelers delight in.

"And are you going to be a missionary, too?" asked Brad at length.

"Yes. I will go back to help my father, and continue his work after him."

Brad gazed at the slim boy curiously. He seemed to take on a new dignity as he spoke of his future work.

"So that's the reason they call you 'dominie,' eh?"

"Perhaps. I don't mind it. I rather like it."

"But you are so delicate, youngster. You'd stand no show against that climate. Ugh, just think of the chills and fever."

"But, oh Brad, think of the thousands of dark souls waiting for the light I can bring them. That thought makes me strong against all fear of disease or risk of any kind."

Rob Wilton's cheeks flushed, and his eyes burned brightly as he spoke.

Brad's face became thoughtful, and his voice grew softer.

"Well, 'little dominie,' the boys call you timid, but I am beginning to think you are braver than us all, and that some day your kind of courage is going to count for more than anything we can do."

"No, Brad," answered Wilton, "we all have different places to fill, and mine is a peculiar one, that is all. I could never be happy here. My mind goes back to India, and I long to return. From my earliest days I have been brought up to look forward to mission work. I love it, and am eager to begin. All my family and father's family are at work there. My grandfather was a missionary, and our family blood has been shed in mission service."

"How was that?" asked Brad quickly.

"My uncle Robert—the relative for whom I was named—my father's brother, was at work near Cawnpore when the terrible Sepoy rebellion of 1857 occurred. Oh, how many times I have heard that story—how, on the fourth of June the attack was made on General Wheeler's intrenchments—how the garrison at length accepted the treacherous offer of safe conduct to Allahabad, and then were massacred on their boats—and, most horrible of all, how hundreds of English people, trusting his false offers of protection, placed themselves in the power of the terrible traitor, Nana Sahib, only to be ordered out into the market place

of Cawnpore on the 16th of July, and slaughtered in cold blood—" here the boy's accents became broken.

"I remember the place well," said Brad in a low voice. "I saw the beautiful memorial monument that has been erected on the spot."

"My uncle lies there," continued Wilton quietly. "My father and mother fled southward, and we have lived for many years at Surat. You know the place. It is on the coast, in the midst of the Maratha region, and about 170 miles from Bombay. My future work will be near there, or perhaps further south, wherever I am sent, for I will connect myself with the mission church at Surat."

And so Rob Wilton talked on of his plans, while Brad listened attentively, wondering, and with an interest which the first glimpse of a nature so entirely new to him irresistibly aroused.

The entrance of Perry Landon brought a sudden termination to a conversation which both of them were reluctant to break off, and, as Wilton rose to go, Brad said:

"Well, dominie, come in and see us often. I have a lot of curious things from India, which you would like to look at, and when my box arrives from New York, I'll show them to you."

"If it depends on the coming of that box, you might as well forget about it," called out Perry Landon as Rob Wilton slipped quietly out.

"Well, if that youngster isn't the strangest mixture I ever saw!" exclaimed Brad. "Only two hours ago he was trembling with fear and screaming almost before he was hurt, because Sidney Ivers had him in his clutches, and yet he has the courage to take that delicate little frame of his to India, and expose it to all sorts of fatal risks for the sake of preaching to the heathen—"

"What is all this, anyhow?" interrupted Perry Landon, looking at him curiously. "What has happened to the little dominie?"

Brad, recalled from his reflections by Perry's questions, related briefly the events of the afternoon, giving a somewhat modest version of the part he had played, but telling enough to enable Perry to guess the whole situation.

"Well, that *was* a romantic adventure!" exclaimed Perry, when Brad had finished. "I'm heartily glad that you gave Sidney Ivers his deserts at last, and I'd be willing to bet that Miss Lena Carter said something nicer than you have reported. By the way, I warn you there. I think Eugene Clifford has a soft spot in that direction."

"Well, no fear of my making him jealous," said Brad laughing. "I have never been a ladies' man, and I'm afraid I would prove an awkward hand at that sort of thing."

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT FROM AN OLD FRIEND.

ON the following Saturday afternoon, as Brad was passing through the large hallway of the academy, he thought he detected a familiar figure standing in the doorway of Dr. Hope's library.

"Why, Mr. Parker!" he exclaimed, hurrying forward. "This is a pleasant surprise. When did you come out from New York?"

"This morning early," answered Mr. Parker, shaking hands cordially. "I had to attend the trustee meeting today, and I was just looking for you to pay you a short call before hurrying back to the city. I must be in New York again tonight."

"Oh, to be sure, I had forgotten about the meeting of the trustees," said Brad. "Come up stairs and see my room. It's a snug, comfortable little place."

"Then you think you will like school life after all, eh?" asked Mr. Parker, resting his hand affectionately on Brad's shoulder as they ascended the stairs.

"Oh, yes. I took to it very nicely, though, of course, it was rather strange at first. I know I shall like it now. I have made some good friends, and I think I am getting along pretty well in my studies."

"Dr. Hope reports very favorably of your work," answered Mr. Parker, as they entered Brad's room. He gave a quick glance around the apartment; then, with a smile and nod of approval, he sat down.

"Well, Brad, I'm heartily glad to see you so well fixed. I had some doubts at first when you objected so strongly to coming, but I think you will agree with me now, that my advice was good."

Then followed a pleasant conversation, in which Brad related all the events of importance that had taken place since his arrival, not omitting the encounter with Sidney Ivers at the lake. Mr. Parker listened, sometimes with an amused, sometimes with a grave expression of face. When Brad had finished, he said:

"Well, you ought certainly to feel at home by this time, and you must have been agreeably disappointed if you came here in the expect-

ation of a dull time. Your life could hardly have been more eventful if you had been traveling during the past month. As concerns this Ivers, I fancy you are right. I don't think he will molest you, for I am convinced that he is a cowardly young puppy, and is probably afraid to risk the chance of another drubbing. I am sorry it happened—very sorry; but, after all, I can't see but what you did the best under the circumstances. Try to avoid all friction in the future, though. Keep away from him as much as possible, and don't engage in another quarrel. The relations between Gordon Ivers and the academy are disagreeable enough at present without further aggravation."

"You may trust me thoroughly in that, Mr. Parker, and I am very sorry, too, that any trouble has arisen. Do you think—that—that—" Brad hesitated a moment, and then, prompted by curiosity, went on, "that Mr. Ivers can do the academy any harm?"

"Harm!" exclaimed Mr. Parker with some show of impatience. "Nonsense. He can harm nothing. It is all idle threat, and Dr. Hope knows it as well as we. Gordon Ivers has no power over the affairs of the Hall, nor even the least influence, though he thought he had in his friendship with the other trustees—Judge Carter and Mr. Norris. But that friendship was ruptured at once as soon as he approached them on the subject of the dismissal of Dr. Hope. They cut him off very short. Gordon Ivers could never displace Dr. Hope. Were we not all so fond of the doctor, we would nevertheless keep him here in observance of the wish expressed in Reginald Hosmer's will. We regard the trust he imposed in us as sacred, and would never deviate a hair's breadth from the course which he planned for the future of the academy. His wishes have guided us in all our decisions. We have never been at a loss to know what his wishes were, for I knew Reginald Hosmer intimately for many years. I was his legal adviser, and was closely associated with him in all his plans. He confided everything to me during the last years of his life, and I arrived at a full and complete understanding of his purposes in founding the academy—"

Mr. Parker grew thoughtful and remained silent for a few moments, then he continued:

"Brad, Reginald Hosmer was a nobleman in the best sense of the word—such a nobleman as I should like to see you become. His was a character for all men to copy. I will tell you more of him later, though. It is needless to tell you that Gordon Ivers, his nephew, is a different sort of a man. It was Reginald Hosmer's desire that I should continue my legal connection with the estate after his death, but, shortly after the arrival of Gordon Ivers, I discovered that this was impossible. Gordon Ivers and I could never deal with each other on any subject, so, as soon as I recognized this fact, I severed my relations with the Hosmer estate, and devoted myself to the furtherance of Mr. Hosmer's plans here in the academy. Gordon Ivers and I have had little to do with each other from that time. He has no authority here at the Hall, which was left to the trustees alone, and you need have no uneasiness as to any evil threats he may care to indulge in. Be assured the academy is secure."

Mr. Parker here rose.

"There," he said; "that's enough for you to know about the matter at present. And now I must hurry off to catch my train. Write me frequently and tell me when you want anything."

"Oh, that reminds me," said Brad with a smile, as they shook hands. "You know that big box of mine at the warehouse? Well, I have often promised the boys to show them my curiosities, and have the box sent out. But, somehow, I never could get around to it, and now they are beginning to say that I have no box. Will you see that it is sent to me soon, so that I can redeem my word?"

"All right," was Mr. Parker's answer. "If I had known that, I would have sent it when you wrote about your skates. By the way, how do the skates suit you?"

"Perfectly. I can never thank you enough for the present. They are beauties; and if I don't win a prize with them, it won't be for lack of a good outfit."

"Well, I wish you luck; and now, good by. I haven't a minute more to spare." Here Mr. Parker glanced hastily at his watch, and then, with a last handshake, hurried out to the carriage that stood before the door.

"Are you a friend of Mr. Raymond Parker?" asked a voice beside Brad, as he stood watching the carriage out of the gate.

Turning around, Brad discovered that the speaker was Arthur Paton. He was considerably surprised, for Paton's manner was quite different from that which he had maintained towards Brad heretofore. It was evident that Mr. Parker's friendliness towards the new boy had deeply

impressed him. Brad, knowing well the insincerity of Paton's nature, did not feel inclined to gratify his curiosity any further than possible.

"No," he answered rather coldly; "I am not a relative. Mr. Parker is an old friend."

Paton asked no more questions; but, from that time on, adopted an altogether new tone in addressing Brad, and even endeavored to make friendly advances towards him. Brad was at first a little annoyed at this attention, knowing the cause of it thoroughly, but, at length, good naturedly determined to take it for what it was worth, and make the best of it.

"I know he is only bowing attendance on Mr. Parker when he treats me well," he said to himself; "but still, what is the difference? It makes things run more pleasantly, even if it is not sincere."

As the days passed by, Brad's attention became more and more centered upon the coming skating contest. The weather remained clear and cold, and he lost no opportunity for practice and preparation, knowing well that Eugene Clifford, for one, was a competitor who could not easily be outstripped, and appreciating the chances of some of the contestants from Bramford making a brilliant record.

It was on the last Saturday afternoon in January that Brad, after returning from the lake, picked up a copy of the *Bramford Post* which had just been delivered at the Hall, and his eye almost immediately fell upon the following item of news:

The Bramford Skating Club will celebrate their usual anniversary next Saturday, February 7, when—weather permitting—the skating contest, arranged by the club, will take place. The details of the contest have already been described at length in our columns, and no variation will be made from the description already given. All desiring to compete will please hand in their names to Mr. Harold Fisk, the secretary of the club, before next Wednesday night.

Brad hurried up to his room with the paper, in search of Perry Landon. Finding the latter there, he showed him the item.

"Now tell me, Perry, what must I do in order to enter?" he asked.

"Oh, that is easily arranged," answered Perry. "You have merely to present your name and pay the entrance fee of five dollars. The competition is open to all."

"But who is Harold Fisk, and where is he to be found?"

"I know him very well. See here, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you to his house tonight, and introduce you to him. We can both get leave to go into town for the evening."

"Good. That will suit me exactly," answered Brad.

It was accordingly arranged that they should call on Harold Fisk without delay; and, having obtained the necessary leave of absence, they set out together for Bramford about seven o'clock that evening.

(To be continued.)

DIGGING FOR GOLD.

A STORY OF CALIFORNIA. *

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A TRAGEDY.

I HAVE said that the passengers were astonished at discovering that their notorious road agent was their fellow traveler. There were two, however, who were not wholly surprised—the miner who had related his cousin's story and the farmer who had had a sharp colloquy with the black-eyed man.

For a minute no one moved or spoke.

"Come," said Dike impatiently; "I have no time to waste. Give me your money."

"Do you want mine?" asked Grant, who was entirely willing to give up the small amount of gold coin he had with him if he could save the dust in his valise.

"No; I don't care for the trifle you have, nor the other boy's money, but those miners over there must give up their treasure, and my agricultural friends also."

"If you want my money come and get it!" growled the miner already referred to.

"I say the same," added the farmer.

"I will stand no nonsense," said Stephen Dike.

"It's hard luck," grumbled the miner, "to give up all my hard earnings."

"Give up your money and grumble afterwards," rejoined Dike.

The miner thrust his hand into his pocket, and then in an excited voice exclaimed suddenly, as he peered out of the coach, "Ha, friends! there is help approaching. See!" And he pointed with outstretched finger beyond Stephen Dike.

The road agent, taken by surprise, turned quickly. The step was fatal to him. The miner, who had pulled a revolver from his pocket, fired without an instant's delay, and Stephen Dike fell backward, instantly killed. The miner's bullet had penetrated his temple. So unexpected was the assault that the road agent had not even time to discharge his own pistols. They fell upon the ground from his nerveless hands, and one of them accidentally went off, but did no harm.

"My cousin is avenged!" exclaimed the miner grimly.

"Give me your hand, sir!" said the farmer. "You have saved us all."

"And rid the State of California of the most dangerous outlaw within its limits."

"It seems hard to rejoice in the death of a fellow being," observed the teacher, "but no one can grieve over the taking off of such a man. Gentlemen, let us remove the body to some place less public."

The passengers got out, and were joined by the driver.

"There is a reward of five thousand dollars offered by the authorities for the capture of Stephen Dike, dead or alive!" he said. "What gentleman killed him?"

"I did," answered the miner; "but I want no reward. I should look upon it as blood money. What I did, I did in defense of my fellow passengers and myself."

Stephen Dike lay upon the ground, his features still wearing the cynical smile habitual to him. Death had come upon him so suddenly that there had not been time even to change the expression of his face.

"I suppose this man has committed many robberies?" said the teacher to the stage driver.

"No one knows how many, but he has robbed my stage four times."

"How did it happen that you did not recognize him when he booked as a passenger?"

"He has always worn a mask when I saw him before. This time he became bolder, and presented himself without disguise. I remember being struck by his appearance and wondering whether I had not met him before, but it did not occur to me that it was the famous road agent, Stephen Dike."

The passengers took the lifeless body and drew it to one side of the road.

"Ought we not to bury it?" asked the teacher.

"I can't bear to put beneath the sod a man who, but fifteen minutes since, was as full of life as we are. Let us leave that office to some one else. We can affix to the tree, beneath which he lies, a paper giving his name."

This proposal was approved. One of the passengers produced a sheet of paper and a traveling inkstand, and this placard was affixed to the trunk of the tree:

This man is
STEPHEN DIKE,
THE ROAD AGENT.

Killed while attempting to rob the Sacramento coach.

"We ought perhaps to examine his pockets, and see if we can find anything to throw light on his career."

This was the suggestion of one of the passengers.

"No," said the miner; "leave that to the persons who may find him. If he has money about him, leave it to others. I have been the instrument of Heaven's retribution. Should I take anything of value from him, I would be degraded to his own level."

This remark seemed to voice the general sentiment, and after an interval of only ten minutes, the stage was again on its way to San Francisco.

Grant and Robert were strongly impressed by what had happened. Neither of them had ever seen a death by violence before.

"It's awful!" said Robert, shuddering.

"But he deserved his fate," returned Grant.

"So he did; but it is terrible to have death come so suddenly."

"You are right, lad!" said the miner. "I feel entirely justified in what I did, but it was a fearful necessity. It is something I shall never be able to forget."

There was no further adventure to record in the two days' ride. Towards nightfall of the second day they reached the city of the Golden Gate, and the passengers separated. Grant regretted parting with Robert Campbell, to whom he had become warmly attached, but was glad to think they would have opportunities of meeting in San Francisco.

Before separating he undeceived Robert as to his circumstances.

"I suppose," he said, "you think me very poor?"

"I wouldn't judge from your clothes that you were wealthy," returned Robert, smiling.

"That's why I wear them. In this valise, which I carry, I have about fifteen hundred dollars in gold dust."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Robert in surprise.

"Yes; but only half of it belongs to me. I have more at the mines, however. I feared to be robbed, and so put on the appearance of a tramp. Now I shall buy a respectable suit."

"I am glad you are able to do so; but even in your poor clothes, I was glad to have met you."

"Thank you, Rob. We have known each other but two days, but I shall always look upon you as a friend."

The two boys shook hands cordially, and Grant set out in the direction of the Alameda Hotel. Before he arrived there he saw Mr. Crosmont walking thoughtfully through Kearney Street with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Mr. Crosmont!" he exclaimed eagerly.

Giles Crosmont looked up quickly, and his face brightened as he recognized Grant.

"Grant Colburn!" he cried joyfully, seizing the boy by the hand.

"I am indeed glad to see you. When did you arrive?"

"Just now, by stage from Sacramento."

"And you are well? But I see you are. You don't look prosperous; but that doesn't matter. With me you will want for nothing."

"Mr. Crosmont," said Grant smiling, "you shouldn't judge a man—or boy by his clothes. Do you see this valise?"

"Well?"

"It contains fifteen hundred dollars' worth of gold dust."

"Yours?"

"Half of it is mine. Half of it belongs to my partner. I wore old clothes, because I did not want to be thought rich."

"Was there need of all this caution?"

"You shall judge for yourself. Our stage was held up by Stephen Dike."

"The daring road agent? I have heard of him. Did he plunder the passengers?"

Grant explained the ruse by which Stephen Dike had lost his life.

"He was a scoundrel! I have no pity for him. And now come with me, and I will take you to my home. I have two rooms, and I shall install you in one of them."

"How about my gold dust?"

"As soon as you have washed, and are provided with a new suit, I will take you to a banker, who will weigh and allow you the market price for it."

"But I shall have no money to pay for the suit till I have sold the dust."

Mr. Crosmont smiled.

"The suit shall be a present from me," he said.

And no small present it proved to be, for clothing was very dear in San Francisco at that time, so that a ready-made suit, which could be bought in any Eastern city for twenty dollars or less, cost ninety.

The gold dust brought a trifle over fifteen hundred dollars, which was entered to Grant's account on the books of the bank.

"Have you any letters for me, Mr. Crosmont?" asked Grant. "I haven't heard from home for a long time."

"Here is a letter which arrived by the last steamer."

Grant read it eagerly. It was from his mother, and contained important news. Instead of reproducing the letter, we will go back to Grant's Iowa home and let the reader know what happened there since he started for the land of gold.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TARBOX FAMILY.

AFTER Grant's departure his mother felt very lonely. She found very little satisfaction in the company of her husband, who became more miserly as he grew older. He began also to show signs of breaking health, and this did not escape the vigilant eyes of

his daughter, Mrs. Sophia Bartlett, and her husband. They were not at all insensible to the fact that their father's property was a snug one, and that it would make them very comfortable when added to their own.

Sophia Bartlett began to feel suspicious that her father's second wife would attempt, by undue influence, to obtain more than her share of the estate. At least once a week she was accustomed to drive over with her son Rodney when her husband was occupied by business, and learn all she could of what was going on at the Tarbox farm.

Rodney generally inquired after Grant, but not from friendly motives.

Some months after Grant's departure one of these visits was in progress.

"Have you heard from Grant, Mrs. Tarbox?" he asked, for it was in this way he always addressed his grandfather's wife.

"I heard last week," answered Grant's mother.

"How is he getting along?"

"He had just arrived in California. The journey across the plains is a long and tedious one."

"Did he have anything to do?"

"He was expecting work."

"Prob'ly he won't get any," said Seth Tarbox. "The boy made a fool of himself when he left home. He might have had a good livin' here, but he was sot on trampin' to California."

"That's the way I feel," said Sophia Bartlett. "Young folks don't know what is best for themselves. As likely as not the boy will be sending home for money to get back."

"He won't get none from me," muttered Mr. Tarbox emphatically, "and I want that understood."

"He isn't very likely to send to you, Mr. Tarbox," said his wife, indignant at this attack upon Grant.

"I dunno about that. He's a headstrong boy, and always was."

"I am glad that my son Rodney is a good and dutiful boy, and is willing to be guided by my advice and his grandfather's."

Rodney understood that it was well to keep in the good graces of his grandfather, who might remember him handsomely in his will, and tried to look virtuous and meek.

"Yes," he said, "grandfather knows what is best for me."

"Rodney's case is very different," Mrs. Tarbox could not help saying. "His future is provided for. Grant had nothing to look forward to here except the life of a farm laborer."

"Is he too proud to work on a farm?" sneered Mrs. Bartlett.

"No more than your son Rodney," calmly replied Mrs. Tarbox.

"I've got something better to do than to work on a farm," said Rodney in a lofty tone. "Just fancy me in overalls, ma!"

"To be sure!" chimed in his mother.

"It ain't no disgrace to wear overalls," said Seth Tarbox, who did not aspire to be thought genteel, like his daughter and Rodney.

"Of course not, pa!" said Mrs. Bartlett in a conciliatory tone. "You are a substantial farmer, and find it necessary to superintend your own work."

"I hope Rodney ain't got no foolish notions about bein' too high toned for honest work."

"No, pa; but Rodney isn't rugged, and his father and myself mean to make a lawyer of him."

"Humph! Some lawyers ain't worth their salt."

"That's the case with some farmers, too, isn't it?" returned his daughter.

"I own you're right, Sophia. Why, there's Bill Jones is gettin' poorer and poorer every year. I've got a thousand dollar mortgage on his farm," he chuckled, "and I guess I'll have to foreclose sooner or later."

"What will become of Mrs. Jones and her young children?" asked Mrs. Tarbox in a tone of pity.

"That ain't my lookout," said Seth Tarbox in a hard tone.

"But surely you wouldn't turn the poor woman out into the street."

"It ain't for me to look out for another man's wife and children, Mrs. T.," returned the farmer.

"But the farm must be worth a good deal more than the amount of your mortgage?"

"Yes," chuckled the farmer, "it's well worth three thousand dollars. So much the better for me!"

"You wouldn't take possession of it, and take such an advantage of the family."

"Mrs. T., you don't understand business. When you talk in that

way you only make yourself ridiculous. You'd better leave me to attend to business, and you look after the housekeeping," and he turned to his daughter for approval.

"You are right, pa," said Sophia, "and Mrs. Tarbox, though she means well, shows that she doesn't understand business."

Mrs. Tarbox bit her lip, but did not reply. She had made the discovery long since that the daughter was as cold and selfish as the father, and probably even more so.

"Mrs. Tarbox, have you got Grant's last letter?" asked Rodney.

"Yes."

"Would you mind letting me read it?"

Mrs. Tarbox hesitated a moment, and then replied: "A part of it is private, but I will read you the part in which he speaks of his position and prospects."

"Thank you. I would like to hear it."

Mrs. Tarbox took from her pocket a letter which she had perused half a dozen times already, and read as follows:

"Well, mother, I have at last reached California. It is a long and tiresome journey across the plains. I hope when I go back I shall be able to go by steamer to New York. However, I made some pleasant friends on the way, and I have good courage, though my money is nearly out."

"Humph!" interrupted Seth Tarbox; "just as I expected."

"Grant didn't take a fortune with him," said his mother. "How could you expect he would have much money left when he reached the end of his journey?"

"I didn't, Mrs. T. That is what I said. Read on."

"I haven't decided yet what I will do first. I expect some time to go to the gold fields, but I may get a position first and earn some money to buy my outfit. I am well and strong, and I am sure I can make a living some way."

"Mark my words," said Sophia Bartlett, "the time will come when your son will wish he had never left the farm."

"I don't feel sure of that," said Mrs. Tarbox. "Grant is a manly boy, and he can work in California just as well as here, and will be paid better than here."

"Do you mean to say that I didn't pay the boy enough for his work, Mrs. T.?"

"I will express no opinion on that subject. California is a new country, where labor is naturally more highly compensated than here."

"I am glad I am not in Grant's place," said Rodney.

"So am I," added his mother; "but you always had good judgment, Rodney."

"I hope so. When I am a man I may go to California just to see the country, but I prefer to stay at home now."

"He has an old head on young shoulders," said his mother complacently.

"It's my birthday tomorrow, grandpa," observed Rodney significantly.

"Is it?" asked Seth Tarbox. "How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Well, well, I didn't know you were getting on so fast. There's a quarter for a birthday present."

Rodney accepted the coin, but turned up his nose at his grandfather's niggardliness, and expressed himself freely on the subject to his mother on the way home.

"What a mean old skinflint grandfather is!" he exclaimed.

"Twenty five cents, and he a rich man!"

"Hush, Rodney, don't let any one hear you speak in that way!"

"But he is mean! you can't deny it!"

"He is close," said Mrs. Bartlett cautiously. "Most farmers are, I believe; but just wait patiently and the money which he has saved by his economy will come to us. You must seem grateful, or he may take a notion to leave his property to Mrs. Tarbox and Grant."

"Oh, I'll be careful, ma, never fear! I hope Grant Colburn won't get a cent."

"I don't think he will. In fact, I feel sure of it."

"Do you think Mrs. Tarbox will get much?"

"Not if I can prevent it!" said his mother, closing her lips firmly.

"I expect she only married the old man for his money."

"I suppose she wanted a home for herself and Grant."

"Will the law give her anything?"

"Yes; but I've thought of a way to get over that."

"What is it, ma?"

"If I can induce your grandfather to make a deed of gift to me of his property before he dies, on condition of my supporting him the rest of his life, that will evade the law."

"That will be a good idea. I shouldn't wonder if Grant and his mother had to go to the poorhouse at last. He'd come down off his high horse then."

"I hope not. Mrs. Tarbox can get employment as a housekeeper probably, and Grant ought to be able to support himself. Of course they must look out for themselves."

Not long afterwards, unfortunately for Mrs. Tarbox, her husband lost fifty dollars. He had sold a horse to a man in a neighboring town for



THE OUTLAW WAS LEFT AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE.

an excessive price, and fifty dollars remained due on the purchase money. This the purchaser refused to pay, and as his property was all in his wife's name, Seth Tarbox was unable to collect it, although, as may be imagined, he moved heaven and earth to accomplish it.

This made him feel very poor, and he determined to make it up by retrenchment in his personal expenses. Had the economy fallen upon himself he might have been justified, but it occurred to him that by dismissing the woman who helped his wife on washing day he could save seventy five cents a week, and he was mean enough to make this proposal.

Mrs. Tarbox could hardly believe him in earnest for she saw only too clearly at what he was aiming.

(To be continued.)



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On next to the last cover page of this issue will be found a surprise in the shape of a premium offer for only one new subscriber that is but a foretaste of other valuable prizes to follow. *This means a handsome present for each new name sent in.*

* * * *

THE French are invariably known as a most frugal people. It is said that what an American would throw away in the line of food scraps, the Parisian *chef* will gather up and serve the next day in the shape of a most appetizing soup. Then we have, as a matter of history, the remarkable speed with which France paid off her debt to Germany after the last war, and now her citizens are going to turn this same spirit of economy to use in still another field.

Large basins are to be constructed along the Seine with the object of utilizing the force of the tides and applying it to manufacturing purposes. Already in California the power of the waves has been harnessed by man to work for him, and a splendid reward is awaiting that genius who shall devise a plan for capturing the exhaust steam that now wastes itself over the housetops in all our cities. Will the prize be secured by America or France? Perhaps some who read these lines will live to see for themselves.

* * * *

A NEWS item from Georgia conveys the intelligence that in a certain family in Atlanta a pet monkey has been trained to do duty as a child's nurse. And really such a guardian for a baby is really worth as much as some white faced, smooth skinned ones we have seen, who leave their young charges blinking at the sun in their perambulators, while they themselves gossip with the policemen, or shake them when they cry out, till their teeth would rattle, if they had any, simply because it is too much trouble to search for the pin that gives rise to the infant's tribulations.

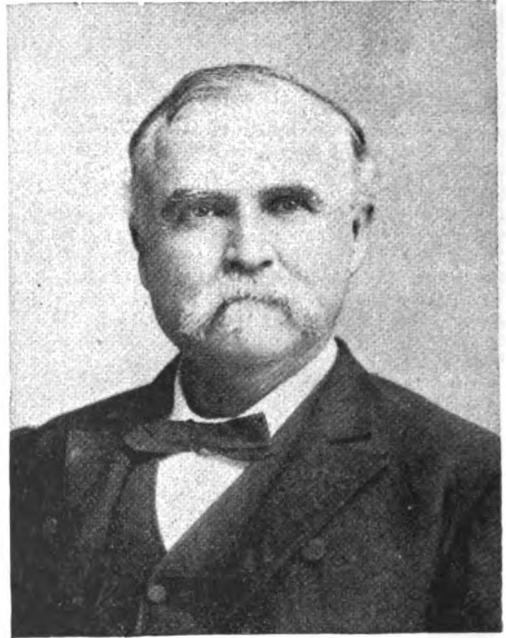
Truth compels us to add that the monkey grew impatient finally, and jumping into the cradle, created havoc with its occupant. Still this was a neglect of duty that the parents could see for themselves and remedy, whereas the delinquencies of the human nurse maid are too often undetected until their results have been made fatally manifest.

ROGER Q. MILLS.

CONGRESSMAN FROM TEXAS.

BROAD shoulders that bear the weight of over fifty years, well knit frame, finely poised carriage, features that catch the attention and draw the interest of the observer, a voice clear, distinct and unhesitating, and manners that indicate perfect self reliance and earnestness—all these are the attributes of Honorable Roger Q. Mills, Representative from Texas.

For fifteen years he has been a familiar figure on the floor of the House. A frequent debater and an intense worker, he has come to be regarded as a leading man in public life.



ROGER Q. MILLS.
From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

When the Lone Star State considered which of her sons should be honored as her representative in the Forty Third Congress, young Roger Mills, of Crosciana, was chosen by the Democratic voters to fill the office. From the start the Texas representative studiously applied himself to the multitudinous details of parliamentary forms, until, when his first term in Congress was closed, he had mastered those points which are essential to success in the framing of laws for a great and prosperous nation.

Again, in the following year, Mr. Mills was chosen to represent Texas in Congress, and again in the next election was he returned to his seat by his constituents, and so on throughout every session up to the present date.

In the conduct of the vast machinery of government it has become necessary to multiply the particulars so much that one must have a cool head and steady nerves to grasp the situation in a stirring period when great questions are at stake. Roger Q. Mills showed his capabilities. Attention was directed towards him, and soon he was placed at the head of the Committee of Ways and Means, the most important body in the House, owing to its management of affairs pertaining to the revenue, the appropriations, and other matters of vital interest.

In debate Mr. Mills is daring and determined, but cautious to a degree. Much of the time he talks in a simple way, as a man might address a group of friends on a question in which he was deeply interested and thoroughly informed. Occasionally he brings his hands together and throws his head back with a piquant energy that punctuates an argument with novel force. He clinches each statement on the spot with a short, sharp sentence. His voice is that of a Southerner, but his methods and arguments are those of a Yankee.

WILLIAM J. BAHMER



AN IMPERTINENT INTERRUPTION.

GLADYS—"Isn't it nice to be here all alone?"
RUDE BOY—"But you hain't alone. He's wid yer!"



AN OPINION THAT IS AN OPINION.

SWELLINGTON—"Do you think it will rain before we get back?"
FARMER—"How long are you going to be?"
SWELLINGTON—"Oh, an hour or two."
FARMER—"Well, my opinion is that it may and it may not."

PRESENCE OF MIND.

MISS PLUMPLEIGH (choking)—"Oh, Mr. Dudekin! I—I—really think I've swallowed a dreadful fly. What shall I do?"
DUDEKIN—"Deah girl, better swallah some flypapah.—
Pittsburg Bulletin.

AN ALLY.

AT Pittsburgh, almost the largest stationary engine in this country pumps up an enormous quantity of water into an immense reservoir, daily.

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"MARIETTA, GA. Aug. 30, 1888."

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"ED. W. S. HOWARD,
"BELLEVILLE, CAN., Jan. 16, 1889."

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"OLIVIA C. BARODWELL,
"LAWRENCEBURG, IND., Nov. 7, 1888."

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"Your Compound Oxygen Treatment has improved my mother's health very much. We feel thankful for this great improvement, and sincerely recommend your treatment to any suffering from *dyspepsia or insomnia.*

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A DOLLAR, YET NOT A DOLLAR.

HAWKINS—"Have you a dollar that you could lend me?"

ROBERTS—"My dear boy, I haven't."

HAWKINS—"Haven't a dollar?"

ROBERTS—"Oh, yes; but not that I could lend you."—*Brooklyn Life.*

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SPRING SONGS AND SIGNS.

THE poets all sing
How welcome is Spring,
But their songs are inclined to deceive;
For I notice each year,
When Spring arrives here,
That the trees and the bushes all leave.

—*Boston Herald.*

"OUT OF SIGHT."

POPS—"Black eye, nose out of plumb, clothes torn! Been in a fight, haven't you, my son?"

MY SON—"N-N-No, sir."

POPS—"What's that you're saying? Why, you must have been in a fight. Now, tell the truth."

MY SON—"Well, pops, there was a fight, but I wasn't in it."—*Puck.*

FITS.

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HE'D BEEN THERE.

BUNCO STEERER—"Why, how do you do, my dear sir? Haven't I seen you somewhere?"

UNCLE HAYSEED (from Rightville)—"Pears likely, stranger; I've been there!"—*Harvard Lampoon.*

CONSOLING REFLECTION.

FREDDY was on his first sea voyage. Pale, limp, and ready to die, he lay groaning in his bunk.

"Cholly," he said feebly, after a paroxysm of unusual violence had spent itself and he had become comparatively calm, "a fellow ought to be doosid thankful he isn't a cow."

"Why?" asked Cholly.

"Because a cow—wauh!—has got four stomachs, don't y' know!"—*Chicago Tribune.*

A MISUNDERSTOOD INVITATION.

MISTRESS—"Bridget, I hope that you will be ready to help at our dancing party tomorrow."

BRIDGET—"Certainly, mum; but I may as well tell you now, that I can't dance anything but the waltz and the Irish jig."—*Brooklyn Life.*

MESSRS ROUSE, HAZARD & CO., Peoria, Ill., undoubtedly carry the largest, as well as the most varied, stock of bicycles in the United States, if not in the world. They are headquarters for everything in this line, being manufacturers and retailers. Their business extends to every State, Territory and large city in the United States and Canada. That it has doubled nine times in eleven years is evidence of honorable and courteous treatment of their customers. They are making a specialty of job lots at present, and many of our readers will doubtless be interested in the real bargains now offered. Full particulars and catalogue can be had by addressing the firm at 14 G St., Peoria, Ill.

CRAWLING OUT OF IT.

TEACHER—"Tommy, you surely know better than to state that the deer belongs to the carnivorous animals."

TOMMY—"He does if they can catch him, ma'am."—*Indianapolis Journal.*

DIDN'T WANT THAT KIND.

J. JAY—"I want a fine looking watch chain."

JEWELER—"Would you like one of the new seamless chains?"

J. JAY—"Seem less! Not much! I want one that'll seem more'n twice as big as it."—*The Jewelers' Weekly.*

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

RAZOR—"I feel jagged this morning."

STROP—"That's why I'm so cut up."

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Dropped on Sugar, Children Love

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WANTED TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING.

SHE—"Darling, do you love me?"
HE (kissing her rapturously and repeatedly)—"Do I? I wish you were a two headed girl. That's all I can say."—*London Tid-Bits.*

HE TOOK THE HINT AND HIS HAT,

"I SUPPOSE," said she, glancing at the clock, "that like other boys, you fought many battles at school, and that when you were once in a fight you stayed in till you won."

"No," said he candidly; "I used to get out of fights as quickly as possible."

"Well, now," she observed, with another glance at the clock, "I should think that you would have been a stayer."

"No, I wasn't."

And to show that he wasn't a stayer he took his hat and went.—*Cape Cod Item.*

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