Vol. XVII. No. 576. FRANK A. MUNSEY & COMPANY, Publishers, MADISON SQUARE, SOUTH. Price Five Cents.

THE ARGOSY

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1893.

;aptured by Smugglers.

BY NED HASTINGS.

As the last rays of the setting sun faded ı the west, Joel Carson shaded his eyes ʼith his hand and looked carefully round.

"Any signs of a ship yet, father?" asked is son Will, who was seated in the stern f the boat, managing the tiller.

"No," answered the man, in a tone of een disappointment. "I'm afraid we'll e obliged to spend another night on the ea. I expected surely to run across some essel by this time. but it appears we're ıt of the course of all ships."

"Well, never mind. We may see one ımorrow," said the boy hopefully.

But the man was not so sanguine. He egan to fear that their chances of being ìcked up by a passing vessel were more ımote than he at first supposed, and the ea caused a troubled expression to ap- ear on his face.

He tried to look cheerful, however, as e resumed his seat, and busied himself etting out some provisions on which to ake their evening meal. His son was so ıre of falling in with a ship before long ıat he had not the heart to discourage ım with an adverse opinion.

This was their second day on the ocean. or more than thirty six hours they had ·ifted about, constantly on the lookout r a sail, but none appeared and hope be- an to depart from Joel Carson's breast as ıe uncertain prospect before them was ore fully realized.

"I'm afraid we made a mistake in not ɔing with the others, my boy," he could ɔt help saying, as he handed his son a enerous supply of the provisions he had ıken from the locker.

"I don't think so. They are probably ·ifting about in the same manner as our- ılves, and may even be in a worse fix. ur boat is strong and large, we have ıough to eat and drink, and, if necessary, ɔuld hold out this way for more than a eek," answered the youth, as he lashed ıe tiller and began to dispose of his share ' the food.

"I know all that, but at the same time would feel better satisfied if I could get ıis money to a safe place. It gives me a ɔod deal of uneasiness to have such a ɪrge sum of money about me, and that is ıe only reason why I prevailed upon aptain Manning to let us have this boat ıd depart by ourselves."

As he spoke he produced a large wallet om the inside pocket of his vest, and roceeded to inspect the contents. It was lled almost to bursting, and as Will gazed ; it he could not suppress a sense of un- asiness as he reflected what its loss ould mean to his father.

"How much did you say was there?" e asked as Mr. Carson having assured imself that the amount was intact, re- ırned it to his pocket.

"Fifteen thousand dollars. I'd be ut- ·rly ruined if anything happened to it, nd we must be very careful not to let nybody know about it when we are icked up. That is if we have that good ·rtune," he added with a sigh.

"Oh, I think we will," the boy replied. Don't let the money worry you, father. o one will know you've got it, and once e get on another ship we'll soon be ome."

"I hope so. We would have been all ight now if it had not been for the fog. etting lost in that has upset everything. f I had known it was going to come up 'd have run the risk and gone with the thers."

"After all I think we were too hasty in eaving the ship, anyhow. She would kely have held together for hours yet, and during that time some other craft would have come to our assistance. Cap- tain Manning and his crew not afraid to risk remaining on her for a while longer, and we should have stayed with him."

"But the other passengers were sure she could not hold together an hour longer," said Will. "Surely they must have known something about it."

"They were too frightened to know what they were talking about," said Mr. Carson, "and we were foolish to listen to them."

"Well, we'll have to make the best of it now," said Will philosophically, as, hav- ing finished eating, he turned his atten- tion to the tiller again.

Mr. Carson settled back in his seat, and resigned himself to the situation with as good grace possible. They were in no immediate danger of disaster; their boat was a strong and stanch one; the weather was clear and gave fair indications of continuing so, and had it not been for the large sum on his person, the ship- wrecked man would not have been so anxious about the future.

He had been sent to a foreign city by the firm for which he worked to collect this money, and had taken his son with him. On the return voyage the ship had foundered within a few miles of the coast, and though the captain declared there was no danger of going to pieces, the pas- sengers insisted on leaving, and were allowed to take to one of the boats and depart.

Mr. Carson, being afraid to trust him- self among strangers with so much money, had requested the captain to let himself and son have one of the small boats, and soon after the two set out alone for the coast that loomed up in the dis- tance. They had not gone far on their way, however, when a dense fog settled over the sea, and when it finally lifted they found themselves out of sight of land, and all efforts to get their bearings were fruitless.

Since then they had drifted about ex- pecting to come in sight of some craft, but the hours wore on and no vessel came to their aid. How far from land they were now it was impossible to tell, and as night again fell around them even the hopeful Will could not entirely help feeling anxi- ous.

The next morning, however, a sail was sighted not far away. Their signal of dis- tress was soon discovered, and a short time afterwards they found themselves on board a small schooner with a num- ber of rough looking men crowding around them, asking all sorts of ques- tions.

Mr. Carson was alarmed. He did not like the appearance of the sailors, and from the keen manner in which he and his son were watched during the day, as they went about the vessel, he concluded that he had good cause to be fearful.

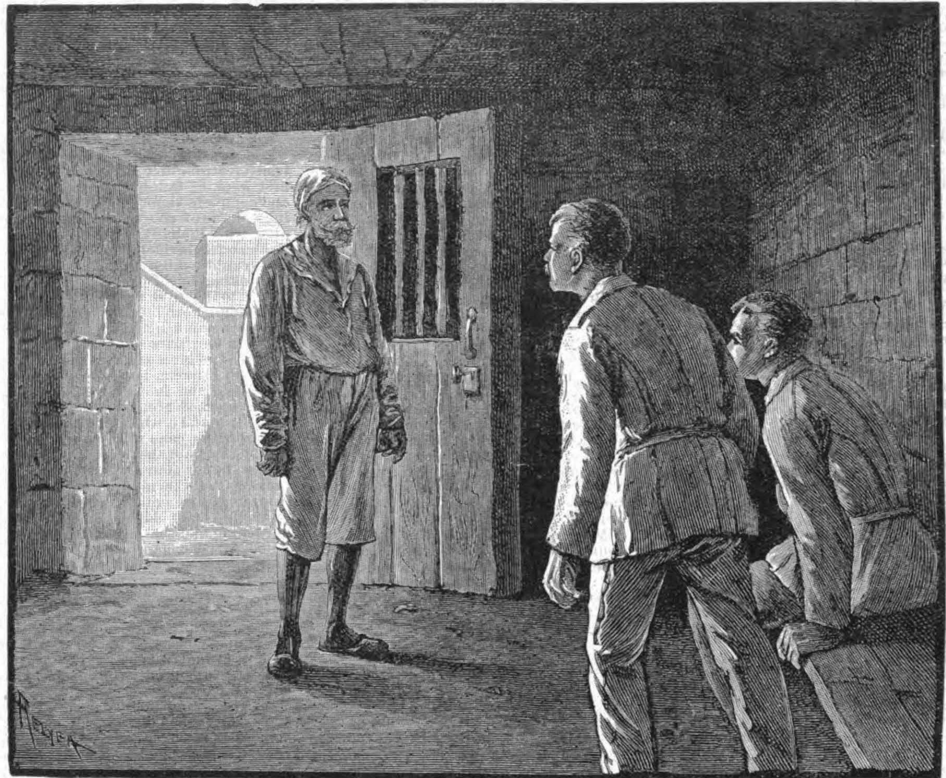
"I'm afraid we're worse off now than when we were in the small boat," he said to Will, as they stood together in the stern of the schooner.

"Why so?"

"Those men appear to be watching us closely. I am afraid they want to rob me."

Will glanced up thoroughly frightened. The men did seem to be watching the agent and his son more closely than was necessary, and Will felt a sense of un- easiness steal over him as he realized it.

Three of the men were standing near by, but when they saw that their presence was commented upon they dispersed, and sought another quarter of the schooner.



A MOMENT LATER A KEY GRATED IN THE LOCK AND A MAN CAME IN.

Meanwhile the vessel stood on her way. There was no indication of land to be seen. This made Mr. Carson all the more uncomfortable. The conviction that they had been picked up by a gang of wreckers, smugglers, or, worse still, pirates, was strong upon him, and he tried to prepare himself for future trouble.

"How I wish I had some kind of a weapon with me," he told himself again and again. "I am utterly at their mercy, and they could rob me any time they chose."

But though he was momentarily looking for an outbreak of some sort, none came, and during the middle of the afternoon, as no land had yet appeared, he ventured to ask one of the men where they were bound.

The fellow laughed, and replied mysteri- ously: "Oh, you'll know that in a few hours. Don't get restless."

But Carson began now to grow very uneasy. He was sure the crew were

pirates and that they contemplated robbing him.

He began trying to invent some plan of escape, but all the thought he gave to the matter failed to suggest one, and he was compelled to abandon the idea.

Toward night land was sighted. It appeared to be an island, and a village was discovered looming up some distance from the coast. The schooner was headed toward a small cove and dropped anchor. A number of rough looking men strolled down to the shore to meet them.

"What luck this time," asked one with a grin.

"First rate, I reckon," replied a sailor, with a significant wink.

Carson saw it and his alarm increased. He felt sure reference was made to himself.

A boat was lowered, and the crew prepared to land. The captain came up to Carson.

"You'll go with us for the present," he said. "We will try to make things pleasant for you."

"What place is this?" asked Carson.

"You'll find all that out later," was the answer, as the captain turned away.

The whole crew embarked, and were soon ashore.

The agent and his son were conducted to a small hut built of stone. The door was securely locked, and then Carson knew the worst had come; they were prisoners.

There was a bench running along the side of the wall, and upon this the man seated himself with a groan. He covered his face with his hands, and cried out in despair:

"We're ruined, Will, we're ruined. The villians 'll surely rob me. I wish I had a revolver with me; I'd give them a hard tussle before they could get my money."

"Don't give up yet, father," returned the boy. "After all they don't know you have the money, and perhaps we may succeed in getting away."

But there was no chance of escape. The door was securely barred, and the one window with which the cabin was provided was too small to offer a means of exit.

The day passed wearily on, and night at last fell over the island. In spite of their serious position they began to grow hungry, and when some time afterwards a man brought in a quantity of food, they ate of it heartily.

Carson tried to question the fellow, but he would not reply. When he went out, however, he said in a low tone to the agent:

"I'll see you again; be on the watch for me."

Joel was puzzled. The words were mysterious and hard to interpret.

The prisoners seated themselves on the bench after the man departed, and sat there in silence. Hour after hour passed. It must have been near midnight, when footsteps were heard cautiously approaching the prison house. A moment later a key grated in the lock, the door opened and a man came in.

"Hist!" he said warningly.

He closed the door and came forward. He was the same fellow who had brought in the food.

He came up to Carson, laid his hand on his shoulder and asked:

"Do you know where you are, and what kind of a place this is?"

"I have an idea," answered the agent, "but I wish you'd tell me plainly and end my suspense."

"I came here for that purpose. You are a prisoner among a lot of smugglers. They intend to rob you of whatever you may have that's valuable, and after that—well, you may imagine the rest."

Carson shuddered.

"It's worse than I thought," he gasped.

"Perhaps I can help you," continued the man. "What is your liberty worth to you?"

"Five hundred dollars cash," said Carson, without an instant's hesitation.

"I'll do it," muttered the outlaw softly. "I owe the captain a grudge, and I'll pay the debt in this way. When will you give me the money?"

"Just as soon as we're safely out of this place, I'll give you the cash. I will, on my honor."

"Good. Take these, and follow me."

As he spoke, the smuggler produced a couple of pistols, handing one to Will and one to the agent. Then drawing one himself, he opened the door, and a moment later they were standing outside.

"This way, and on your life make no noise."

The outlaw led the way around to the rear of the village, and down toward the cove. Here a boat was drawn up on the beach. This the man proceeded to shove into the water, assisted by the fugitives.

They were about to embark when some one called out:

"Halt!"

Turning, they saw two men running toward them. A rifle gleamed in the hands of each.

"Into the boat, quick!" shouted the outlaw. "We're discovered."

A moment later they had hurried on board and shoved off. When the pursuers came up they were a hundred yards from the shore.

"Come back or we'll fire," cried the men, leveling their guns.

No attention was paid to this, and the next second two rifle shots rang out. The fugitives were horrified to see their outlaw friend drop the oars and roll over the side of the boat into the sea. He must have been instantly killed, for he sank at once, and was seen no more.

The report of the rifles roused the entire village, and soon men were running along shore, calling for the fugitives to return. But Carson had already secured the oars, and was straining every muscle to get away. Several shots were fired at them, but they escaped unhurt.

In a few minutes they had passed out of the cove, and were carried rapidly seaward. They raised the sail as soon as possible, and, as there was a good breeze stirring, the boat bounded across the waves rapidly.

Carson expected the smugglers to follow them in the schooner, and kept a constant watch astern, but hour after hour went by, and the vessel did not appear. Then the agent decided that the fellow who aided them to escape had anticipated this possibility, and had probably disabled the vessel in some way.

When morning dawned they were far away from the island, and a few hours later a ship was sighted in the distance.

They were picked up again, this time by a homeward bound merchantman, and in due course reached their destination. Carson delivered the money safely to his firm, and related their adventure. The affair was reported to the authorities, and a ship sent out to apprehend the smugglers.

After some difficulty the island was found, and the whole gang captured. Joel Carson and his son had the satisfaction of seeing them tried and sentenced to prison, while two of them were executed for the murder of the man who had assisted the agent to escape.

[*This Story began in No. 565.*]

Belmont;

OR,

MARK WARE'S COLLEGE LIFE.

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT,

Author of "Dirkman's Luck," "Brad Mattoon," "The Crimson Banner," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI—(Continued).

A RETURN TO OLD QUARTERS.

No doubt both Chapin and Herbert wanted to be rid of Mark. Evidently, from what Mark had overheard, the two boys had plans in common—no doubt talked over during the summer—and they regarded Mark as an obstruction. It was this conviction more than anything else that had determined Mark in leaving. Anything else Mark could have stood on account of his relations with Herbert and his father, but the knowledge that Herbert wanted him to go left but one course clear before him.

Had there been any doubt to as Herbert's feelings in the matter it would have been dispelled by the latter's conduct after the quarrel. He avoided every possible opportunity of a reconciliation. He kept carefully out of Mark's way, and within a week or two of their parting, he left the club of "Epicures," joining another club with Chapin, Hall, and others of their kind.

A few days later Mark learned that Chapin had taken his place in No. 15, Warburton Hall.

"I suppose he is satisfied now—no doubt that is what he was aiming for," said Mark to himself.

And yet that didn't seem to be enough. So positive was Herbert in his avoidance of Mark that the latter could only interpret it as an indication of a genuine dislike.

"Now that he is rid of me I should think he would be content," Mark reflected. "He acts as if I had done him some great wrong—as if I had done something mean and contemptible."

In his heart of hearts Mark did not believe that this coldness would last very long. He believed that Colonel Morgan would come forward at the first opportunity and smooth matters out. He was determined that the first move should come from Herbert or his father. He would not write or say a word to the colonel about the affair. But he felt sure that the colonel would soon find out how the land lay and compel some sort of an understanding.

The first opportunity would be the coming Christmas vacation, and towards that time Mark looked with eagerness. Feeling a deep sense of gratitude and obligation to the colonel, Mark was anxious that the old gentleman should not misunderstand or misjudge him. He felt that he must not lose the good will of his benefactor and best friend.

Meantime first term was advancing, with its customary round of events. The trial of strength took place during the first week of October, and was an easy and complete victory for the sophomores. Rogers was of course the chosen champion, with Richards again as his coach. Against this invincible pair the freshmen class could avail nothing.

Thinking he had made a similar discovery to that of Richards the year before, Hammond, now a junior, picked out from the freshman ranks a raw boned country fellow about Rogers' build, and, as he supposed, of greater strength. He proved a disappointment, however, to his classmates and the juniors, for Rogers made quick work of him, tumbling him about on the ground a while, and then wrenching away the cane with no apparent difficulty. Perhaps the freshman might have made a better match for Rogers a year previous, but Cincinnatus had grown both in strength and agility, and his experience on the football field had done wonders in hardening and seasoning his muscles.

Richards had made a distinct concession to the sophomore class in taking Rogers into the cane fight, for he believed, as Percy Randall did, in keeping football men out of rushes and cane fights. The trial of strength, however, called for the best man in the class, and the class called for Rogers so that settled it. No harm came of it, for Cincinnatus won his victory without a strain or scratch.

Next in the fall's calendar came the football season, and in this Belmont was doomed to reverses. Every three or four years a college gets together a splendid team. Then a batch of six or seven of the best players graduate, and weak spots appear. So it will go for a season or so, until another strong set is developed. With the outgoing, senior class five strong players, including Percy Randall, had departed. There were left now only Mark, Rogers, Tracy Hollis, Richards and two juniors of the previous year's team.

Richards, who was chosen captain, made a hard struggle of it, filling up his ranks with the best new material he could find; and, all things considered, he put a very good team in the field. But he could not hold up against the Park and Halford teams, the former of which had lost but one of their old players, and the latter two. Belmont was beaten 8-4 by Halford, and 10-4 by Park, the latter finally winning the championship by defeating Halford 6-0. It was disappointing to Richards, who had set his heart on winning at least one of the games, but there was no possibility of overcoming the strong teams that Halford and Park marshaled out. The boys had simply to take their defeat as one of the fortunes of war, and hope for success next time.

With football, his studies, and the many friends who seemed nearer to him than ever now that he had broken with Herbert, Mark found the fall quickly gliding away. Almost before he could realize it Christmas vacation was just ahead, and the prospect of returning to Medford and meeting the colonel faced him. In his letters to Medford he gave no hint that anything was wrong. He wrote once to the colonel, telling him how he was getting along, but did not mention Herbert. In return he received one of the colonel's usually kindly letters, the tone of which showed clearly enough that he knew nothing as yet of the true state of affairs. Herbert had evidently kept silent too.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

One afternoon during the first week in December, Mark was studying alone in his room. As often happened now his mind strayed from his books, and he was thinking over the one subject ever present with him—wondering what his approaching visit to Medford would bring forth.

"Herbert will probably tell his father about the trouble as soon as he gets home, and the colonel will ask me to explain. Then I'll make a clean breast of it from the very beginning," said Mark to himself. "I'll tell him the whole story, from the first day I saw Chapin—and then if he thinks I am in the wrong—if he thinks I have acted badly towards Herbert, and condemns me as Herbert has, I——"

But Mark never finished that sentence, for at that moment, he heard a slow, deliberate step coming up the stairs, and a moment later, the door, which had been left ajar, was pushed wide open, revealing a tall figure standing on the treshold.

Mark sprang up in surprise.

"Why, Colonel Morgan, you here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," answered the colonel heartily. "I was in New York on business, and I stopped over a train on my way home just to see how you were."

"Come in," said Mark, while the colonel still held his hand. "I am very glad to see you."

"But what are you doing here? I came here because I didn't know where your new room was, and I supposed a good way to find you would be to ask young Hollis, who I remember had taken your old quarters. I didn't expect to find you here."

"This — this is my room too — now colonel," said Mark hesitatingly.

The colonel looked at him sharply.

"Why, what do you mean?" he asked.

"Has Herbert told you nothing about—about our trouble?"

"Trouble! No; what trouble? Herbert has told me nothing. What has happened?"

"Well, it's rather a long story, colonel, and——"

"But this trouble—quick, out with it! Then you can tell your story," exclaimed the colonel abruptly.

"It's simply that Herbert and I—that we have had a serious difference, and separated, colonel. It's awfully unfortunate. I feel it far worse than Herbert can. I'd give my right hand to make it pleasant again——"

"Some boy's quarrel, I suppose—tell me all about it," interrupted the colonel, sitting down.

Mark started in to tell his old friend the whole story, but from the beginning he found himself at a serious disadvantage. He had not wanted to be the first to tell the story. What he wanted was to have the colonel first hear Herbert's version; then he would feel able to speak freely. Now the positions were reversed most awkwardly for him. To use the legal term, Mark found himself in the position of plaintiff when he was expecting to be defendant.

This limited him. He did not feel as free to speak about certain elements in the story—Chapin, for instance, and the influence that he had exerted in bringing about the trouble. He could not help thinking that everything he might say about Chapin might be construed to his own disadvantage when the colonel learned that Chapin was now Herbert's closest friend and room mate. And besides there was very little of a definite character that could be said about Chapin

—it was one of those indescribable dislikes that boys instinctively feel, which though unsubstantiated by facts, are usually a true guide. Mark told everything so far as he could, from the time of his first difference with Herbert, until the afternoon when the latter had told him he could leave.

"And you have kept me in ignorance of this for over two months!" exclaimed the colonel severely, when Mark had finished.

"What could I say? Was I to run to you and say 'Herbert has driven me out?' I felt terribly hurt by it. I have been conscious of nothing but the warmest feelings of friendship for Herbert. I would have done anything for him—I would do anything now, but for some reason he seems to have taken an unaccountable dislike to me."

"Nonsense—you carry it too seriously," said the colonel. "Herbert has a high temper—he got it from me, and he has no doubt said some disagreeable things. I dare say you did, too, but what of it? These squabbles count for nothing—they are easily mended."

"I am afraid not, colonel," returned Mark gravely. "Words are easily forgotten—I would be glad to do my part of the forgetting. But we have gone too far. We are separated—for good."

"Why do you say that?"

"I couldn't go back now, even if our difference was smoothed over, for Herbert has another room mate—his friend Chapin."

"And that's the reason I say you should have spoken to me at once," exclaimed the colonel, rising from his chair. "Just on account of a feeling of silly pride, you have allowed this boyish squabble to go on festering until now it is something serious. You had no business to quarrel without my permission—you know what I said about your standing together. Do you remember your promise to me?"

"Indeed, colonel, I have never forgotten it for one minute," said Mark, his voice trembling a little. "I would have borne almost anything rather than leave Herbert, but when he showed me so plainly that he wanted me to go what could I do?"

"You have misunderstood each other—I will go to Herbert at once, and get this matter straightened out."

"Goodness knows I hope you will," said Mark fervently. "It has made me very unhappy, and——"

"I know——and all for nothing. I will see Herbert now, and have a talk with him. Suppose you come to the hotel about seven o'clock. I will bring Herbert there and we will dine together."

Mark accepted gladly, for a reconciliation with Herbert was the one thing he most desired, and the colonel was the one person who could bring it about.

Although he knew that friendship could not now be renewed on the old terms, he nevertheless welcomed gladly the prospect of pleasanter relations with Herbert, and was ready, as he said, to do his share of the "forgetting."

The rest of the afternoon, including the hour of recitation, was spent by Mark in anxious expectancy.

He reached the hotel at quarter before seven o'clock, and waited for the colonel and Herbert. The hour came, and another quarter hour passed, but neither father nor son put in an appearance.

By half past seven Mark began to grow uneasy and worried. He waited a quarter hour more, and then, fearing that something had gone wrong, he determined to stop no longer, but go back to his room.

On his arrival there the first thing that greeted his eyes was a note addressed to him, lying on the table. As the handwriting was that of Colonel Morgan, Mark tore it quickly open, and, with a glance, ran his eyes over the contents. It began abruptly:

"Since hearing my son Herbert's story I have deemed it unnecessary to meet you as I arranged. He has filled up the gaps which your narrative left open, and I now have a clear understanding of the whole affair. I can easily see why you omitted mentioning certain things, for they reveal your conduct in a very unenviable light. I am surprised and shocked that one in whom I had so much confidence, and in whom I took so much interest, could have acted as you have. Knowing all the circumstances, I do not wonder at my son's behavior towards you. I consider that you owe him an humble apology. You have shown both him and me a strange return for our interest in you. We were your best friends, and we had reason to look for something different. I am bitterly disappointed."

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 568.]

A Bad Lot.

BY ARTHUR LEE PUTNAM,

Author of "Ben Bruce," "Cast Upon the Breakers," "Number 91," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROF. PUFFER, FROM HIS OWN POINT OF VIEW.

"Shall you see him, Mr. Cunningham?" asked Bernard.

"Yes. I have engaged you, to be sure, but after what you have told me of the professor, I am curious to interview him."

"I shouldn't like to have him see me. He might try to get me into his power."

"Wouldn't you like to be present and hear what he has to say?"

"Yes, if I could do so unobserved."

"You can. There is an alcove curtained off from the main room. Go in there and you can hear every word that passes between us."

"Thank you. I shall like it very much."

"You may tell the gentleman to come in," said Walter Cunningham, addressing his servant.

The latter reappeared followed by Professor Puffer, who bowed low to the young man from whom he sought a position.

"Professor Puffer?" said Cunningham inquiringly.

"I have that honor," said Puffer. "I called about your advertisement for a traveling companion."

"Do you know of any one whom you can recommend?"

"I would be glad to accept the position myself. What salary do you propose to give?"

"That will be a matter of negotiation after I have made my selection."

"I only wanted to make sure that it would be worth my while to accept. As you may infer from my card I am a man of reputation," and Professor Puffer swelled out his chest and assumed a look of dignity.

"I am glad to hear it. I consider it a compliment that a man of your standing should be willing to be my companion."

"To tell the truth, Mr. Cunningham," went on Puffer, "I was not sure till I saw you whether I should be willing, but now that I have seen you I have a strong desire to accompany you."

"Appearances are deceitful, you know, professor."

"I am willing to take the risk. How soon do you propose to start?"

"My dear sir, it seems to me you are going too fast. I have not yet selected you. I should like to ask you a few questions."

"I shall have pleasure in answering, sir. Professor Puffer is always open and above board."

"That is well. May I ask where you have held the position of professor?"

"At the American University of Harvard. Doubtless you have heard of it."

"Certainly."

"I have also lectured at Cornell University."

"On what subject?"

"Ahem! on antiquities."

"Then that is your specialty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Doubtless I should find your companionship very instructive."

"You are kind to say so."

"I don't say so. I only say that from your account of yourself I should presume so. Of course I know of you only from your own statements. So you were a professor at Harvard University?"

"Yes, sir."

"During what years?"

"I left there a year since after serving for a term of five years."

"That was a long period. Why did you leave, may I ask?"

"On account of my health. I labored so assiduously that it became seriously affected. My physician prescribed traveling for a year or more. My means are not large, partly because I have spent so much money on books and scientific research, and our salaries as professors were not munificent."

"You have a large library?"

"About four hundred volumes," answered Puffer promptly. "I think those books—many of them rare—must have cost over ten thousand dollars."

"Where are they now?"

"I have stored them. I could not make up my mind to sell them."

"What an old humbug!" thought Bernard, as he heard the professor's statements in the security of the alcove.

"May I ask your age, Professor Puffer?"

Puffer hesitated, and finally answered, "I am forty five."

Walter Cunningham would have been surprised if he had put any confidence in the professor's statements, as he looked at least ten years older.

"I asked because I am a young man, and though you are doubtless a man from whom I should gain instruction, I am in doubt as to whether your age would not be too great to make you a congenial companion."

"My dear Mr. Cunningham," said the professor with a genial smile. "I am not surprised to hear you say so. Forty five no doubt seems very old to you, but I assure you I have a young heart and my company is prized by a great many young people. Why only recently I was engaged as companion for a boy of sixteen."

"Indeed! What was his name?"

"Bernard Brooks."

"Did he seem happy in your company?"

"Yes indeed! We were like brothers. He loved me dearly."

Walter Cunningham had hard work to suppress a smile, and Bernard felt like choking with laughter.

"Old Puffer is a worse humbug than I supposed," he said to himself. "How I should like to burst upon him after that big falsehood. Wouldn't he look disconcerted?"

"Where is the boy now? I should like to see him."

"He has left England with some friends of the family."

"Was he sorry to part with you?"

"I don't like to boast, but, big boy as he is, he shed tears at leaving me."

"How was it that you gained such an ascendency over him?"

"I really can't say. I am naturally fond of young people, and they take to me."

"You think, then, that I should find you an agreeable companion?"

"My dear Mr. Cunningham, may I say Walter, give me a week and we should be like Damon and Pythias."

"I suppose this boy Bernard was an attractive boy."

"Very much so. Of course he had his faults—most boys have—but as long as he gave me his affection I was willing to overlook them."

"That was very kind in you. I am afraid I have faults too."

"Very few, I am sure, Walter—excuse me, Mr. Cunningham."

"Can you give me an idea of what you would regard as a satisfactory salary in case I engaged you?"

The professor brightened up. This looked encouraging.

"At Harvard I was paid three thousand dollars a year," he said, "but then my duties were arduous. I instructed a large junior class, and gave lectures weekly to the seniors."

"I hope you wouldn't feel inclined to lecture me, professor."

"Ha, ha! very good!" said Puffer, laughing heartily. "You will have your joke. However, I only mentioned this to explain why my salary was so large. Of course I shouldn't expect nearly as much with you. If you paid my traveling expenses and a hundred dollars a month it would satisfy me. I am not expecting to save much in this my year of recreation."

"I will consider your proposal. By the way, can you show me a catalogue of Harvard University with your name enrolled as professor?"

"I am really sorry, but I don't happen to have a catalogue with me."

"One of Cornell where I understand you gave a course of lectures will do."

"I regret to say that I haven't that either."

"Of course I don't doubt you, but it would be pleasant to have some confirmation of your statements."

"My dear Mr. Cunningham, I hope you don't doubt my word."

"You know I have never met you before this morning. Perhaps you have some of the books you have published which you can show me."

"I haven't at present, but I may be able to pick one up in the London bookstores."

"Do so, and send it to me by messenger. I shall be too busy to see you for a week to come."

"Do I understand," asked the professor insinuatingly, "that you engage me as a traveling companion?"

"Don't understand anything of the kind just now. Give me your address, and I will communicate with you."

"I am staying at the Brown Hotel, in Norfolk Street."

"Very well. I will note it down."

"I shall be glad to hear from you as soon as possible as I have another position in view."

"Very well, Professor Puffer, I won't keep you waiting unduly."

Professor Puffer bowed gracefully and retired. Then Bernard was called from his nook by Mr. Cunningham. He came out all smiles.

"It was as good as a play, Mr. Cunningham," he said. "I am very glad the professor speaks so well of me. It is quite unexpected."

"It seems you shed tears at leaving him."

"If I did they were tears of joy."

"I don't know but I had better reconsider my decision and engage Professor Puffer instead of you."

"If you really think you would like him better, Mr. Cunningham, you had better do so."

"You are not very much afraid of it. Well, Bernard, I will tell you what I did not care to tell him. I mean to start away inside of a week, and I think you had better join me at this hotel so that we may make preparations together."

"I should like nothing better."

"As to the salary—you have not inquired how much I am to pay you."

"Because I am content to leave that to you."

"Very well, the professor settled that matter. I will pay your traveling expenses, and give you a hundred dollars a month."

"But that is much more than I can earn," said Bernard in astonishment.

"Very probably. I give you a large salary out of friendship."

Miss Smith, the schoolmistress, was delighted to hear of Bernard's success. The next day he removed to Morley's Hotel.

CHAPTER XXV.

BERNARD'S GOOD FORTUNE.

"It will be several days before I shall be able to get away, Bernard," said Walter Cunningham the next morning, "and, by the way, I have not told you where I am going."

"No, sir; I should like very much to know."

"I propose to visit Italy and per-

haps Sicily. We shall go first to Paris, and remain a short time."

Bernard's eyes sparkled. He had always wished to visit the Continent, and had expected to do so in the company of Professor Puffer, but he felt that he should enjoy himself much more in the companionship of Walter Cunningham. Even had Puffer proved a reliable man there was nothing about him to win the good will and attachment of a boy of his age.

"I shall enjoy it very much, Mr. Cunninghtam," said Bernard.

"So I hope. I have not told you much about myself," continued the young man, "but as we are to be companions and friends it is proper that I should do so."

Bernard did not speak, but his face expressed unmistakable interest.

"I am alone in the world. My father and mother are dead, and I never had a brother or sister. My father was a wealthy man of business and a man of note, having reached (this was two years before he died) the position of Lord Mayor of London. He contracted a fever at his country house, where, it appeared, the drainage was bad. Two years since, just after I had attained my majority, he died, my mother having preceded him; and I was left in possession of a hundred thousand pounds."

"Half a million of dollars!" said Bernard.

"Yes, that is the way it would be rated in America. In a pecuniary way, therefore, I am fortunate, but I can't tell you how solitary I feel at times."

"I can understand it, Mr. Cunningham. I am in the same position as yourself, only that I am left destitute."

"Then it appears to me, Bernard, there is a special propriety in our being together. How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"I am but seven years older. I shall look upon you as a younger brother, and in our new relationship I shall expect you to drop the formal Mr. and call me Walter."

"It will seem awkward at first, but I shall get used to it and like it."

"By the way—you will excuse my mentioning it—but it seems to me that your suit is well worn, not to say shabby."

"That is true. As soon as I can afford it I will buy another."

"You need not wait till then. I will send you to my tailor's, with instructions to make you two suits at once. I will also give you an order on my haberdasher for such articles as you may require in his line."

"Thank you. You can deduct the price from my salary."

"That is unnecessary. These articles will be my first gift to you."

"How kind you are, Walter. I think," Bernard added with a smile, "Professor Puffer would be willing to be a brother to you."

"I have no doubt of it, but in spite of the professor's fascinations and the affection which he says you entertained for him, I am afraid I should not appreciate him as perhaps he deserves. Now I think it will be well for you to go and order your clothing, as we haven't much time to spare."

Mr. Cunningham's tailor occupied a shop in Regent Street, and thither Bernard went. He took with him a note from his employer which insured him a flattering reception. He had no trouble in choosing cloth for suits as Mr. Cunningham had sent instructions. Next he repaired to the haberdasher's, and selected such furnishing goods as he required. By special direction of Mr. Cunningham they were of the best description.

He was just coming out of the shop when he met the young man—the first applicant for the position of companion to Mr. Cunningham. He looked rather shabby, and Bernard noticed that his coat was shiny.

He stopped short at sight of Bernard.

"Didn't I see you at Mr. Cunningham's rooms at Morley's two days since?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"I have been expecting to hear from him. Do you know whether he has yet made choice of a traveling companion?"

"Yes, sir, he has."

A shade of disappointment passed over the young man's features.

"Whom did he select?" he asked.

"He chose me."

"You!" exclaimed the other in mingled surprise and disdain. "You?"

"Yes, sir."

"What on earth made him select you? Why, you are only a boy."

"That is true."

"Have you ever traveled?"

"Only across the Atlantic from America."

"It is positively humiliating," said the other angrily, "to be superseded by a half grown, immature boy," and he glared at Bernard.

"No doubt, sir," said Bernard.

"Why it was the height of audacity for you to apply for such a position."

"I suppose it was," said Bernard modestly, "but I had one excuse."

"What was it?"

"I was poor and very much in need of employment."

"Then why didn't you apply for a position as shop boy?"

"Because I don't think I could live on the pay of a shop boy."

"Mr. Cunningham must be insane. Certain no man with his wits about him could make such a foolish selection. Listen to me! I am poor as well as you. I need a new suit of clothes, but I can't buy it. I have been out of work for three months. Now I am going to ask a favor of you."

Bernard concluded that the favor was a pecuniary one, and he felt disposed to assist his unfortunate fellow applicant, but he waited to have him explain himself.

"This is the favor I ask," the young man proceeded. "You will not long retain your position. Mr. Cunningham will discover your incompetency. When you are about to be discharged, will you mention my name as your successor. I am sure to suit Mr. Cunningham. There is my card."

Considerably astonished at the coolness of the request Bernard glanced at the card. It bore the name and address of Stephen Brayton.

"I will remember your request, Mr. Brayton," he said, "but I hope I shall not be discharged."

"Of course you hope so, but you are certain to lose your place. You seem to be good natured. Since you have been successful, perhaps you will do me another favor."

"I will if I can."

"It is a small one. I am very short of money. Could you lend me half a crown?"

"I will do better than that. Here's half a sovereign."

The young man's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"You have a good heart," he said. "As I did not get the place I am glad you did."

"Thank you. I wish you good luck."

"He is right," thought Bernard. "It was certainly a singular selection for Mr. Cunningham to make. He did not think of my qualifications. He evidently took a liking to me."

The next morning as Bernard was sitting in Mr. Cunningham's rooms at Morley's assorting his papers, the servant brought in a short note which Bernard read.

It ran thus:

"My dear Mr. Cunningham—

Not yet having heard from you, and being uncertain as to your decision in reference to a traveling companion, I have ventured to call to inquire as to your intentions. It is desirable that I should know speedily, as I have a proposal from another party which I shall otherwise accept. I should, however prefer to go with you, as in the brief interview which you kindly accorded me I was very favorably impressed by your engaging personal traits.

I am, very respectfully,
Ezra Puffer."

Bernard read over this note with amusement and a little apprehension.

"What had I better do?" he thought. "Will it be safe for me to see the professor?"

Mr. Cunningham had assured him that Professor Puffer could have no possible hold upon him, and he therefore decided to take the risk.

"You can tell the gentleman to come in," he said.

Professor Puffer was in the anteroom. When he presented himself, with the note already written, he asked the servant, "Is Mr. Cunningham in?"

"No sir," said the servant, "but Mr. Brooks is in."

"Is Mr. Brooks a friend of Mr. Cunningham's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then be kind enough to hand him this note. It is addressed to Mr. Cunningham, but he can read it."

"Yes, sir. All right, sir."

Quite unprepared for a meeting with his old ward, Professor Puffer entered the room with a jaunty step. When he recognized Bernard, he stepped back with an expression of intense astonishment on his face.

"Bernard Brooks!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, Professor Puffer. What can I do for you?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

PROFESSOR PUFFER ONCE MORE.

"What brings you here, Bernard Brooks?" demanded Professor Puffer sternly. "You have no business in Mr. Cunningham's room."

"I am in the employ of Mr. Cunnigham," said Bernard.

"How can that be? You are too young to be his valet."

"I have been engaged by him as his traveling companion."

To say that Professor Puffer was surprised would be too mild. He was absolutely overwhelmed with astonishment. He could not believe it.

"This must be a falsehood," he returned after a pause.

"You can stay here and inquire of Mr. Cunningham if you like."

"I will," said Puffer sternly. "I will let him know in that case that you are under my guardianship, and that I will not permit you to accept the preposterous engagement. You, a traveling companion!"

Bernard was not quite withered by the professor's disdainful tone. Secure in the attachment of Walter Cunningham, all fear of his quondam guardian had disappeared.

"You forget, Professor Puffer, that I was your companion," he said with a smile. "If I was fit to be your companion I am certainly fit to be his."

"You were not my companion. You were my ward. You are my ward still, and when I leave this place you must go, too."

"Would you take away Mr. Cunningham's traveling companion?"

"He will have no trouble in obtaining a better one. But I don't believe you have been engaged. He would have no use for a child."

"Say kid at once, professor."

"I do not use slang," returned Professor Puffer severely. "I shall wait and see Mr. Cunningham."

"You will excuse my going on with my work."

"What are you doing?"

"Sorting Mr. Cunningham's papers."

"Does he trust you to do that?"

"He requests me to do so."

"Do you actually mean to say that you have been engaged as his traveling companion?"

"It is quite true."

"Where did you fall in with him?"

"I saw his advertisement and applied for the place."

"Where were you staying at the time?"

"At the Arundel Hotel, near the Strand."

"Ha! and I was only in the next street. How did it happen that I did not meet you?"

"I don't know."

"If your story is true which I can hardly believe, what pay has Mr. Cunningham promised to give you?"

"Excuse me, Professor Puffer, but I would rather not tell."

"As your guardian I demand an answer."

"You are not my guardian. Nothing would induce me to place myself again under your charge. You know very well what reasons I have for fearing and distrusting you."

"I suppose you allude to that little affair on board the Vesta."

"That little affair, as you call it, was an attempt to murder me."

"Nonsense!" said the professor, but he did not appear quite at his ease. "You had better not make such a ridiculous charge. No one will believe it."

"You may be mistaken in that, Professor Puffer."

"When does Mr. Cunningham propose to travel?"

"You had better apply to him. I do not feel at liberty to spread his plans."

Professor Puffer felt exceedingly mortified and annoyed. Here was a situation which he had applied for and been refused actually given to a mere boy against whom he felt a grudge—his own ward, as he chose to consider him.

"I won't let him keep the place," said Puffer, shutting his lips firmly. "I will tear him away from this fool of a Cunningham—and when I get him once more into my grasp, I will revenge myself upon him. He won't find it so easy to get away from me again."

Half an hour passed. The professor maintained his place, looking grim and angry. Bernard handed him the morning issue of the London "Times," but he seemed busy with his own reflections, and scarcely glanced at it.

Finally a light step was heard at the door, and Mr. Cunningham entered the room. He looked from the professor to Bernard and a smile formed upon his face. He guessed what had occurred.

"Professor Puffer, I believe?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered the professor. "May I ask you if you have considered my application?"

"Yes. I should have communicated with you. I have engaged Mr. Brooks to be my traveling companion."

"Mr. Brooks!" said the professor scornfully. "Are you aware that this boy is under my guardianship?"

"No, I am not."

"It is true, and he has no right to make any engagement without my permission."

"Excuse me, but is this the boy of sixteen to whom you referred in your conversation with me the other day?"

"He is."

"You said that you had been engaged as his traveling companion. You said nothing about being his guardian."

"I didn't go into particulars," replied the professor who began to see that there would be something to explain.

"You said, however, that he had left you, and had left England with some friends of the family."

"Ahem! I was mistaken. I have been requested to resume the charge of him."

"Have you a letter to that effect?"

"Not with me."

"Your story appears inconsistent. I am convinced that you have no claim upon Bernard. I have engaged him as my companion, and intend to take him with me in my proposed journey."

"Of what possible use can a boy be to you?"

"That is my affair!" said Walter Cunningham shortly.

"I will not permit him to go with you."

"What do you propose to do about it?"

"I will appeal to the law."

"I think, Professor Puffer, the less you have to do with the law the better. Bernard has informed me of a scene on board the Vesta which might expose you to arrest."

"I don't understand what he refers to."

"I refer to your attempt to throw him overboard."

"Does he say that?" asked the professor in pretended amazement.

"Yes."

"Then he has told an outrageous falsehood. No such thing ever took place. He is the worst boy I ever met."

"When you were here before you spoke very differently of him. You said he was a very attractive boy, and you referred to his attachment to you. You said he shed tears at parting from you."

Bernard burst into a fit of laughter which only aggravated his old guardian the more.

"He didn't deserve it. I spoke of him as well as I could, because I did not want to hurt his reputation."

"Professor Puffer," said Walter Cunningham in a tone of disgust, "I am busy this morning, and I will not detain you any longer."

"I will go," responded the professor, "but not alone. Bernard Brooks, come with me!"

"I decline," said Bernard.

"Then I will have to recourse to the law."

"So will I," retorted Bernard.

"No one will believe your preposterous charge if that is what you refer to. You have no proof of it except your own statement."

"There you are mistaken. I have the affidavit of Jack Staples, seaman on the Vesta, who saved me from your murderous attack."

Puffer turned pale. What Bernard said surprised him very much, and he saw at once that such a document would mean danger to him.

"If you want to invoke the law, Professor Puffer, you can do so," said Mr. Cunningham.

Puffer was discreetly silent. He seized his hat and left the room without bidding farewell to Bernard or Walter Cunningham.

"Your friend has gone, Bernard," said Cunningham. "I venture to say that he won't come back. It is certainly a droll circumstance that you and he should have applied for the same situation and that he was refused."

"You may repent your choice, Mr. Cunningham."

"You mean Walter."

"Yes, Walter."

"When I do I will tell you. And now, Bernard, I have brought you something."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a handsome gold watch and chain.

"I observed that you had no watch," he said, "and I resolved to supply the deficiency."

"How can I thank you, Walter?" exclaimed Bernard in joyful excitement. "Of all things it is the one I most desired."

"You will find it a good one. In such an article as a watch, a cheap one is not desirable. Here is one which you can keep all your life."

Before leaving London Bernard wrote the following letter to his friend Barclay:

"Dear Nat," he said in it, "you may be desirous of hearing from me. I have not time at present to go into details. I will say, however, that my New York guardian is no friend of mine, but as well as I can make out, a dangerous enemy. He sent me to England in charge of a man named Puffer—he calls himself Professor Puffer—who tried to throw me overboard one dark night. I escaped from him after reaching London and secured a very advantageous situation as traveling companion to a wealthy young man named Walter Cunningham. We start next week for Italy, and I am very busy making preparations. I will write you from Italy.

"Do you ever see my dear friend Septimus, and is he as sweet and amiable as ever. I didn't like his father, but I prefer him to Professor Puffer.

"Your sincere friend,
Bernard Brooks."

CHAPTER XXVII.
A CITIZEN OF NEBRASKA.

Three months later the two friends were domiciled in the Hotel Constance in Rome. They had taken a leisurely course from London, three weeks in Paris, visiting the interior of France, and spending some weeks in Switzerland and Northern Italy. They had now been two weeks in Rome and used the time to good advantage in visiting the art galleries and the ruins of the ancient city.

Bernard had enjoyed everything, and had managed to pick up some conversational Italian. To some extent he had acted as courier for Mr. Cunningham, who had always been accustomed to have things done for him. He found Bernard especially useful, as he had dismissed his servant at Milan. The latter was a stiff necked Englishman and was continually getting into trouble from his inability to adapt himself to foreigners and foreign ways.

"Are you ready to leave Rome, Bernard?" asked Walter Cunningham.

"Whenever you are," answered Bernard promptly.

"Of course we have not seen all or even a small part of the things worth seeing, but I am tired of sightseeing. I have thought that an independent excursion in our own carriage, not following any prescribed course, but halting where the fancy seizes us, would be enjoyable."

"I should like nothing better," said Bernard enthusiastically. "In what direction do you propose to go?"

"In the general direction of Naples."

"I am told by an American, who is a guest at this hotel, that there are several routes."

"That is true. I have decided to go by way of Frosinone, San Germano and Capua. The route is said to be very interesting. I wish you would look up a vetturino and arrange to hire him by the day. Then we shall be able to pursue an independent course."

"I will do so, Walter. Have you any instructions as to the price?"

"No; you know from the short excursions we have made what is fair and moderate. You may as well select a vettura that is roomy and large enough to accommodate four persons. We don't want to be cramped, for that will interfere with our enjoyment."

"And when do you wish to start?"

"Tomorrow morning, say at eleven o'clock."

"Very well. I will attend to it."

"It is a great comfort to have you with me, Bernard. You take a great deal of trouble off my hands."

"I am glad to hear you say that. Think how I would be situated if you had not taken me up."

"I have been well repaid for doing so."

Bernard engaged a vettura, or traveling carriage, designed for four persons, and in an hour it made its appearance. The vetturino, as the driver is called, was a lithe, slender dark complexioned man who answered to the name of Pasquale. What his last name was Bernard did not inquire, as it was sufficient to have a single name to call him by.

"How long will the signor want the vettura?" asked the driver.

"I do not know. We will hire it by the day."

"And where will the signor wish to go?"

"To Naples, by way of Valmontone and Frosinone. Do you know the route?"

"Si, signor, most assuredly."

Bernard and Mr. Cunningham seated themselves in the carriage, and they started. They left Rome by the Porta Maggiore, their course being through the Campagna, the dreary and unwholesome tract in the immediate neighborhood of Rome. There was very little to see in the first day's journey except a ruined aqueduct, which detained them but a short time, and they pushed on to Valmontone where they arranged to stop over night. The inn was far from satisfactory, and they were not tempted to prolong their stay.

In the evening as they sat on a bench outside the inn, a man of about fifty wearing a tall white hat with an unmistakable American look walked up to them, and removing his hat said: "Gentlemen, I'm glad to see you. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Amos Sanderson, and I live about ten miles from Omaha when I'm at home."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance Mr. Sanderson," said Cunningham politely. "I am Walter Cunningham, from London."

"You don't mean to say you're an Englishman," said Sanderson in surprise. "You look like an American."

"Doubtless that is meant as a compliment," said Cunningham smiling.

"Well I never heard any one take offense at being taken for an American."

"True. I have been in America, and I understand why it is that you Americans are proud of your country. However, if I am not an American, my young friend here, Bernard Brooks, is an American boy."

"I am glad to meet a fellow countryman, Mr. Sanderson," remarked Bernard, smiling.

"Well, well, it does seem real good to meet an American boy," said Mr. Sanderson, his face lighting up. "Shake, Bernard, my boy!" and he extended a muscular hand which Bernard shook cordially.

"Are you staying at this hotel, Mr. Sanderson?" asked Walter Cunningham.

"Don't call it a hotel! It doesn't deserve the name. Call it a tavern. It's a regular one horse place."

"Then I am glad we are only going to stop one night."

"I have been here a day and a half and it's the longest day and a half I ever passed."

"Why did you stay if you didn't like it?"

"I'll tell you why. I came here in a small vettura, and I had a quarrel with the vetturino who tried to cheat. So I sent him off, and was glad to get rid of him, for a man with a more villainous countenance I never saw. I haven't been able to get another carriage, so here I am. How did you come?"

"By a vettura. We are making the journey in a leisurely way, going as far or as short a distance daily, as we choose."

"Where are you going?"

"To Naples."

"So am I. Is your vettura a large one?"

"Large enough to hold four persons. We like plenty of room."

"Then I'll make you a proposition. Here I am alone—shipwrecked as it were on land. If you will let me join your party I'll pay my share of the expense. In fact I don't mind paying more, for I ain't mean though I do hate to be imposed upon. Come now what do you say?"

Walter Cunningham was rather startled by this unexpected proposal from an utter stranger. It jarred somewhat against his British exclusiveness. Still there was something attractive in the American, rough and unpolished as he was in his manners, and Cunningham felt that he would amuse and interest them. As far as honesty went it would be impossible to suspect Amos Sanderson. Besides he looked like a man of substance and not like an adventurer. Walter Cunningham glanced towards Bernard and thought he read in the boy's face a desire that the American's proposal should be accepted.

"I hardly know what to say," he replied after a pause. "We do not in general care for the companionship of others, and I can hardly be said to have much knowledge of you—our acquaintance being of the briefest."

"About ten minutes," said Mr. Sanderson. "That's true, and I'm afraid its cheeky in me to ask you to take me, but I feel sort of drawn to you both, particularly to my young countryman, Bernard."

"Say no more, Mr. Sanderson. We'll take you with us as far as Capua at any rate. There, as it is a large and well known place, you will have no difficulty in making other arrangements."

"Thank you, squire. You're a gentleman. You'll find Amos Sanderson a true friend that'll stand by you through thick and thin. If we are attacked by bandits, he won't run away and leave you in the lurch."

"Bandits? Surely there is no danger of meeting any of them?"

"Well, squire, I wish there wasn't, but I don't feel certain. Only last week a couple of gentlemen were overhauled, and had to pay a good stiff sum to get away."

"I supposed the bandits had all been driven out of the country."

"That's where you are mistaken. There's people everywhere that find it easier and more agreeable to make money by taking it than by earning it, and I guess Italy has her fair share of such gentry. I'll tell you a little secret. I quarreled with my vetturino on purpose. His face was a villainous one, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if he were in league with some of the bandits."

"I have heard of such things."

"Some of these vetturinos" (Mr. Sanderson was not aware that he should have said vetturini) "have brothers or cousins among the bandits and play into their hands. I guess mine was one of that kind."

"Our vetturino Pasquale seems an honest sort of fellow. I should not suspect him of leading us into a trap."

(To be continued.)

A Mystery of the Forest.

BY E. E. YOUMAN,
Author of "The Lone Island," etc.

CHAPTER VII.
THE NOCTURNAL MARAUDER.

George saw what was coming and quickly sprang aside, just in time to avoid being struck. At the same time he shouted a warning to Tom, but of course it came too late, and the next instant his brother lay at his feet struggling to free himself from the bushes and earth that enveloped him. George gave him what assistance he could, and in a short time Tom stood up.

"Are you hurt?" asked George.

"Not a bit," was the reply. "But where's Charlie? I suppose he must have fallen through the hole, too."

"Yes; there he sits. He isn't hurt, but he blames us for his mishap, and won't speak to me."

Tom looked in the direction George indicated, and beheld young Burke seated in the farther corner of the cave, looking sullen and angry.

"So you blame us for this, do you?" asked Tom, not knowing whether to laugh or get angry.

"I don't blame you, for it was George's fault I fell in this place."

"How so?"

"Because if he had come with me when I started after that bird he could have pulled me out before I

fell through. I stumbled into the place before I knew it, and my gun was discharged by the fall. Then I called for you fellows and tried to pull myself out, but the dirt caved in around me, and, as I felt myself slipping through, I yelled to you again and dropped to the bottom. I could just hear you calling to me after that, and answered every time as loud as I could. You must be deaf, or you'd have heard me."

"Well, we didn't hear you," said George, "and it was in hunting for you that I fell in myself. My gun went off in the fall, for I had both hammers raised, and came very near shooting myself. Yet you blame me because you fell in, when the whole truth is that it's your fault I met with the accident."

"Of course it is," said Tom with energy, "and you talk like a chump when you say anything else," he added, looking at Charlie.

"Oh, I didn't expect you to side with me," Charlie replied rising; "but I'm no more of a chump, all the same, than you are."

"You've certainly acted like one. You've made us lose considerable time searching for you, and, after we nearly kill ourselves in finding you, abuse us for not doing more. Now let's hear no more of it."

When Tom spoke like that he was prepared to back it up, and Charlie was wise enough to drop the matter. Besides he had no desire to quarrel with the brothers, for he wanted to accompany them on the search for the lost oxen, as he anticipated considerable excitement before the journey was over, and knew if he provoked them too much they would withdraw their company.

"Oh, well it's all right now," he said. "But how are we going to get out of this hole?"

The place into which all had so singularly succeeded in falling was evidently a large cavity formed by some peculiar freak of nature, and the frail top had been inadequate to sustain Charlie's weight when he passed over it.

Had he been alone it would have been impossible for him to get out through the small aperture he had made in falling in, but when the clump of bushes caved through with Tom a large quantity of earth was forced away, and more than half of the whole rim had collapsed.

The result of this was that by dragging the bushes over to the rear of the cavity they could climb upon them, and manage to reach the top by forcing their way up the bank that had been formed by that part of the roof caving in. They lost no time in doing this, and in a little while were standing on the solid earth above.

"Now don't let's lose any more time," said Tom. "It'll be dark in less than two hours, and we'll be forced to camp for the night without having made any headway."

This was true. The sun was already casting long shadows through the woods, and if they would accomplish anything that day, they would be obliged to move at once. Tom accordingly led the way and soon reached and crossed the stream, where he took up the search for the trail at the point where he had so suddenly left it, while George and Charlie resumed work as before.

The stern words of rebuke Tom had addressed to young Burke in the chasm evidently had a salutary effect, for it was noticed that he manifested more interest in the business before them, and continued the search with almost as much energy as that displayed by the brothers. But notwithstanding their thorough prosecution of the work they were not rewarded with any indications of success, and when at last the sun disappeared, and the shades of night fell around them, the boys came to a ha.. puzzled and disappointed.

"The oxen must have come out of the brook at some point," said Tom, as he dropped the butt end of his gun to the ground and looked across at his companions, "and I can't understand how it is we've traveled all this distance without finding the trail. We've come more than three miles along the stream, and I'm sure the cattle haven't waded all that way through the water. Are you fellows sure you haven't passed the trail anywhere?"

"Sure as it is possible for any one to be," answered George with emphasis. "We've both hunted for it with the greatest care, and if it had come out of the water on our side we'd surely have found it."

"Can it be possible they have gone the other way after all?" Tom continued anxiously.

"I hardly think so," his brother replied, "although of course it is impossible to tell. Still we traveled further than this in the other direction this morning, and nothing came of it."

"Well, there's no use going any further tonight," Tom resumed. "We may as well camp here, and start out early in the morning."

This suggestion seemed to please Charlie. He was not inclined to continue the search without deriving some pleasure from it, and as he was very fond of camping out the prospect of spending the night in the woods just suited him.

They proceeded to hunt up a good location for the camp, and in this it was noticed young Burke was the leader in the display of energy.

A suitable spot was discovered at last, and, after collecting some fine boughs, of which there was a great abundance, they threw them upon the ground and found they would afford a fairly comfortable bed.

When this was arranged the boys made a vigorous attack on the provisions with which Mrs. Hess had provided them, and, being very hungry, it is needless to say the meal was thoroughly enjoyed.

Charlie had neglected to supply himself with food, but the brothers had enough for all, and were generous in its distribution.

Darkness had come upon them by this time, and the lonely chirps of the cricket and occasional hoot of the owl could be heard at intervals sounding on the stillness. They sat down on their bed of boughs, and devoted some time to discussing their future plans, and mapping out their course for the following morning.

"We'll follow down the stream four or five miles further," said Tom, "then if we don't come upon the trail we shall know for sure that the oxen have gone the other way after all, and we'll go back, and search in the opposite direction. I can't understand how it is we haven't come upon the trail before."

"Perhaps they didn't go into the water at all," suggested Charlie.

"They certainly did," said Tom. "We were careful to examine the place where we first discovered the trail, and could find nothing to show that they had turned away from the stream. The tracks led right down to the water, and there they were lost. So the oxen have gone either up or down the river for some distance and come out again, and we must find the point where they left the water."

"That can't be so easily done," persisted Charlie.

"Why not?"

"Because the ground may be so hard that their tracks won't show. We passed a few places like that when we came along."

"That's so," George put in; "but I made a point of examining the ground for a considerable distance around those places, and am sure the trail was not there."

Charlie did not reply, but George could see that what he had said had produced a doubt in his brother's mind that the stream had not been searched so thoroughly on their side as it had on his. He knew Tom's interest was centered in finding a continuation of the trail, and that his brother depended on him for assistance, and he felt very much annoyed at Charlie's ill advised remark.

"There's no doubt at all about our having passed the trail," he continued with energy. "I know the oxen have not left the stream on the side we followed, and it's my opinion that we won't come across the trail till we've gone a good deal further down."

This seemed to partly allay the fear which young Burke's words had aroused in Tom's mind, for the expression of doubt gradually left his face, and did not return again.

"I wonder if it is necessary for one of us to watch while the others sleep?" asked Tom, when they finally began to think of retiring.

"Hardly," said George. "Nothing will harm us."

"We might keep a fire burning," suggested Charlie. "That would scare away any wild animals that might come prowling around."

"Who's going to tend to it?" asked George.

"We can take turns. It's more than likely some of us 'll wake up through the night, and whoever does can throw wood on it."

"Would you actually take the trouble to get up and do that?" asked George, laughing.

"Certainly; why not?" inquired Charlie indignantly.

"Nothing, only I didn't suppose you'd care to go to the exertion."

"I guess if a fire is made I'll do my share towards keeping it going," declared Charlie with spirit. "I'll help gather wood for that purpose now, if you like."

It was decided, however, that a fire was not necessary, and the idea was abandoned. There were no larger animals than a wild cat infesting this portion of the forest and of these the boys had no fear. Besides George declared he was easy to wake, and if anything came near them he would soon discover it.

"For my part I wish something would molest us. I'd soon make short work of it," exclaimed Charlie grandly.

George laughed.

"Talk is cheap," he said. "What is that I've heard about a barking dog, etc.?"

"Oh, guy ahead, I don't mind it," cried Charlie. "You think I'm afraid, but maybe I'll have a chance to show you how mistaken you are."

"I hope you do. Until then, however, I'd say nothing about it."

"As soon as you fellows finish wrangling we'll retire," put in Tom quietly.

"I'm ready at any time," said his brother.

"So am I," added Charlie, stretching himself on his bed of boughs.

The others soon followed him and in a few minutes a profound stillness reigned over the camp.

A wild cat halted in the thicket near by, sniffed the air suspiciously for a moment, then began creeping stealthily in the direction of the sleeping boys. When it reached the spot it paused within a few feet of the trio, its brilliant eyes flashed upon them longingly for a minute or more, then, evidently concluding it would be inexpedient to make an attack, it turned and disappeared in the darkness.

A huge snake was the next to come near the camp, dragging its repulsive length so close to the bed that any one of the sleepers could have thrust out his hand and touched it. It crawled away in the forest, however, and the boys slumbered on.

Soon after the reptile had vanished another visitor began to approach. Now if any of the boys had been awake they would have caught the cautious footsteps of this nocturnal prowler as he carefully picked his way through the thicket.

This time it was not a wild cat nor a serpent, but the unmistakable form of a man. What business he could have in the vicinity of the camp was not as yet apparent, but he was armed with a long barreled rifle, and seemed to be extremely anxious to avoid discovery.

He carefully advanced through the bushes, and once, when he inadvertently trod upon a stick that snapped beneath his foot with a loud noise, he uttered a decidedly vigorous exclamation and crouched down in the shadow. There were no indications that the boys had been aroused by the noise however, and after a while he ventured forth again, and carefully began to approach.

"They must sleep soundly," he muttered, as he gained a point within a few feet of the boughs, "and I think I can do it without waking 'em."

A few steps more were cautiously taken, and he was standing directly over them. He was in the act of stooping down when Charlie Burke moved uneasily, and the marauder fell back with a low cry of alarm.

The youth slept on, however, and, being assured the danger was past, the man returned to his mysterious work. He again bent over the sleeping boys, and for some time busied himself in cautiously removing something which it was now evident had been the object of his visit to the camp.

Presently he breathed a low sigh of satisfaction, straightened himself up, and, as stealthily as he had approached, began to retreat. His form was soon swallowed up in the darkness, and almost at the same instant Charlie Burke awoke with a start, and sat up with a cry of surprise.

"A dream, by hookey," he muttered in a tone of relief, "but what a queer one!"

The brothers were awakened by the move Charlie made, and a moment later George asked:

"What's the matter? What did you get up so quick for? You jumped as if you were shot."

"I thought I was. I had a queer dream."

"Humbug!" growled Tom sleepily. "Lie down again, and be quiet."

"Let me tell the dream first," said Charlie.

"Won't it keep till morning?" asked George. "You can tell it while we're eating breakfast."

"I won't tell it at all now," said Burke angrily, and, lying back on the boughs, he was soon sleeping soundly again.

CHAPTER VIII.
THE MISSING GUN.

The bright rays of the morning sun were slanting down through the tree tops when the boys awoke, and the woods were ringing musically with the songs of the birds. They made haste to wash themselves in the stream, after which breakfast was disposed of and they were ready to continue the search.

There is nothing so delightful as a beautifully clear morning, and the boys were quick to respond to the inspiring influences surrounding them. Even Tom, whose anxiety had been so great the preceding afternoon, went around the camp whistling merrily, and looking forward to the successful termination of the search within a few hours.

"Come on, fellows," he cried, as he shouldered his gun. "The sooner we commence business the sooner we will find the trail, and after that the rest will be easy."

Charlie picked up his gun and started on behind Tom, who had already crossed the stream and was heading downward, when both were startled by a sudden cry from George. They turned and beheld him hastily pulling the bed of boughs apart, scattering it in all directions while he looked carefully through it. He was

much excited, and it was evident something unusual had occurred.

"What's the matter?" called Tom. "You've got no time to waste on that thing; come on."'

"I can't find my gun," cried George excitedly. "Have either of you got it, or did you see anything of it?"

By this time he had scattered the boughs thoroughly, but no signs of the weapon were discernible, and he stood up and looked around, puzzled and alarmed. Tom had crossed the river and started back, and he and Charlie now came up, the latter seeming nearly as excited as the owner of the gun himself.

"Are you fellows playing a trick on me?" asked George, eying them suspiciously as they paused at his side.

"Certainly not," cried Tom with emphasis. "That is, I am not, are you Charlie?" and he glanced at young Burke sternly.

"No," said Charlie with increasing excitement. "But I think I know where it is."

"Where?" demanded George.

"Stolen," was the startling reply; "and my dream which you fellows wouldn't listen to last night is not so much of a dream after all."

"Oh stuff," cried Tom impatiently. "Don't begin harping nonsense. If you know anything about the gun tell us. We can't lose half a day listening to a nonsensical dream."

"I tell you I don't know whether it's a dream or not," cried Charlie with such earnestness that the brothers were compelled to listen; "but this I do know. While we were sleeping I thought a man came out of the woods and stood over us. I moved a little, or thought I did, and he went away. He came back again, and stooping over, pulled George's gun toward him, then straightened up and stole off in the woods

"A minute after that I woke, or sat up anyhow, for I don't know now whether I was awake or not, and you fellows were aroused at the same time. I wanted to tell you about it, but you wouldn't listen. The fact that the gun is gone shows it wasn't a dream I had, but that I really saw some one come out of the bushes and carry the gun away."

While Burke spoke his excitement steadily increased, and he uttered the words with such emphatic sincerity that his companions were impressed with the truth of it in spite of themselves.

"Why didn't you arouse us?" demanded George.

"Don't I tell you I was going to do so and you wouldn't listen.? If you had let me tell you we'd have likely missed the gun at once, and could have caught the thief before he got away. He couldn't have been far off when I awoke."

George was almost wild over his loss, and Tom was deeply moved at sight of his grief. He knew the weapon represented many months' hard work and close saving on the part of his brother, and now it was gone. Tom wanted to say a few words of sympathy, but could think of nothing appropriate, and after looking helplessly at George, who was leaning dejectedly against a tree, he turned away and began searching carefully around.

"The gun may be near us," he said. "Perhaps you mislaid it."

But the most thorough search failed to bring to light any signs of its whereabouts, and all efforts to find it were soon abandoned.

Charlie had joined in the hunt with energy, for he, too, was sorry for his friend's loss, and, to do him justice, he felt that the whole business was the result of his own negligence and stupidity in not making a vigorous outcry at the time.

When Tom suspended operations and began to console his brother as best he could, young Burke still continued hunting for some signs of the gun or the robber a little distance from where the camp had been.

He soon found something that corroborated his story, and proved that the gun was gone for good, or at all events beyond immediate recovery

"Look here," he suddenly cried, and, as the brothers quickly approached, he pointed toward something in the ground before them.

It was the mark of a heavy boot, and proved that some one had been in the vicinity of the camp while they were asleep. It was a despicable theft; for a long time they tried to imagine who the robber could be. They could think of no one, however, and were about giving it up, when Charlie suddenly cried:

"I'll bet anything it was the tramp."

He began another careful scrutiny of the footprint, and when he concluded asserted wth emphasis:

"Yes, sir, it was surely the tramp. This is just about the size of his boot, and he's just the fellow who'd be likely to do it.

He looked at the brothers as if expecting opposition to this theory, but the boys did not appear to doubt what he said.

When Charlie first met them and told them about the tramp, and how he thought it was this fellow who had stolen the oxen and the cows, they did not place much credence in his assertion, but these subsequent events served well to give color to his statement, and they began now to believe the tramp was more closely connected with the happenings of the past day than had previously appeared.

Reasoning from this standpoint it did not require much thought to convince Tom that it would be wise to transfer the search from the oxen to the tramp, as by finding him they could recover the stolen gun and the oxen as well. The more the youth reflected on this possibility the stronger grew his conviction that they were on the right track at last, and he lost no time in communicating his belief to his companions.

Charlie concurred with him at once, declaring that this was what he had been in favor of from the start. He insisted that the animals in question would never have wandered so far away from home unless some one was driving them, and he had no doubt that the tramp was at the bottom of it.

George, too, was in favor of making the change, for it gave him an opportunity to get back his beloved breech loader, and he longed to come across the thief at the earliest possible moment.

If that tramp could have overheard the plans laid by the boys he would have made all haste to place a good distance between himself and the young avengers. George had never been so thoroughly aroused before, and it was easy to see he was very much in earnest, as, with flashing eyes and an expression of stern resolve, he took the lead of the expedition.

The one imprint of the boot which they had discovered seemed to lead down the stream, and they set out in that direction, hoping to find others further on. They maintained a careful search as they advanced, and were finally rewarded by coming across two more tracks along the river, and they hurried on, much encouraged.

A few minutes later George came to a sudden stop and pointed toward something ahead.

CHAPTER IX.

INCREASING PERIL.

There could be no doubt that the leader had made an important discovery, and his companions hastened to his side.

"The trail at last," cried George as they came up.

Sure enough, there were the tracks leading out of the water only a few feet ahead.

Nor was this all.

Beside the trail made by the oxen was the imprint of a man's boots, corresponding exactly with those near the camp.

The boys could see through the whole thing now. The tramp had run off the yoke, compelling them to wade through the stream in order to prevent any one from finding the trail.

He had probably not supposed they would be missed so soon, and doubtless calculated to be safe on the other side of the mountain with his booty before search for them could be instituted.

When the boys went into camp that night they were closer upon the objects of their search than they had any idea of. The marauder, having discovered that he was being pursued, had stolen upon their camp, secured the best weapon among them, and continued his flight with the oxen through the darkness.

He had succeeded in obtaining several hours' start and was now in all probability many miles in advance, but the boys knew his progress would be more or less retarded by the oxen, and hoped to overtake him before night.

"We must not lose one minute more time than we can possibly avoid," declared George. "You can depend upon it the tramp will press steadily on, and we've got to travel just twice as fast in order to overtake him."

"If we hadn't gone into camp so soon last night we'd have likely overhauled him long ago," said Tom. "I wish we had only kept on for half an hour longer."

"Never mind; we're sure of our game now, and we must make the most of our time," replied his brother. "Come."

The trail led directly through the forest away from the river. It could be seen that the tramp had no further use for the stream from this point, and was now desirous only of reaching the opposite side of the mountains as soon as he could. Here he would likely be free from pursuit, and could dispose of his booty at leisure.

If he could succeed even in reaching the mountains before being overtaken he would be safe, for if pressed too closely he could take to cover among the rocks and trees or in the deep ravines, and defy discovery.

The brothers were fully cognizant of the advantage the marauder would secure by gaining the wilder parts of the forest, and this made them all the more anxious to overhaul him before he could reach the mountain fastnesses.

There was an excitement in the chase now that made it really fascinating. Nor was it entirely devoid of danger. The tramp, now that he had secured a good weapon, was well armed, and would not hesitate to resort to desperate measures if pressed too hard.

"We must be very careful," said George, "for it is evident the fellow has laid his plans well, and won't take failure readily."

"Don't you be alarmed," spoke up Charlie. "I told you some time ago I'd like to have something to occur in which I could get a chance to show you what I can do, and I think now my opportunity will come. When it does——"

He did not complete the sentence, but flourished his gun suggestively, and drew himself proudly erect.

"When it does," laughed George, "you'll back 'way down."

"Will I? Just wait."

He looked as if he was sincere in the assertion, but the brothers were inclined to believe that it was all affectation. However, neither of them deemed it of sufficient importance to continue the subject farther, and they pressed on in silence.

After a while they began to notice that they were entering a section of the wilderness entirely unfamiliar. The woods were becoming more dense, and they soon found themselves wondering how the marauder contrived to drive the oxen through the underbrush.

"He must have had more than a hard time in getting through this place," said Tom, as they came to a particularly rough spot, "but he seems to have succeeded."

A moment later he continued with some excitement:

"See there; he has cut down some of the bushes to make it easier for the oxen. If he keeps that up we'll soon overhaul him."

This was so, and George noticed the fact with considerable uneasiness. It proved that the tramp had an axe or a hatchet in addition to his gun, and these weapons would afford him means of making a very stubborn resistance when the final moment arrived.

The youth had hoped that the oxen could be recovered without serious trouble, but these things pointed to a more dangerous culmination of the chase than he cared to contemplate. He was determined to recover his property at all hazards, however, and even the possibility of a hand to hand encounter with the tramp did not make him waver.

A little farther on they came to a dense thicket through which a rough path had been cut, and, as Charlie saw this place, he uttered a cry of surprise, and startled his companions by remarking:

"It's utterly impossible for one man to drive a yoke of oxen through that thicket. I'll bet anything you please there's two of 'em."

If this were so, and from all appearance there was no reason to doubt it, then the peril before them was doubly increased. Even George, as he thought of it, grew decidedly uncomfortable.

He did not doubt their ability to bring one man to terms, but the prospect of engaging two was more than he felt they were competent to manage. At the same time he was fully determined to press on himself, but he did not like to have his companions run into danger.

"In that case," he said coming to a stop and facing the others, "The work we've undertaken will prove no child's play. Now I don't want you fellows to get into trouble, and perhaps you'd better turn back. For my part I'm going to get back my gun, and shall keep on, but I don't want to get you into a row with these men on my account."

"You ought to know better than to talk that way to me," cried Tom reproachfully. "I hope you don't think I'd leave you to fight it out alone. I'll stick to you till the last."

Then turning to Charlie he continued:

"But you'd better go back. We don't want you to get in a scrape with us, and that's what may occur when we reach these men."

"You don't know me, my boy, when you talk like that," said Charlie emphatically. "I started out with you, and I'll see the thing through. When we overhaul the tramps just let me deal with 'em, will you. I'd like nothing better than that."

George looked at him in surprise. He had supposed young Burke to be somewhat timid, but this sudden display of courage in what would doubtless prove real peril revealed a trait in his friend that excited his admiration.

He was sure this time that Charlie meant what he said, for there was a look in his eyes not to be mistaken, and George felt he could be relied on when the time for action presented itself.

"Come on, then," he said, and once more they all three put themselves in motion.

(To be continued.)

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Tell your friends that a splendid new serial by Mr. Alger will begin next week, in No. 577.

SEEING THINGS.

In connection with the recent articles printed in "The Argosy" on the subject of authorship, it will be apropos to quote a bit of advice from a lecture lately delivered at Union College, Schnectady, by Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York "Sun." His subject was "The Press and Journalism," and he laid particular stress on the importance of cultivating the observing faculty. For if one does not see things, how is he to write about them?

But there are observers and observers. Some people can look at a thing for ten minutes without being able to give you afterwards a single detail that entered into its composition. A good training school would be frequent indulgence in the game that consists in leading the several members of a company into a room where a table has been covered with objects of various sorts, allowing them each half a moment's inspection, and then having all write down a list of the articles they saw. He who has the longest accurate list wins the prize.

THE POPULARITY OF MUNSEY'S.

Munsey's Magazine, at its new price of ten cents a copy, has been the sensation of the autumn. Everywhere one sees the cheerful yellow and red cover—Columbian colors—with its beautiful portrait, changing each month, but always charming whoever the subject. The circulation has mounted like the mercury in a thermometer on a hot day, and it is daily ascending to still greater heights.

Have you seen the beautiful Christmas number, that for December, now ready and for sale everywhere at the usual price—ten cents? It is fairly spilling over with good things in both pictures and text.

Remember that the club price for Munsey's and "The Argosy" is $2.50 per year for both periodicals.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP.

How many young people can understand that they are making half of the happiness or more than half of the unhappiness of their everyday life in the future by the friends they are making for themselves now?

Most boys scorn the idea of choosing a chum for any other reason than because they like him. There ought not to be any other reason if he is the sort of fellow you ought to like. It is all very well to be natural, if you are naturally nice; but suppose you happen to naturally prefer that which isn't nice?"

A boy who is coarse and rowdyish, is going to make a coarse man. When you are making plans for your future, you do not want to think of yourself as the friend of loafers, or rowdies; nor of men who are always on the ragged edge of business and social affairs. You want in that future time to know men. Solid, honest men whose words are to be relied upon, and whose actions can be looked at by the world.

It is well to be friendly with everybody, but there is no reason why any boy should be weak enough to make a chum of the fellow who sits by him in school, or who lives in the same block, or for any reason, except that they are helping each other to grow into good men.

SUPERB CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

Since the reduction in subscription price, the cost of bound volumes of Munsey's Magazine has been placed at one dollar each. This is an opportunity that none should neglect to obtain a splendid holiday present for a friend at an insignificant outlay, an item not to be ignored in this year of financial stringency.

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HOW TO TALK.

Words to the speaker are exactly like pencil and brush and colors to an artist. Some people who know how to use them can tell any sort of a story and make it delightful by the shading they convey to us in words. We are too apt to be indolent and use the same words to express everything, making our talk meaningless and commonplace.

A great newspaper editor spoke to a class of boys at a college the other day. He told them that the best books to read were Shakespeare and the Bible: there were no words in either that were not in exactly their right places. Slang and high sounding words used to express low sounding ideas make a wearying talker. The best talker is always so simple that a little child can understand him. And when he uses an adjective, it is the one which describes his noun.

Then, too, there is a use of words which is kind. Words have character. Some are cold and harsh, while others are soothing, although they mean the same thing. One can almost tell the character of a man by his choice of words.

A young girl was bewailing her thinness to Bishop Phillips Brooks. "Thin!" said he. "You are ethereal."

It was a presentation of a reality in its most attractive aspect, and made it palatable instead of distasteful.

The Fakirs and the Kodak.

BY RICHARD MACE.

Travelers in the East are always bringing back new stories of the curious things which they see the fakirs or jugglers perform, and there was a great effort made to bring some of the experts to the World's Fair in Chicago, but without success.

There is nothing in India so strong as the idea of caste. Caste is the word which the people apply to the class to which they belong. It is not in India as it is here, possible for a boy to be born into the lowest and humblest position in life, but by his honesty, and manliness and efforts to learn and to be a gentleman and a worker in the world, become one of our greatest men. Over there a man must stay in the class into which he is born, unless he breaks some of its rules, when he becomes what is called a pariah, or an outcast, and nobody will associate with him.

One of the strongest rules of almost every caste, is that against crossing the ocean. A juggler who came over here would be obliged to stay here, or be an object of suspicion and scorn when he returned. So if you want to see their wonderful tricks you must go to India.

Two Chicago young men went a year or two ago, on a trip around the world. One of them could sketch very well with his pencil, and the other took along a kodak. About fifty miles from Smila, the hill station which Mr. Kipling writes so much about, they paid a company of fakirs to give them an exhibition of their peculiar feats.

The three men seated themselves on a bare space upon the ground, and one of them began to play upon a sort of tambourine, edged with bells. The music was slow at first, with a sort of sing song, then it became louder and louder, and one of the men sprang up and began to dance, swinging and swaying and turning faster and faster, until he was only a whirl in appearance. Finally he fell upon the ground.

He sat for an instant dazed, and then he took some live coals from a brazier which was handed him, blew upon them and put them into his mouth and ate them like nuts. He then walked to a cactus plant, whose leaves wore long thorns, and breaking off pieces ate them. He also ate some glass, biting it off and chewing it like bread.

Then one of the other men brought a red hot shovel which he stood on (with his bare feet) until it was black. A sword so sharp that it cut a piece of paper was brought, and held in position, edge uppermost, by the two men who had not danced. The dancer, putting his hands upon the shoulders of his companions, sprang upon it, and stood there for some seconds. He then balanced himself across the edge of the sword, neither his feet nor hands touching the ground, resting his whole weight upon that part of his naked body which touched the razor like edge of the saber. When it was over the young men examined him but could find no cuts or marks.

Then one of the other fakirs, sat down on the ground and taking a seed from an open dish planted it in the earth. He threw a handkerchief over it and waved his arms, while the other men banged the tambourines.

Presently there was a little rising in the center of the handkerchief. It grew larger and larger, until it looked like something living moving there. The music grew louder and louder as it had before, and suddenly the fakir whisked off the handkerchief (a great silk one) and lying there was a baby boy about two years old.

The third fakir sat bunched up all this time. Now he arose and taking a ball of small rope, threw it into the air. It went up and up until it seemed to disappear, unwinding as it went, and leaving the end dangling. The fakir set the baby on his feet; he was a bright looking little fellow, with beady black eyes, quite naked. Putting the rope into his tiny fist, the man gave him a slight slap with his open hand. The child began to climb. Up, up, he went, until he disappeared. The fakir shook the rope angrily, and looking up shouted something. Then he, too, began to climb the rope, and went on, until strain their eyes as they would the Americans could see no trace of him. Then suddenly there fell down the rope a tiny hand, then a foot. The Americans sat still with horror while they saw the baby boy fall down in pieces. Next the fakir came down. He went to the pieces, laid them together, gave a sharp slap, the baby sat up and ran off laughing.

Then once again the handkerchief was spread, and the old, old "mango trick" was performed; where the seed was put into the ground, and first the tiny plant appeared, and then the plant in flower, and then the fruit. Suddenly one of the Americans leaned forward and tried to touch the mangoes, but the fakir cried out and held him back, saying that it would be death to touch the fruit. It was there, but it had been created out of the air and earth and must go back to it suddenly, not by the roundabout way which ordinary fruit took, which had grown in the usual way.

After the mango had disappeared the third fakir arose and went through the whirling dance to the sound of the tambourine, and when he was like a white column of dust blown by the wind, he suddenly sprang into the air and stayed there! The young men could distinctly see the horizon and the distant landscape underneath his feet. He was motionless, with his arms folded, exactly as though he were on the ground, standing at his ease, but he was in the air, at least two feet from the earth.

They paid the fakirs and went on to their bungalow.

"I have obtained some pretty good rapid sketches," the artist said. "They did everything so fast that I could only catch a suggestion."

"I have at least two dozen snap shots," the young man with the kodak added. "I will prove that all those stories of jugglers are true. I never believed in them myself before."

But when he came to develop his strip of film, he found that there was nothing there save pictures of the three fakirs, either sitting still or dancing. Not one single trace of the mango tree, the rope, or the boy.

He washed the negatives again and again. Nothing more came out. And now he believes that the fakirs hypnotized them, and made them believe they saw what never existed. They could not hypnotize a camera.

Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindliness and small obligations given habitually win and preserve the heart and secure comfort.—Sir Humphrey Davy.

I never had any faith in luck at all, except that I believe that good luck will carry a man over a ditch if he jumps well, and will put a bit of bacon in his pot if he looks after his garden and keeps a pig. Luck generally comes to those who look after it, and my notion is, that it taps at least once in a lifetime at everybody's door, but if Industry does not open it, away it goes.—Spurgeon.

TO GAIN THE HEIGHTS.

All thoughts of evil; all evil deeds
That have their roots in thoughts of ill;
Whatever hinders or impedes
The action of the nobler will,—
All these must first be trampled down
Beneath our feet, if we would gain,
In the bright fields of fair renown,
The right of eminent domain.
—Longfellow.

A Dark Conspiracy.

BY NELLIE E. C. SCOTT.

The town had not seemed the same since Professor Ansell's coming. Formerly no town "from the wilderness to the sea" had been more staid—more conservative—than Gilder's Landing, but now, to quote the words of Miss Nancy Fairchild, it was "all worked up over this 'professor of mesmerism,' as he calls himself—a fellow that nobody knows the first thing about!"

Miss Nancy, you see, represented the conservative element. But there were many in Gilder's Landing, grown persons as well as youngsters, who thought Professor Ansell a most wonderful man.

Now, from a perfectly impartial standpoint, the professor's status may be fixed as follows: He really had some unusual powers in the way of mesmerism—could make one eat salt cheerfully under the impression that it was ice cream; could make one believe, with the little old woman in "Mother Goose," that one was not one's self, but somebody else, etc., and was, withal, a very fair sort of a man. But, having posed as a wonder for years, and become accustomed to the homage of the public, he had come to look upon himself as something above and beyond the ordinary mortal, and easily deserving of all the adulation offered him.

But it is with one of the professor's most ardent admirers, rather than himself, that we have to do. This was Lon Webster, a tall, slim youth of sixteen or seventeen, somewhat nearsighted and slightly deaf, who closely resembled Ansell in one thing, namely, unlimited self conceit.

Lon had worked in his father's store before the professor's advent, but now he was seldom seen there, or anywhere else, in fact, except in Ansell's company. He had given up everything for his new friend, who, presuming upon the boy's rather weak nature and attachment for himself, made of him little more than a servant.

This state of things caused considerable feeling among Lon's old associates, three of whom (they were all graduates of the class of '85 at the village academy) were learning the trade of printer in the "Leader" office.

"It's too bad Lon hasn't any more spunk than to let that fellow lead him 'round by the nose," remarked Will Sands one evening when the three apprentices had returned to the office after supper to distribute a galleyful of pi.

"I know it," said Rob Hayes. "Did you see at the show last night what a goose he made of himself, running here and there for Ansell as if he was bewitched? His father's disgusted with him. He was talking to my father today, and pa said if Lon was his boy he'd take him in hand. But Mr. Webster said he didn't think it'd do any good—that he hoped Lon would get tired of it himself after a while if he was let alone."

"Pshaw! I don't think he'll tire of it," put in Dick Moore, the humorist of the trio. "I walked home with him last night, and he seems perfectly crazy over the thing—can't talk of anything else. Says he's going away with Ansell when he goes, and'll be a professor of mesmerism himself one of these days.

This seemed such a good joke that the boys laughed for nearly a minute.

"The fact is," resumed Dick, "that Lon's too conceited to live. I'd give something pretty to see him taken down a peg or two; but gracious! Lon would never know he'd been taken down, so it wouldn't be worth while to try it."

While he was still speaking steps were heard on the stairs, and presently Lon Webster and another one of the "boys" appeared.

"Why, Lon," exclaimed Rob, "how is it that we see you here again—so far away from the professor? He must be out of town."

"He is out of town—suddenly called away," replied Lon. "He'll be back tomorrow, though."

"Ah, that accounts for it! I thought you'd not be likely to favor us if he was anywhere near."

"I don't see why you boys are so prejudiced against Professor Ansell," said Lon, patronizingly, and then he proceeded to relate, for the tenth time, the wonders worked by his friend.

"Who's prejudiced? No such thing!" cried Dick. "But I don't take much stock in his doings. Anyhow, I'd just like to see him mesmerize me."

"Well, he can do it," said Lon confidently; "he knows his business. I've given the subject a good deal of attention myself—made a pretty thorough study of it—and I—I'll bet you I can put you to sleep, Dick, in short order."

"I'll bet you can't," said Dick. "Go ahead and try it."

Lon seemed somewhat embarrassed by such a prompt acceptance of his challenge, but it would never do to retreat now. However, he looked very gravely at Dick from out of his nearsighted, large eyes, and said solemnly:

"Now you're perfectly sure you're willing, are you? You know there's no limit to what a person can be made to do while in the mesmeric trance."

"Why, you wouldn't hurt a fellow, would you?" Dick asked in apparent alarm.

"Oh, no, not seriously, of course; I might direct you to do some things not altogether agreeable," said Lon.

"Now see here," exclaimed Dick, "if I let you experiment on me, remember there's to be no funny business—if you make me daub myself with ink or burn my fingers or anything, I'll pay you for it when I come to."

"No, I won't do anything mean," Lon agreed, with a chuckle.

"Go on, Dick, we won't let him hurt you," said the eager boys.

"Sure, now?"

"Yes, sure."

"All right, then; go ahead, Lon—what'll I do first?"

"Just sit down in this chair and keep still."

Dick obeyed, and Lon immediately began making passes with his hands before the "subject's" face. When this had been kept up for several minutes without result, the boys began to laugh and make sarcastic remarks:

"I knew you couldn't do it," said Dick. Lon begged them to be quiet.

"Now I shall have to begin all over again," he said reproachfully. "You see there is the greatest difference in people: some come readily under the influence, others take longer. Now if you won't interrupt for a few minutes——"

DICK'S HAND MOVED OVER THE BOXES DOUBTFULLY FOR A SECOND.

His speech and action were, no doubt unconsciously, such an exact imitation of his patron's that the boys could hardly restrain their mirth.

This time Lon was more successful; the "subject" was plainly yielding, and at length, after what seemed a last violent effort to shake off the "influence," a long drawn sigh issued from Dick's lips; his eyes closed, his hands fell limply by his sides, and Lon turned to his companions with an indescribable look of triumph upon his face.

"Dick is not what we call 'responsive,' but I have conquered him," said he, taking his glasses off to wipe them.

At that moment Will Sands "nudged" his brother apprentice, Rob Hayes, who was standing beside him. Clarkson, who had come in with Lon, saw the motion, and both boys followed the direction of Will's glance.

Was it the ghost of a smile they saw playing about the passive face in the chair? Whether or not, Lon found himself with a remarkably attentive audience, which was, of course, very gratifying.

"Now what are you going to make him do?" was the first query.

"I'll give him something easy at first. Richard," Lon raised his voice an octave and pointed to the opposite end of the room, "walk down to that door and back."

As Dick proceeded to obey, his foot struck against a stick lying on the floor.

"Look out for the snake," cautioned Lon, and Dick got away from it with such frantic haste that the boys laughed and applauded.

"Now," proceeded Lon, when Dick had returned to his original position, "go over to Bob's case, take up his stick and set up the word paragon."

Dick hesitated an instant, then moved off with a sort of jerky motion toward the case indicated. His hand hovered over the boxes doubtfully for a second, then he picked up the letters slowly, and when the seven were in place returned to the rest.

Yes, there was the type for "paragon" in the stick.

This was the beginning of an hour's fun, a repetition of what had been going on in the town hall every night for a week past. However, the boys drew the line at pin sticking, pepper eating, ammonia smelling, etc., on the plea that Dick would suffer unpleasant after effects from them.

"Lon," Clarkson said at length, "you haven't made him do a thing that he couldn't have done if he'd been wide awake. Can't you give him something hard—make him think he's one of the old Greeks or somebody and have him make a grand speech."

Lon puckered up his brows and looked very solemn. After a little he turned to Dick and said:

"You are now Mr. Winslow." (Mr. Winslow was the editor of the "Leader.") "Go into the sanctum and write an article —an editorial—on the—the"—he picked up a paper from one of the cases, and glancing over the columns found what he wanted—"write an editorial on 'The Relations of this Country with England.' Don't let it take you more than five minutes."

"Oh, come, Lon, that's too much," said Will. "Mr. Winslow takes more than five minutes to write an editorial; that's too much."

"No, it isn't," replied the confident Lon. "Clarkson wants to see him do something out of the common, and he can do this as easily as anything else."

It is to be feared that Lon's "subject" would have disappointed him in this instance had Lon possessed enough originality to have given him a fresh topic; but, being an intelligent boy with a good memory, it is not surprising that Dick made a fairly good resume of an article he had put in type but three days before. At the same time it was far from revealing the original.

Anybody less inflated than Lon would have discovered incongruities at a glance, but to him it was a crowning triumph—a wonderful piece of work.

But it was nearly nine o'clock; the thing was losing its novelty.

"Wake him up now, Lon; he's done enough," said Clarkson; "the poor fellow must be tired out."

Lon's ambition was hardly satisfied. There were other things he would have liked Dick to do. But Dick's movements were becoming erratic. He did not respond with the same ready obedience as at first, so Lon decided to wake him up before the good effect was marred.

He went through some queer movements, and then, passing his hands again before Dick's face, after some unintelligible words he called to him:

"Come, Richard, it's all right; wake up!"

After a little "Richard" opened his eyes, but instead of resuming his normal appearance, only sat glowering at Lon, who thereupon made more passes.

"Come, it's all right, I tell you," he repeated; but Dick showed not a sign of agreeing with him. He still sat shrunken together in the chair, and now and then muttering incoherently. His eyes were closed.

"What's the matter—why don't you bring him to?" asked Rob.

"I—I can't seem to do it, somehow. You know it was hard to bring him under the influence at first, and I believe it takes a stronger hold of that kind of people. Bring me a little cold water, will you, please—and a towel?"

The cold water had such an effect on Dick as it might have had upon any

healthy boy. As the first drops of it trickled down inside his collar he straightened up suddenly, glared fiercely at Lon, and struck the basin of water from his hand.

Lon jumped back, frightened.

"I'm afraid it's been too much for him, boys," he whispered; "his brain wasn't strong enough to stand it. Won't some of you go for the doctor? Clarkson, you go—quick, please, and be sure you bring him back with you." He tried to appear cool, but his hand trembled violently as he picked up the basin and carried it to the sink.

When Lon's back was turned, Dick's frown relaxed, he looked up at the faces bending over him, and with a merry, but instantly suppressed grin, winked one eye!

"Wait a minute, Clarkson, and Will and I'll go along with you," said Rob. "I'm tired tonight. I'm going home."

"Oh, don't all of you go—don't leave me here alone with him!"

"Pshaw! Dick won't hurt you, but I'll stay with you if you like," said Rob.

"What'll we tell the doctor?" Clarkson asked.

"Oh, tell him just how it is: that I mesmerized him, never thinking it would do him any harm, and tell him how queerly he's acting."

Will and Clarkson told Dr. Morgan "just how it was," and the doctor, being himself young and something of a wag, entered into the spirit of the thing, and sent this disheartening message back to Lon:

"Tell him I know nothing about mesmerism; if he has mesmerized Dick he'll have to get him out of it himself so far as I can see."

Lon was walking up and down the room, followed by Dick's relentless gaze, when the message was brought to him.

"I don't know what to do, boys," he said helplessly.

"Perhaps if we take him out into the open air and walk him around it'll do him good," Will suggested. "Poor fellow, it's a shame! And all on account of your miserable fondness for showing off, Lon. Wonder what Dick's folks will say when they see him."

Lon groaned. He attempted to take Dick's right arm, but Dick eyed him so threateningly that he was glad to give the place to Rob. Clarkson took Dick's other arm, and Lon walked with Will at a little distance behind.

"I don't think I'll go into the house, Will," said he—Will and Dick boarded together with Dick's aunt, Miss Nancy Fairchild—"it seems, somehow, as if the sight of me excited him. He seems quiet enough now, and I guess he'll be all right, but if he should act queer again in the night, put wet cloths on his head and send for me at once. Come to think of it, perhaps you'd better go 'round by the drug store and get a little valerian or something—they'll tell you what's good for the nerves—And just tell the other fellows that I think I'd better not go in, will you?"

When Will returned from his ostensible visit to the drug store, and stopped to hang up his hat and overcoat in the hall, the sound of hilarious laughter reached him from the sitting room. As he turned to put on the night latch some one ran lightly up the steps and called his name softly. It was Lon.

"I wonder how Dick's coming on," he said nervously.

"I have only just come; haven't seen him yet," answered Will.

"Sh! isn't that he speaking? Wait till we hear what he says," and Lon leaned forward eagerly.

"I thought the jig was up when he told me to write that editorial," Dick was saying. "And when it was written I felt sure he'd see through it. And then when he began to work my arm up and down like a pump handle I don't know how I ever kept my face straight."

Another outburst followed this, after which Miss Nancy's voice was heard from the floor above, saying:

"Boys, are you crazy? Richard, do you know it's after ten o'clock?"

When he had caught the drift of Dick's remarks, Lon suddenly straightened up and stepped toward the outer door, motioning Will to follow.

"I don't under—wasn't—is it true that Dick was only fooling—that I didn't mesmerize him at all?"

The expressions on Lon's face, surprise chagrin, disappointment—all contributed to the making of such a comical picture that Will found it absolutely impossible to keep from laughing. But, not wishing to add to Lon's discomfiture, he checked his mirth and said:

"I guess it is true; but I wouldn't feel badly about it if I were you, for it was only a joke, you know."

Lon seemed not to hear him. He stood in deep thought with his eyes fixed upon the opposite wall. His face as he gazed took on a stern expression that gradually became one almost of dignity. Will had never seen him look so manly before.

"I guess I've been making a fool of himself," he said at length, with a courageous attempt at a smile. "Well, it's good I've found it out. You may tell Dick if I couldn't see through his editorial I can see that. Good night." And Lon was gone!

* * * * *

"And say, fellows," said Will, after relating his interview with Lon, "don't let's tell anybody about tonight, will you? Lon's cut up enough about it now."

And all agreed that "mum" was the word.

* * * * *

"I see Lon is helping you in the store again," said Bob Hayes' father to Mr. Webster a week or two later.

"Yes, there's a great change in the boy —come all of a sudden," replied Mr. Webster. "When he'd got so crazy after that professor that it seemed he couldn't get no crazier, the tide kinder seemed to turn. One day he was talkin' of goin' away with Ansell, and the next he was back here in the store, as settled as any boy could be. Just run the thing into the ground an' got tired of it, I suppose."

"I suppose so," assented Mr. Hayes.

But Bob, who was with his father, and heard the conversation, did not agree in this conclusion.

[This Story began in No. 571.]

Checkmate.

BY WILLIAM LIEBERMANN.

CHAPTER XVI.
RALPH THINKS HIMSELF VERY CLEVER.

The next morning Jones volunteered to show Ralph the sights. With Ralph it was a day to be long remembered, this first day in a great city. And Jones, though he seemed a little bored, now and then, by his young friend's enthusiasm, was on the whole a very good guide, and took good care that Ralph should see whatever there was worth seeing.

As they neared the hotel, toward afternoon, Jones stopped in front of a lurid poster, representing a fire engine at full speed.

"Have you seen the 'Still Alarm?'" he asked.

"Still Alarm?"

"It's a play. Suppose we go and see it tonight?"

"Do they have a real fire engine on the stage?" asked Ralph, gazing open mouthed at the poster.

"So they say," said Jones, "real fire engine and horses. I've nothing to do tonight. We'll go and see it. The theater's only two blocks from the hotel."

Jones bought the tickets then and there.

After dinner, Ralph was left to pass the afternoon as he pleased, for Jones, after recommending him not to lose himself by going too far from the hotel, went away on business. The nature of that business concerns us not; probably it was some new roguery.

Ralph was tired after his morning of sightseeing, and so did not care to go out again. And, country boy as he was, he felt ill at ease in the big public sitting rooms and office of the hotel. So, in the end he went to his room. There the first thing that caught his eyes was Jones' valise, standing in a corner.

He wondered what had become of his own baggage. Probably it was waiting to be claimed at St. Louis, to which place it had been checked. But the valise belonging to Jones. What if it contained those papers—the papers that had brought him so far from his friends in Porson's Hollow? It was worth while investigating.

He tried the valise; it was locked. He hesitated a long time, and then did something he was heartily ashamed of. With the bent end of a split key ring he picked the lock, which was a simple one. Hurriedly he ransacked the valise.

To his great delight, almost the first thing he came upon was a carved box of some dark wood. He recognized it immediately; Grace herself had once described it, and no least word of hers could he forget. He opened it; letters, more letters, and a small morocco leather blank book; that was all. He took up a letter at random. It was addressed to Mrs. Hernden, and was dated from Singapore. It was signed "Rod," evidently from a brother, who must have been a great traveler, for another letter was dated from Constantinople, and a third from Cape Town.

Ralph took up the blank book. Evidently a diary; he read a few entries. A newspaper clipping slipped out. It was an account of the loss of the "Manasseh" and the rescue of Colonel Dexter and a servant. The page from which the clipping slipped was blotted with tears; Ralph could hardly read it.

After all, these papers seemed very unimportant; hardly worth all the trouble they had caused. Ralph wondered that Mrs. Hernden should attach so much value to them. Then he remembered, Grace had spoken of a traveler uncle who had been lost at sea. Probably these were mementoes of him. That would account at once for Mrs. Hernden's anxiety to recover them, and her statement that they could be of no use to any one else.

One thing puzzled him. Why was the stranger willing to give so much money for these papers? How was he able to make "a clear half million" out of them? Surely Mrs. Hernden, anxious as she was to recover them, would not, and could not offer so large a reward for what were, after all, such very trivial letters. No one gives half a million dollars for a bundle of old letters, even though they may be the last letters received from a dead brother. What could be the solution of the mystery.

Suddenly it occurred to Ralph that Jones might return at any moment. Hurriedly he locked the door of his room, and stopped to think what he should do. His reading of detective stories had made him very shrewd in some things. He could not take the box; he had nowhere to put it, and besides, it would be too easily missed. For this latter reason it would be unwise to take the papers, without putting something in their place.

But he had nothing to put in their place. To leave them while he went in search of something would be to run the risk of not having another opportunity to take them. After a minute's reflection, he put the letters in his pocket, closed the valise, and went out to hunt up a stationery store.

He soon found one, and bought pens, ink and paper, and a small morocco book almost exactly like the other. By a bit of rare luck, too, he found one that was old and shopworn, so that it made a very good substitute for the one he intended to take. On his way back, he stopped in the office of the hotel and got a few envelopes, and a newspaper.

Jones had not come back. Ralph hurriedly locked the door. He had thought out just what he was to do, on his way to the stationery store. He took off his shoes, and then threw himself on the bed, and tossed from side to side once or twice. Then he rose, folded a sheet of blank paper, slipped it into an envelope and sealed it, and addressed it to Dr. Sherwood.

These maneuvers were to give him time in case Jones should return before he had finished the rest of his task.

Without his shoes, he could move silently about the room, to close the valise and put it in its place; the disordered bed would at once explain his being in his stocking feet, and his delay in opening the door, for he would claim that he was tired, and had been taking a nap; and the addressed letter would explain the presence of writing material. All this he thought very clever. Then he set to work.

First he clipped a column from the newspaper as near as possible in style of printing and glazed appearance, like the clipping describing the loss of the "Manasseh." The rest of the newspaper he tore up and threw out of the window. Then he took the letters one by one from their envelopes, replacing each with a blank sheet of paper. Each letter he placed in a new envelope, copied the address, and made notes, on the back of the postmark, stamps, etc.

Then he took up the diary. It was written in a fine, small handwriting, at first glance scarcely legible. Ralph turned over the leaves a little hopelessly. There were a great many written upon; it would be an impossible task to copy all that.

Then an idea struck him. All that was necessary was that the book might not at a random glance, appear empty. The fine, angular handwriting could easily be imitated by a simple, meaningless zigzag line. He tried the effect on a sheet of paper, and compared it with the original. The illusion was very good. At first glance no one would distinguish the fraud.

So he began filling the pages with zigzag lines, looking like a fine angular hand, but many times faster than he could have hoped to have written. In half an hour the book was done.

All this time he had been working with feverish haste. Now he began to take a sort of artistic pride in his work, even going so far as to sprinkle a few drops of water, to imitate the tear stains, on the page where he intended to place the false clipping. This done, he put the new book in the box, the envelopes with their blank sheets of paper on top of it, closed it and replaced it in the valise, which he locked again by means of the bent key ring.

At last he had them, these papers—had everything but the box itself and the envelopes. Now that it was all done, he felt a little ashamed of himself. Was it quite honorable in this fashion to go through another man's valise, and steal—yes, that was the word—steal these papers? No doubt they did not belong to Jones; but did that make his own act any less culpable?

He felt uncomfortable in that room, waiting for Jones. So he put on his shoes, and prowled along the corridors, still afraid to go and sit in the office.

The elevator was a thing of wonder to him, and he watched it with curious eyes. He got acquainted with the elevator boy, a boy of about his own age, and was allowed to ride up and down to his heart's content. Frank was a bright, good natured fellow, and he and Ralph soon became good friends.

"Say," said Frank, "is your friend a gambler?"

"Gambler? I don't know. Why?"

"Seemed pretty thick with Mr. Coltwood last night."

"Coltwood?" said Ralph in surprise. "Harvey Coltwood?"

"Yes, that's him. Saw 'em last night in a corner of the gents' smoke room."

"Does he live here?" asked Ralph.

"Who? Coltwood? No. Comes from St. Louis, I believe. But he's here a great deal."

"And he gambles?"

"There's a party of 'em play what they call 'a little game,' in room 47, and he's always one of them when he's in Chicago. He went there last night after he left your friend."

"What does he look like?"

"I'm no hand at describing people, but I'll point him out to you tonight. No, not tonight. I ain't on duty. I go off at seven."

Jones strolled into the office, looking unutterably miserable. He noticed Ralph standing by the elevator.

"Ah, you here!" he exclaimed. "Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm afraid we can't go to the theater tonight."

"Can't go!" said Ralph, in his disappointment forgetting the embarrassment Jones' presence might otherwise have caused him.

"I have such a confounded headache, it's out of the question. We'll go another night." Then, as if it were an afterthought he added: "Still since we have the tickets, if you care to go alone, do you think you could find your way to the theater?"

"I'm sure I could," said Ralph eagerly.

"Well, I'll give you the tickets. It's not likely you know any one else who would like to go, I suppose. Still, the tickets are no use to me. You can take them both."

Ralph went straight to Frank, the elevator boy.

"Did you say you would be off at seven o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Will you come with me to the theater?"

"Won't I! What's the play?"

"'The Still Alarm.'"

"Bully! They say it's a dandy play. Got a real fire engine in it, and there's a regular duel with bowie knives, too."

So the boys went together, after dinner, to see the real fire engine, and the regular duel with bowie knives, and enjoyed it, too.

Just as they were entering the hotel, Ralph saw the handsome stranger of the train going out. He had evidently been drinking. Under his arm he carried a small box. Ralph recognized it; it was Mrs. Hernden's. So the loss of the papers hadn't been detected!

"Say," said Frank, laying his hand on Ralph's arm, "you wanted to know what Harvey Coltwood looked like? That's him, there."

"That! That Harvey Coltwood? Whew!"

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. JONES EXPRESSES A HIGH OPINION OF RALPH.

Ralph being well out of the way for the evening, Jones' headache quickly vanished. Possibly he missed it, for he went the surest way to get another, namely, to the hotel bar.

He sat down at one of the tables and waited for Coltwood. Finding that time hung heavily on his hands, he lit a cigar, and called for another drink. After that came another, and then another.

Perhaps they went to his head, for when Coltwood did come, an hour later, Jones at once began to explain at great length that he had only taken six drinks—no, it was five; that is, he wasn't quite sure. Let's see; there was the first, and then another, and then one after that. And there was the one the waiter said he hadn't paid for, but that wasn't so, the waiter didn't know his business, and he should complain at the office tomorrow. Waiters were altogether too impertinent in these days. Why only the other day one of them brought him a welsh rare-bit that was burned!

To tell the truth, scarcely any one knew how to cook a welsh rare-bit just right. They can't do it in Paris, where they boast of their cooks. Why, when he was in Paris last year he went into a cafe on one of the boulevards—curious places, those Paris cafes. They set the tables out on the sidewalks, you know; cooler than inside, too, and amusing to watch the people going by. Only, in the evening the insects are likely to drop into your glass—— Oh, yes, he was talking about drinks. He had forgotten. Well, as he was saying, he'd had six; maybe only five. Any way they'd have another and make sure about it.

Harvey Coltwood had been drinking, too, and readily agreed. So they called for more drinks, and Jones grew more talkative than ever. But with it all, he lost nothing of his shrewdness, for when Harvey proposed to come to business, Jones' first inquiry was for the money and the agreement.

This latter he examined laboriously, but thoroughly. Then he counted the money carefully. Satisfied as to the correctness of both he proposed that they should go to his room.

"Is the kid out of the way?" asked Coltwood.

Jones explained at length, and with circumstance, the story of the manner in which he had sent Ralph, unsuspicious, to the theater. This took time, and then they walked unsteadily to Jones' room.

"I say," said Jones, who knew his companion's eagerness to get the papers, and took a malicious delight in delaying as long as possible, "I say, I hope you're not going to put up any more jobs on the kid?"

"What's it to you if I am?"

"Well, he's such a fool it doesn't seem square to play him. And besides, he's a decent sort of a cub. And he hasn't a soul in the world to turn to. It seems kinder mean to play him."

"Say, Green, you'd better turn preacher!" said Coltwood, contemptuously. "You just confine yourself to your part of the business, and see that he goes on tomorrow, by the way I spoke of; railroad to Burlington, boat to St. Louis."

"All right," said Jones, who really cared nothing whatever what might become of Ralph.

Coltwood recognized Mrs. Hernden's box at once, when at last Jones did produce it.

"That's right," he said, "let's see if the letters are there."

He opened the box eagerly, and turned the letters, counting them. The large handwriting of the colonel he recognized easily, and luckily for Ralph, did not think to open any of the envelopes. When he came to the memorandum book, he snorted approval, and opening it at random tried to read.

"Deuced crooked little handwriting! I can't read a word of it. Can you?"

"Looks just like a lot of scribble, and not writing at all," said Jones, after trying to make something out of it. "I guess those whisky cocktails have gone to my head. I'll go to bed. You'd better get out, too, or the kid 'll run up before you're gone."

So Coltwood departed unsteadily, and Jones immediately rolled over on his bed and went to sleep, boots and all. Something slipped from his coat pocket to the floor, but he didn't notice it. So Ralph found him a few minutes later.

Ralph had noticed that Coltwood had been drinking, so was not greatly surprised at Jones' condition. What did surprise him, however, was the object that had evidently fallen from the sleeping man's pocket. There, in the midst of a scattered heap of greenbacks, lay his own pocketbook, the pocketbook he had lost on the train, and the loss of which had been the direct cause of all his adventures.

So to Jones' rogueries must be added the theft of this. Strangely enough, it had never occurred to Ralph to connect Jones with his own loss, or with the note and the money he had found in his pocket that day in the woods just afterwards.

And then Harvey Coltwood. That made it all plain enough. Of course Coltwood would be glad to prevent Colonel Clifford from taking a new favorite, who might be a dangerous rival when it came to dividing the estate. But what on earth could Coltwood want with Mrs. Hernden's letters? That was a problem. And at any rate, he would be disappointed, for the letters were safe in Ralph's pocket.

Ralph opened the pocketbook. Everything was there just as he had left it. Even the money was untouched—about sixty dollars. Evidently Jones had plenty of his own, and had not yet been reduced to using Ralph's. Or perhaps he only intended to delay Ralph, and meant, in the end to return, the pocketbook. Only, the railway ticket was missing. Probably Jones had used it. Ralph did not consider its loss of much account.

He put the book in his pocket and gathered up the bills that lay scattered over the floor. There were about thirty of them, some ten, some twenty dollar bills; in all, exactly five hundred dollars. Evidently this was the money Coltwood had given for the papers.

Ralph smoothed the bills out and put them on the table, intending to return them to Jones in the morning. Of the pocketbook he determined to say nothing. In the morning he would leave Jones, and start either for St. Louis or for Porson's Hollow, he was undecided which. Coltwood might discover the fraud by tomorrow, and it was well to be out of the way.

When Ralph rose next morning, Jones was still sleeping heavily. The noise Ralph made dressing himself however, woke him, and he sat up in bed, or rather, on the bed, for he had never undressed, and stared at Ralph, the picture of woe begone dissipation.

"I say," began Ralph, "you're very careless with your money. When I came in last night I found five hundred dollars scattered over the floor."

"Eh!" said Jones, jumping up, "did you! What did you do with it?"

"There it is," returned Ralph, pointing to the pile of bills. Jones rapidly counted them, and finding the sum correct, turned to Ralph.

"Thank you, young man! I'm glad to see you are so honest. Here!" and he held out a bill.

"No, thanks!" said Ralph, indignantly, "I don't have to be paid not to steal."

"Well, well, no offense! I thought you might be glad of it."

"Thanks. I've got enough to take me to the end of my trip."

"End of your trip, eh?"

"Yes. I'm going on to St. Louis today." Ralph had really not quite made up his mind where he was going, but it wouldn't do to let Jones guess his indecision.

"What way do you propose to go?" asked Jones.

"I don't quite know."

"Well, if I were you, I'd go by train to Burlington, and take the boat the rest of the way."

"By boat!" cried Ralph, enthusiastically, "that's the way for me! I always wanted to go on one of those big boats!"

Jones was glad to find him so ready to fall in with his plan.

"You'll find it a little longer," he said, "but a good deal cheaper, besides more interesting as a trip. If you want to go today, though, you'll have to leave here pretty soon. The train starts at ten o'clock for Burlington, to catch the daily boat."

"Well, I've got no preparation to make. I can go at once. I'll just go to breakfast, then pay my bill and go right off."

"You haven't any bill to pay," said Jones. "You came here as my guest. You're sure you won't take that money? No? Take it as a loan, then, You may need it. You can return it to me, care of Adolph Green, 473 La Salle St., Chicago. That'll reach me. No? Well, good by, then. I don't think I'll get up just yet. Au revoir." And Adolphus Jones turned over on the bed, muttering "Five hundred dollars, and he never touched a cent. There's something in the kid!"

Ralph ate his breakfast in peace, and walked out of the hotel just as Harvey Coltwood, not half so handsome as usual, after his evening's dissipation, and seemingly wild with rage, rushed in. Ralph stood aside to let him pass, whistled under his breath, and smiled maliciously. Then he walked rapidly away from the hotel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DISCOVERY.

When Harvey Coltwood rushed past Ralph, he went straight to Jones' room. He found that gentleman leisurely shaving himself.

"Hallo, what's up?" asked Jones.

"What's up!" repeated Harvey angrily. "Do you think you can work off any of your infernal coolness on me? Do you think I'm another fool like the youngster, to be taken in by any of your confounded airs?"

"Go slow, old man! What are you talking about?"

"Do you think I'm to be put off with——"

"Evidently you're not to be put off with anything," said Adolphus calmly. "If you'll excuse me, I'll go on shaving while you blow the froth off your temper, and then we'll come to business." And he coolly turned to the mirror again, lathered his chin anew and went on shaving.

Coltwood was absolutely speechless with rage. Nothing but his natural cowardice kept him from violently attacking the fellow. After a moment's silence, broken only by the scraping of the razor, and Harvey's tramping as he paced the room, he gained sufficient command over himself to begin again.

"What have you done with the papers; the real ones?"

"Eh?" said Adolphus putting down his razor in surprise. "What papers?"

"You know well enough those you gave me last night were worthless imitations."

"Come now, that's too thin! I suppose you want to get out of paying the rest of the money you owe me. That's the trick, isn't it? It won't work. Not with this child."

"You——"

"Hold on! Gentlemen don't call each other bad names. Let's keep up the characters of gentlemen, as far as we can. Besides, bad names lead to ill feeling, and ill feeling doesn't help toward a thorough understanding of business details. Count twenty, my dear fellow, or a hundred. It's a good plan, an excellent plan, when a man's in your state of mind!" And with this bit of contemptuous advice, Adolphus again returned to his shaving.

Coltwood almost literally acted on the advice, containing his rage by a forcible effort. As a matter of fact, he was a good deal afraid of Jones, who, for all the airs of a country curate he was fond of assuming, was nevertheless a strongly built and muscular young man.

Jones at length finished his shaving, put away his razor, washed his face, and then addressed Coltwood.

"Now then," he said, "if you are sufficiently cool to talk sense, we'll talk it over. You say I've given you worthless imitations of the papers. And you seem in such a confounded temper, I'm half inclined to think you really think so. Let's hear what you have to say about it. Only, no strong language, remember."

"Look at that, and that, and that!" cried Coltwood, tossing some letters on the table.

"Why, this seems all right," said Jones, picking up one, and glancing at the envelope. "Surely you don't call this handwriting, and the stamps and postmarks forged?"

"Open it!"

Jones did so, and seeing the blank sheet of paper, laughed in contempt.

"Do you take me for a fool?" he asked.

"No," said Coltwood, "I take you for an infernal rogue."

Jones laughed again. "That's an uncalled for compliment," he said. "But frankly, my dear fellow, why am I not to understand at once that you merely took the letter out and replaced it by a sheet of blank paper?"

"Is this the diary you said you had among the papers, or isn't it?"

"Looks like it," admitted Jones.

"And this clipping, that was in it; do you remember that?"

"Oh, yes. The account of the loss of the Manasseh."

"Read it!"

"Not the right one, evidently. But that's as easy to explain as the blank paper. You took the real clipping, and put this in place of it. You were careless, too, for you took a piece that was dated. See! dated yesterday! Clipped from the Chicago 'Press.' Too thin! Altogether too thin!"

"Perhaps," said Coltwood, angrily, "perhaps you'll say that I rubbed out my aunt's diary, and substituted some fifty pages of meaningless scribble?" And he tossed the book to Adolphus.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Adolphus, "this doesn't look half so fishy. Though perhaps you might have done it, too. Look here, Coltwood, I give yu my word I had not the least idea the papers were not genuine. I had the genuine papers—copied them, always make copies of important papers. They were all O. K. when I got to Chicago two days ago. Now, they've been changed since I got here; unless you changed them yourself, that is."

"I did not!"

"Well, I'll suppose you didn't, for the sake of argument, though I have my doubts. Now, if you didn't, who did?"

"You yourself!"

"That's a mistake, but of course you won't admit it. Now the only person left who might be suspected is the kid. He was writing letters, he said, yesterday, when I was out. I can prove I was out all yesterday afternoon, and as the clipping is from an afternoon edition, that lets me out. Ah, here's his pen and ink, and the paper he used.

"Let's see! The same! the very same used in my letters!"

"Point number one against him."

"Or against you!"

"Never mind that just now. Hallo! here's the letter he wrote. He forgot to post it. By your leave, youngster!" And Jones opened the envelope. "By jingo!" he cried, "a blind! there's nothing in the letter! It was only to account for the writing materials."

"Very clever, Green! And you want me to believe——"

"Hang it, man, I don't want you to believe anything; except that no matter what turns up, I shall keep that money, and hold you close to the agreement for the rest! Look for yourself. Do you know his handwriting?"

"How should I?"

"Well, you know mine. That isn't mine."

"No."

"Point number two. Here, look at the blotting paper. It's covered with fine scribbing." He held the blotter before the looking glass, and tried to read in the reflected image. "Look at this!" he cried. "The very scribbling of which the book is full! And the ink, too. This letter was written with the very same ink! The youngster wasn't such a fool after all! He's tricked the pair of us!"

"I don't believe a single part of the whole scheme! You've got your proofs down too fine; you learned them by heart, I suppose. Besides, what on earth should he take them for? And if he did take them, what made him so very shrewd all of a sudden?"

"I give it up. The question is, to get them back. What's the time? I didn't wind my watch last night."

"Eleven minutes past ten."

"Too late to catch him. He's gone on by the ten o'clock train to Burlington."

"Are you sure he went that way?"

"Sure. He was delighted at the possibility of a journey by boat."

"Well, though I don't more than half believe the whole story, I'll see for myself. If I can intercept him before he gets to my uncle, I'll soon prove whether he took the papers or not. And I think I know a man who'll do the job. If you want me tc believe you, don't you leave here till I get word from St. Louis."

"If I had tricked you, do you think I should have stayed here so long?"

Harvey hurried away to send a telegram to St. Louis. Jones went on with his interrupted toilet, muttering to himself:

"The youngster wasn't such a fool after all. Tricked the pair of us! And neatly, too. I more than half hope he fools Coltwood altogether!"

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 566.]

Under a Cloud;

OR,

OGLE WENTWORTH'S FATHER

BY J. W. DAVIDSON,

Author of "Comrades Three," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TRAMP FINDS A HOME.

Mrs. Wentworth slept but little Sunday night. The nurse whom Mr. Green had sent did all in her power to quiet her, but with little avail. In the morning she insisted on being dressed, in spite of her weakness.

"Ogle will be home today, I think," she said, turning her pale face wistfully towards the door, and all day long she kept this thought continually in her mind.

It was getting along toward night when some one rapped on the door. The nurse answered the knock, and Mrs. Wentworth heard a voice ask if that was the home of Ogle Wentworth.

"Tell him to come in, whoever it is," she said rising, and staggering forward. "It is some one with news of Ogle."

The woman seemed to open the door unwillingly, and the next moment the cause was apparent, for a wretched looking object stepped across the threshold and advanced with outstretched hands, a hideous leer upon his face.

Mabel and Gracie shrank back in terror, while the tramp said in as reassuring a tone as he could assume:

"Don't be frightened, little ones; I wouldn't harm you for the world."

Then he turned toward Mrs. Wentworth, who stood with dilated eyes.

"Ye don't know me, do ye?" he said inquiringly. "I don't wonder. Ten years makes a great change, and I've suffered everything but death. Perhaps I haven't been just such a man as I ought to be, but I'm going to do better. I saw our boy the other day."

Anxiety for Ogle overcame her fear of the degraded man before her, and she stepped tremblingly forward and placed her thin hand upon his tattered sleeve.

"Are you telling me the truth?" she said pleadingly, fear and hope struggling for the mastery in her face. "Where did you see him? Is he well?"

"Smart and chipper," replied the man. "Now, if you'll tell this woman to get me something to eat, I'll tell you the whole story. It seems nice to be home again," he continued, seating himself. "I haven't had a roof over my head a great deal lately, and I'll know how to appreciate it."

The horrible truth of the situation seemed to burst all at once upon Mrs. Wentworth. Pressing her hands to her temples, she tottered backward and sank into a chair.

"That's right," said the tramp patronizingly. "Be seated till you kind of get accustomed to having a protector. These poor little dears here don't know what to make of it. It's something new to have a father, isn't it?"

They were too much frightened to make any reply, but crouched closely together in the farthest corner of the room.

"Perhaps you think it ain't me," continued the man, turning again toward the fear stricken woman. "I've got any quantity of proof. You haven't a few dollars to spare, have you, so that I can rig up a little better? I don't want you to be ashamed of me. When I rest up a little, I'll go to work at something, and we'll make a fine living."

He made an attempt to smile, but the distortion was frightful. Then a frown came upon his repulsive face.

"Why don't this domestic of yours get me something to eat?" he demanded angrily. "You might try to use me decent."

Before any reply was made to this request a quick, sharp rap sounded upon the door, and the tramp rose to his feet.

"I'll answer it," he said.

Mrs. Wentworth rose also and started forward.

"It is Ogle," she said. "I know it is."

But in the door stood a man with eager, questioning eyes, his dark beard streaked with gray, his face bronzed and careworn.

With a muttered imprecation, the tramp attempted to dart by him, but the stranger grasped him by the shaggy beard and held him firmly, a fierce light burning in his dark eyes.

"Let me go! Let me go, I've got to leave here," wailed the tramp. "I ain't the man you think I am; I'm somebody else."

He sank down upon his knees, but the strong hand still clutched his beard, and he was powerless, while Mrs. Wentworth looked from one to the other in mute amazement. There was a certain resemblance between the two, in spite of the wretched condition of the tramp.

"I don't wonder you wish to get away, Clark Artwright," said the stranger sternly. "I have been searching for you for two years, and got wind that you were in this region, though I little expected to find you here tonight."

Then, still holding the tramp with one hand, he turned to Mrs. Wentworth.

"Who did he claim to be?" he asked gently, bringing his prisoner forward into view.

"Philip Wentworth, my husband," faltered the woman.

"And do you recognize me?" again asked the stranger, his earnest eyes fixed intently upon Mrs. Wentworth.

For a moment she did not answer. Then she said slowly:

"I think you are Philip Wentworth, but the last time I saw you your face was covered with blood and you struck me down the night you robbed your own house. That vision is before my eyes constantly."

"The night I struck you down and robbed you!" repeated the man, while the cowering wretch whom he held trembled violently. "When did this happen?"

"What need have you to ask, if you are really Philip Wentworth?" demanded the woman reproachfully.

"I am Philip Wentworth," he replied solemnly, "but, so help me heaven, I never lifted a hand against any woman, much less against you, and no one can call me a robber with truth. There is some terrible mistake here."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

The new comer turned his eyes upon the tramp as he finished speaking, and the latter winced under his gaze.

"Can it be possible," said Philip Wentworth, keeping his eyes fixed steadfastly upon the man he still held by the tangled beard, "that this vile wretch was the one you mistook for me? Speak, you scoundrel. Did you commit the crime of which she speaks?"

The miserable creature was nearly fainting with terror.

"Have mercy," he gasped. "You nearly killed me that day ten years ago, and I was bound to have revenge. I'm sorry for it. I've been sorry ever since."

The tramp's face was livid with fear, and well it might be. A great storm of passion raged in the bosom of the man who held him, and he felt that his last hour had indeed come.

But a woman's hand was laid on the arm of Philip Wentworth; a woman's voice touched his heart.

"Philip," it said, "we have suffered for ten years, but God has been merciful to us at last. Let us be merciful as well. If our boy were only here."

"He is at the hotel," replied the man, his eyes softening, his voice a trifle unsteady. "I picked him up on the road last night and brought him here." And then in answer to her appealing look, he continued:

"He was threatened with fever, but has lost the worst symptoms, and is out of all danger now."

A glad light shone in the eyes of the woman at this, and she said fervently:

"I have so much to be thankful for now, Philip, that I have no room for the remembrance of the misery through which we have passed."

Then she turned toward the two little girls, who stood looking on wonderingly.

"Mabel, Gracie, this is your father. You are not afraid of him."

They came forward shyly, and Philip Wentworth, forgetting his prisoner entirely in his eagerness to greet his children, relaxed his hold, and the tramp sprang away with all the strength he possessed.

"And now I will explain to you in regard to the events of that day ten years ago," said Philip soberly. "We had been set to watch a turn, this Artwright and myself, to keep the logs from jamming, and, as he refused to help me roll some off which lodged on the rocks, we had angry words. At length I remembered the many promises I had made you, and refrained from any more harsh language. This seemed to aggravate him the more, and he grew so violent that my self restraint was severely tested. Thinking that he had cowed me he lost all sense of prudence and struck me heavily. My pent up passion broke forth at this, and I could contain myself no longer. The next instant he lay senseless, stricken by my hand. In a moment a revulsion of feeling came over me and I knelt beside him. While kneeling thus I was joined by another river driver, who, after a hasty examination, pronounced him dead and advised me to flee. Half crazed, and scarce knowing what I was about, I turned and——"

Here he was interrupted in his recital by a violent altercation out of doors. Some one was alternately begging and threatening, while a stern voice could be heard in response.

Rising hastily and going to the door Philip Wentworth beheld the tramp in the clutches of a stout, florid faced man, who was breathing heavily from his exertions. It was Mr. Green, and he broke forth as soon as he had recovered his breath.

"I suppose you are the gentleman who picked up the Wentworth boy. You must excuse me, but I have just captured this vagabond, and I must take him now and deliver him up to the proper authorities. I wish to have a few moment's conversation with you when I return."

He was about departing, when Mrs. Wentworth came to the door also.

"Philip," she said, "please do not have him kept. Let him at liberty."

Mr. Green opened his eyes wide in

astonishment as he looked at the man and woman before him. Then a light seemed to break upon him, and he said, with some embarrassment:

"Philip—ah—is this the real—is it—"

A smile came over the pale face of the woman.

"Yes," she replied, "this is Philip Wentworth, alive and well."

"Well, I declare," returned Mr. Green, looking with contempt on the tramp, who had ceased to struggle, "the genuine one is a great improvement on the spurious. Do you think I had really better let him go?"

"Wait a moment," said Philip Wentworth. "Bring him in, and if he answers a few questions we will free him."

Mr. Green led him into the house, and then Philip Wentworth took him in hand.

"If you answer me truly," he said, with a look that showed he was in earnest," you shall have your freedom. Otherwise the law shall deal with you as an impostor."

"I will tell you everything I can," replied the tramp, shifting about uneasily at the mention of law. "Ask me any question you like."

"To begin with," said Philip, "how did you know where that money was kept that you stole?"

"You gave it away in your sleep," returned the tramp. "You talked in your sleep night after night, and after I came to that day we had the quarrel I made up my mind to get the money. You went away in such a hurry that you left your hat and jacket. These I took and, without washing the blood from my face, visited your house that night."

"Go on," said Philip Wentworth.

"I had no idea of hurting any one," continued the tramp, "thinking your wife would mistake me for you, because we looked so much alike that a good many people mistook me for you."

"You don't resemble each other to any extent now," observed Mr. Green, as the tramp paused again.

"I think that will do," said Philip Wentworth, after a moment's thought. "I suppose you have no money?"

"Not a cent," replied the tramp, a supplicating look coming into his shrunken face. "I'm homeless and penniless."

"If you will leave this part of the country at once, I will furnish you the necessary money. But, remember, if you linger any longer than is needful I will have you arrested."

With these words Philip Wentworth took out his pocketbook and counted out a sum sufficient, as he thought, to defray the tramp's expenses. Then Mr. Green added a like amount.

The tramp began to utter a profusion of thanks, but Philip Wentworth cut him short.

"There is no occasion for gratitude," he said. "It is not from any good will we bear you, but my wife wishes to shun the notoriety of a public prosecution."

The tramp sidled toward the door, as though uncertain whether he really had his freedom or not. When he had passed from sight, Philip Wentworth said with a sigh of relief:

"There I hope that is the last we will ever see of Clark Artwright."

"I will not intrude upon you longer," said Mr. Green, "but will go over to the hotel and see how Ogle gets along."

As the door closed behind Mr. Green, Philip Wentworth, with his two little girls at his knees, continued his story.

"After I had somewhat recovered my senses I strove to ascertain the truth in regard to the fate of Clark Artwright, and learned that he was really dead. That is what the man who discovered me beside him wrote me, but I more than half believe now that he shared in Artwright's plunder."

"As I heard it," said Mrs. Wentworth, "this Artwright was knocked into the river by you and his body never recovered."

"Be that as it may," continued Mr. Wentworth, "I felt that I was an outcast, and when you returned my letter unopened with what I then thought, a cruel message, my cup seemed full to overflowing. Knowing what I do now I do not wonder at your action, though at that time it nearly deprived me of reason. I immediately started for the West, and for five years was a wanderer. At the end of that time I came East again, and began a search for you, though I dared not do so openly by advertising for I still thought Clark Artwright was dead. I traced you to Portland, and learned there that you and the children had been seriously sick and had moved away and probably died.

"Then I returned to the West, and two years ago I learned, beyond a doubt, that Artwright was alive. I at once set to work to find him, and, learning that he was in this region came to my father's, and then took my sister to her home from there, and on the way found our boy lying in the road. Verily, the ways of Providence are past finding out. I stopped as short a time as possible at my sister's and then returned, impelled by an impulse I could not resist. But I must go over to the hotel and bring our boy home. I will have you in better quarters tomorrow."

Mrs. Wentworth watched him as he strode away, so strong and self reliant in his bearing, and the old time sense of happiness flowed in on her heart again like a river of peace. She gathered her little girls tenderly in her arms and kissed them.

"You have a father of whom you need not be ashamed," she said, sobbing for very joy. "God be thanked for His mercies."

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 567.]

A Curious Companion.

BY GEORGE KING WHITMORE,

Author of "Fred Acton's Mystery," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII—(Continued).

MRS. OPDYKE FREES HER MIND AGAIN.

"You don't believe with this Mr. Midgerly, do you?" were Seagrave's first words, when the story was ended.

He placed his hand on Al's shoulder and looked fearlessly into his eyes.

"No, I don't," was the prompt reply. "I didn't from the first moment."

"Thank you for that," and Seagrave put out his hand and warmly pressed the one that met it. "I wish I could explain it all to you now. But I can't—I can't. It is too sacred. I think though that I ought to go back to Harristraw and show that I didn't run away because of that murder mystery."

"They may throw you into jail," said Al.

"Very well. That may bring some one else to terms. I am minded to return this very afternoon. If—who's there?"

Seagrave interrupted himself to ask this question in response to a knock on the door.

"Is Mr. Hall here?" inquired a bell boy, putting his head in.

"Yes," said Al. "Who wants me?"

"Mrs. Opdyke. She's got a message and is in a terrible way."

"It's something about Max!" cried Al. "I'll see you later, Seagrave," and he hurried off.

He found Mrs. Opdyke stretched out on the sofa fairly gasping. In her hand she held a sheet of paper which was evidently the cause of her emotion.

"Read that," she cried, as soon as Al appeared. "Is that your friend's handwriting?"

"It is," answered Al, and with fast beating heart he ran his eye over the lines whose purport the reader already knows.

"Now say that he is not a kidnapper!" exclaimed Mrs. Opdyke. "I wonder you can stand without a blush in my presence and claim such a fellow for a friend."

For the first instant or two Al was completely bewildered. Here it was, in Max's own hand, an unblushing demand for ransom. How could he explain it?

"Who brought this note?" he asked after a second's silence.

"I do not know; the bell boy brought it to me. But what has that to do with excusing your friend."

"He wrote this note under compulsion. I am positive of that," returned Al, who had had time to collect his thoughts. "And if we could have traced the fellow who brought it we might have come upon the gang who are holding both your son and my friend."

"A very fine theory, to be sure," sneered Mrs. Opdyke. "Of course it is to be expected that you will try to think of some way to stand up for this young villain. Even the blackest criminals can find lawyers to defend them."

Al flushed angrily.

"Madam," he said, "I will not stay here to be insulted," and he started towards the door.

"Come back; forgive me," cried the distracted mother. "You must not leave me. I can't think to do anything by myself. Don't mind what I say. Tell me how I shall get the money here in time to satisfy this villain's demand."

"You don't mean to say you are going to pay it?" exclaimed Al, overlooking, in deference to the lady's excitement, the repetition of the obnoxious epithet applied to Max.

"I will give anything to get my child back."

"But you ought not to do this. Let me go to the police——"

But here Al was interrupted.

"Set detectives on the trail of my innocent lamb? Never. Besides, these men, whoever they are, whether friends of your friend or not, have taken pains to see that their tracks are well covered. What is money to me compared with my son? He is all I have, and I am rich. Tell me how I can get the sum needed here by telegraph from my bankers in Boston."

Seeing that she was determined to do this, Al promised to arrange it for her if she would calm down sufficiently to accompany him into the city where her signature would be required.

At the same time he was saying to himself:

"This awful wrong must not be allowed to succeed. I must find some way to get back Max and the little chap before the ransom gets into the hands of the men who are holding them."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN ESCAPE HALF ACCOMPLISHED.

"Would you be afraid, Morris, to have me let you down from this window to the ground?"

Max put his mouth close to the little fellow's ear to say this.

"What for?" demanded the boy, looking up at him curiously.

"Hush, not so loud. We can see your mamma quicker perhaps if we get out this way."

It was early in the evening. Kenny had brought both dinner and supper to the captives, and on his last visit left Max a candle and two matches.

"It's so warm you won't need any covers tonight," he had said. "You can sleep on the mattress."

The mention of this word mattress had inspired Max with an idea.

"If I can only get Morris out," he said to himself, "I could pitch the mattress out on the ground and then drop on it."

But to get Morris out was the problem.

Suddenly Max's eye fell on his umbrella in the corner. It had a crook in the handle.

"I wonder," reflected Max, "if I couldn't fasten my coat to that and lower Morris that way. I could fling out the mattress first, so that if he did drop when he was pretty high, he would drop on that."

He now proceeded to explain his idea to the boy, who appeared to regard the whole thing in the light of a game got up for his special entertainment.

"Oh, that'll be splendid!" he exclaimed. "Let's begin now."

"No, no. We can't do it while it is light. The man that owns the house wouldn't like it."

"But I'll be asleep after it is dark," objected Morris.

"Oh, no you won't. Not after I wake you up," and this end of the business settled, Max fell to musing on the next step.

Where should they go after they had succeeded in making their escape? If he had only been permitted to address that envelope to Mrs. Opdyke, his way would have been clear. But Kenny had been too sharp to allow him to do that.

The only thing to do would be to find a policeman, tell his story, and get the officer to supply him with a morning paper containing the offer of reward.

This course decided on, there was nothing left to do but wait for darkness. And of waiting Max was heartily tired. He had done nothing but wait all day.

"And this is the reality of the rose colored visions that have filled my mind all summer," he murmured. "This is the way I am enjoying the Columbian Exposition!" and he shook his head sadly as his eyes rested on a fraction of the Ferris Wheel just visible in the dim distance through the windows.

Dusk descended over the Windy City. Far away Max could see light upon light flame into being.

Morris had crept over to the denuded bed and was already asleep. Max's own eyes began to grow heavy. He had lost a good deal of rest the past few nights. But he knew he dared not yield to the slumber god now.

He stepped over to the door and listened. All was still in the house.

"I believe Kenny has gone out," thought Max. "I hope he hasn't though. He might happen to be coming home just as the little fellow and I are making our exit. If I was only sure of waking up before morning, I'd lie down alongside of Morris now."

How the minutes dragged! Max would have lighted the candle and tried to read if he had had anything to read but a railroad time table.

"I wonder if Al is turning Chicago upside down looking for me?" he mused. "What a state of mind he must be in! If I only get out of this place, I'll go to the Edgarton of course. I forgot that I had remembered the name, the forgetting of which has got me into all this trouble."

Suddenly he heard the door down stairs open and close, and then there was the sound of voices in one of the lower rooms.

"I believe now's my chance," thought Max. "If they're just come in, they're not likely to go out soon. It's dark maybe now, too."

He stole quietly back to the window and looked out. He could no longer see the outlines of the big wheel—only the lights in the cars.

He went to the bed and gently shook Morris.

"Don't make any noise," he bent over to whisper in his ear. "I'm going to play that game now."

In an instant or two the little fellow had comprehended. He sat up on the edge of the chair to which Max led him and watched proceedings with deep interest by the light of the solitary candle.

Working as quietly as he could, Max hauled the mattress off the bed, and dragged it to the window. But he met with a set back.

The mattress was big and the window was small. He would have to double the former over into pretty narrow compass to be able to get it through the latter.

"I guess you'll have to help me, Morris," he said finally, panting from his exertions.

"Now you bear on this corner with all your might," he added, when the little fellow had trotted over to his side.

They had just got one end of the mattress, doubled, through the window when there was a fumbling at the lock of the door.

Like a flash Max hauled the mattress in and let it fall flat on the floor.

"Lie down on it and pretend to be asleep," he whispered to Morris, then flew across the room and blew out the candle.

He had barely time to return and drop down on the mattress beside his companion, when the door opened.

"Oh, gone to bed have you?" said Kenny's voice.

"Yes," muttered Max sleepily.

"All right. Just stopped in to find out if you was all safe. Good night," and without waiting for a reply, Kenny closed and relocked the door.

"Well, that was a narrow one and no mistake," exclaimed Max under his breath, as he sprang up. "If he'd have carried a light it would have been all day with my plan unless he'd have fallen in with the idea that I'd dragged the mattress over here for more air. But now the coast's clearer than before. Come on, youngster."

The candle was lighted again with the last remaining match, once more the big boy and the little one laid their full weight on one end of the mattress, and a second time it was run out through the window.

Max gave it a shove and down it dropped to the ground below.

"Now, you're sure you're not afraid?" he said to Morris, as he brought out the umbrella and proceeded to tie one of the coat sleeves securely around the crook in the handle. "And you'll be certain to hold on tight till I tell you to let go?"

"Of course I will," returned Morris, and he danced from one foot to the other, apparently eager to start off on his aerial journey.

"Now when you get down," Max warned him, "be sure to run out toward the street so I shan't drop on you. And don't make a bit of noise."

The two now moved to the window.

"You're sure you can hold on tight, Morris, my boy?" said Max again, as he picked the little fellow up in his arms.

"Yes, yes. Why don't you let me out?"

"Here goes then," and making sure that the mattress was directly underneath, Max lowered Morris carefully to the combined length of his coat and umbrella, then gave the softly spoken command "Let go."

An instant of awful suspense, and after it he saw the little fellow scramble to his feet and run out toward the street.

And now came the difficult phase of the escape. How was Max to break his own fall? He did not care to risk a sprained ankle or a broken arm by jumping free.

When he had planned this manner of getting away, he had told himself that getting Morris out safely was the important part of it; he could easily find some means of lowering himself.

But now that the supreme moment had come these means did not so readily suggest themselves.

He tried tying one sleeve of the coat he had used in lowering Morris, to the leg of the bed, and clutching hold of the other. But this would lower him only about half a foot.

"But I can take another coat out of my satchel and tie the two together," he suddenly recollected.

He was about to act on this idea, when his heart was made to stand still by another fumbling at the door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW TROUBLE.

Max had never thought so rapidly in his life as he did during those first few seconds succeeding the noise at the door. His first impulse was to blow out the candle; then he recollected that he had no match left with which to relight it.

And there was Morris outside. Should he rush to the window and tell the child to hurry away from the vicinity of the house, running the risk of finding him when he (Max) succeeded in making his escape later? If this was not done, the boy might call up any minute, and thus betray everything.

Before Max could decide on anything, however, the door was opened and Kenny entered.

Max was kneeling on the floor beside his valise. The candle light revealed the bed minus its mattress, also the absence of the younger captive.

Kenny, not forgetting, however, to close and lock the door behind him, strode across the floor quickly and gripped Max by the shoulder.

"What is the meaning of this?" he cried. "It's a lucky thing I heard that noise and came up to investigate. Where's the kid?"

Max rendered desperate, turned cool, as some natures will when the crisis arrives.

"Same place as I am; in Chicago," he answered.

"Come now; don't be impudent," and Kenny accompanied his remark by a faint tap on Max's ear, suggestive possibly, of a stronger one to follow.

The blood flared in Max's temples.

"Don't you strike me!" he cried, springing to his feet.

His breath came hard and fast; his fingers worked in and out of each other nervously; all the pent up rage at his captivity, that had been gathering volume during the day, was ready to burst the bounds he was doing his best to set it.

For he knew that he was no match for Jim Kenny. As well might a coxswain of a boating crew hope to down the "rusher" of his college football team. And Max realized that Morris' safety depended on his remaining cool.

So now, instead of following up his angry ejaculation, he stepped back to the window and called down:

"Morris, oh, Morris!"

"Aha, so he is there, is he?" exclaimed Kenny, making a rush for the door.

In his eagerness to recapture the child, he forgot to lock this behind him. Indeed, he left it wide open.

But Max made no move to avail himself of this avenue of escape. His whole mind was centered on Morris, for he had received no response to his call.

"Morris, oh, Morris!" he shouted again, and kneeling down by the window, peered into the darkness.

But no small boy was to be seen, and there was no answer to his calls.

Max became desperately anxious. This was worse than anything that had happened yet. To be separated from the boy and realize that he was alone in the great city? Max wondered how he could ever for an instant have questioned the seriousness of such a phase of the situation.

Now Kenny appeared below, carrying a lighted candle.

"Where is the boy?" he called up to Max. "I don't see him any where."

"Neither do I," replied Max. "I am afraid he has wandered off. Won't you try your best to find him? He is safer in your hands than he would be knocking about the streets."

"Of course he is. What did you do such a blunderingly idiotic——" but this point Kenny tripped over the mattress and fell prostrate upon it, the candle being extinguished as it dropped from his hand.

"Oh, if I were only there to search, too!" muttered Max, never thinking of laughing at his captor's mishap.

He turned and noticed that the door was open. Out of it he darted in a trice, and down the stairs. Kenny had just picked himself up when Max appeared by his side.

"You won't find him around here," said Max. "He must have taken alarm at something and hurried off. Here, you go one way and I the other."

"Yes, and if you find him you'll both walk off together."

"I shouldn't be surprised if we should. But you are just as liable to find him as I am. Of course I shall come back here to see," and bare headed as he was, Max started off, in the direction they had come the night of their arrival.

Eagerly he peered on both sides of the street, every once in a while calling out, "Morris, oh, Morris! It's I, Max. Where are you?"

But there was no response.

Finally he came to the railroad station. Here, too, the search was vain, although Max made several inquiries of loungers about the waiting room.

A train came in, bound for the heart of the city.

"If I only had the money I could get aboard and go down to the Edgarton and Al," thought Max, as he listened to the throbbing of the engine, impatient to be off again.

"But no," came the quickly succeeding reflection, "even if I had the fare, I could not go off and leave this state of uncertainty about Morris behind me. I must go back at once and see if Kenny has found him.

He retraced his steps, and found the house dark, save for the candle that still burned in the room he had occupied, and the door fastened. Three or four rappings brought no response and Max concluded that Kenny was still absent on the search.

He sat down on the door step, determined to wait for him.

"Queer idea, too," he smiled to himself. "Coming back to prison and hanging around the barred door, waiting to be let in!"

Kenny's callers had evidently long since departed. It was very still in this sparsely settled neighborhood. Only the distant clang of an electric car gong and now and then the whistle of a far away locomotive could be heard.

"A few minutes ago," Max ruminated, "I felt that if only I was free I wouldn't mind being penniless. Now I am both free and penniless, neither the one nor the other signifies, since Morris is missing."

If only the child were a little older, Max would not have hesitated to go off to Al and trust the youngster to take care of himself till the police could be put on his trail. As it was, young Purdy would gladly welcome the sight of the little fellow again, even in Kenny's custody.

Some one was coming now. Max eagerly sprang to his feet and looked in the direction whence the sound of footsteps came.

But there was only one figure, that of a man. It advanced to the gate and then hesitated. Evidently Max's presence was a surprise.

"Is that you, Mr. Kenny?" Max called out. "Have you heard anything of Morris?"

"No, it isn't Kenny," replied the figure advancing. And there was a threatening ring in the voice. "What are you doing here?"

Max shuddered. He knew now that the new comer was Andy Begum, who, in all probability, had killed old man Peterson in Beechwood.

"The boy has got away," Max said in answer to the other's question.

"Got away? How did that happen?"

"Well, I may as well tell you, as you would doubtless do the same thing in my place. I lowered him out the window."

"And what are you doing loafing around here then, and why were you so anxious to know if Kenny had found him?"

Begum was clearly so mystified that he forgot to be surly.

"Well, he got away before I could follow and nobody knows where he is now. I've been out hunting myself, but couldn't find a trace."

Max was far from feeling at his ease in this man's presence, although he tried his best to speak in a nonchalant way.

What he was thinking was:

"This fellow knows that I know of his connection with the Beechwood affair. If he puts me out of the way, his risk would be so much the less. I wish I dared run. I'm not a bit ashamed of feeling cowardly."

While these thoughts were flashing through his mind, Begum gripped him by the arm.

"You needn't stand out here any longer," he said gruffly. "I've got a key. Come inside with me."

Max knew that it would be quite useless for him to make any resistance to carrying out the suggestion of the man who had him in his power. The wisest plan, he decided, was to act as though he had not the slightest fear of his companion.

"All right," he said. "It will be much more comfortable sitting on a chair than on that door stone."

His heart gave an extra throb when he heard Begum turn the key in the lock after they had entered. But he endeavored to reassure himself with the reflection that the other still considered him a prisoner of Kenny's.

Begum lit a lamp that was on the table in the sitting room, or whatever the general meeting apartment of the band might be called, and then touched the match to a vile smelling cigar which he took from his pocket.

"Sit down," he said to Max in a more affable tone than he had yet used. "I want to talk to you about this Harristraw business."

Max did not need to sit down. He fairly dropped into a chair at hearing this subject boldly broached.

"Well?" he said, faintly, seeing that some reply was expected from him.

"You appear to think," Begum continued, "that you have a hold on me from some knowledge you possess of what I did in Harristraw. And yet I believe you admitted last night that you had never seen me before. Will you tell me then how you identified me as being connected with whatever was in your mind?"

"Yes, I will tell you," replied Max promptly. "It was because you shut up your friends so quickly when they taunted you with being chicken hearted about something you did in Harristraw."

"But if you had never seen me before," Begum persisted, "how did you know what I did?"

"I didn't know, but I could strongly suspect."

"And what did you suspect? Really this is very interesting."

The man spoke lightly, but Max could almost see the curb he was putting on himself.

"I suspected," Max replied gravely, "that you robbed and killed a man named Peterson who was mysteriously murdered in Beechwood, a little village on the outskirts of Harristraw, last Saturday afternoon."

Begum drew in a long breath—although it plainly cost him a great effort.

(To be continued.)

THE ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND UP TO DATE.

Almost every boy who has read "Robinson Crusoe"—and what boy has not?—knows that the story is founded on the shipwreck experiences of the Scotchman, Alexander Selkirk. But perhaps not so many are aware of the fact that the island of immortal memory is now inhabited. We find the following particulars in the Melbourne "Argus":

Two valleys, winding down from different directions, join a short distance back from the shore, and here stands a little village of small huts scattered round a long, low, one storied building, with a veranda running its whole length. In this house lives the man who rents the island from the Chilian Government, and the village is made up of a few German and Chilian families.

The tiny town is called San Juan Bautisa, and the crater-like arm of the sea on which it is situated, and where Alexander Selkirk first landed, is now called Cumberland Bay. The island is rented for about $1,000 a year. The rent is paid partly in dried fish. Catching and drying the many varieties of fish, and raising cattle and vegetables, wholly occupy the contented settlers, and much of their little income is obtained from the cattle and vegetables sold to passing vessels. The cattle need no care, and the vegetables almost grow wild. Turnips and radishes, first sown here by Selkirk himself, now grow rank and wild in the valleys like weeds. There is also a race of wild dogs, which completely overrun the island, depending for existence mainly upon seals. They are the descendants of a breed of dogs left by the Spaniards.

At the back of the little town, in the first high cliff, is a row of caves of remarkable appearance, hewn into the sandstone. An unused path leads to them, and a short climb brings one to their dark mouths. About forty years ago the Chilian Government thought that a good way to be rid of its worst criminals would be to transport them to the island of Juan Fernandez. Here, under the direction of Chilian soldiers, these poor wretches were made to dig caves to live in. In 1851 they were taken back again, however, and the caves have since been slowly crumbling away.

The narrow ridge where Selkirk watched is now called "The Saddle," because at either end of it a big rocky hummock rises like a pommel. On one of these is now a large tablet with inscriptions commemorating Alexander Selkirk's long and lonely stay on the island. It was placed there in 1863 by the officers of the British ship Topaz. A small excursion steamer now runs from Valparaiso to Juan Fernandez Island. The round trip is made in six days, and three of these may be spent on the island fishing and visiting these lonely but beautiful spots which, nearly two hundred years ago, were the haunts of Robinson Crusoe.

SUNDAY STAMPS.

A good deal of prominence was given to the Sunday question last summer in connection with the World's Fair. Although in the case of the Columbian Exposition the example set by Belgium could not be followed, the course pursued in that country by one of its prominent officials, establishes a precedent of a very interesting nature—especially to stamp collectors. We quote from "The Voice."

The present minister of railways, telegraphs, and posts, of Belgium has scruples about the delivery of mail matter on Sunday, and is doing all he can to check it, though he cannot entirely stop it under the laws of the country. He has lately adopted a unique device by which those entertaining the same ideas on the subject as himself may prevent their letters being delivered on the Lord's Day, while those who have no scruples in the matter may avail themselves of the usual Sunday deliveries.

The device is a little tag attached to the usual stamp, directing in two languages—French and Dutch—that the letter bearing it is not to be delivered on Sunday. The French inscription reads, "Ne pas livrer le Dimanche," and the Dutch, "Niet bestellen op Zondag." If those using these stamps have no objection to their letters being delivered on Sunday, they need only tear off the tag containing the order, and place the upper portion of the stamp upon the envelope.

These stamps have just been issued, and only a few of them, mostly of the 10 centime variety, have as yet been received in this country. The complete series contains nine varieties, valued at 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 25, and 50 centimes, and 1 and 2 francs. All of them bear the same design, but the colors are different. The profile on the stamp is that of King Leopold II.

THE MYSTERY OF IT.

Mrs. Sniffwell—"Why, Bridget, you have been eating onions."

Bridget—"Shure mum, you're a moind reader."—Harvard Lampoon.

Mr. J. B. Emerton.

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ONE ON PAPA.

Papa—"My gracious, what a point of interrogation you are! I am sure I didn't ask such strings of questions when I was a boy."

Son—"Don't you think if you had done so you would be able to answer some of mine?"—Tid-Bits.

THE PASSING OF THE SEASONS.

The man who delighted to mow the lawn,
With a "clickety-clacketv-clang!"
Is waiting, now that the summer's gone,
For the snow shovel's reign complete to dawn,
With its "binkety-bunkety-bang!"
—Washington Star.

VERY UNREASONABLE.

Would be Purchaser—"How much for the picture?"

Artist—"The price is £1,000."

"Why, man alive! you expect to be paid for your work as if you had been dead four or five hundred years."—Tid-Bits.

SOMETHING HE HAD FORGOTTEN TO TELL ABOUT.

"But, George," said Clara, after George had missed nearly all of the Brown football game in trying to explain the different points to his sweetheart, "I don't see now where the bases are."—Harvard Lampoon.

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"Cholly's in disgwace at the club again!" said Willie Wibbles.

"Deah! deah! You don't say so. He's always in twouble, isn't he? It was only lawst week that he came out without his twousahs wolled up."

"It's worse this time."

"How?"

"This mohning he forgot to brush and comb his chysanthemum!"—Washington Star.

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