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THE ARGOSY

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Lloyd Abbott's Friend.

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.,

Author of "A Publisher at Fifteen," "My Mysterious Fortune," etc.

CHAPTER I.
HOPES IN THE BALANCE.

"It will be no harm to try it. If I on't get it I shan't be any worse off han I am at present."

Lloyd folded his napkin hastily hile he was speaking and darted out nto the hall after his overcoat.

"You won't get to town till nine," is sister Myra called after him. "All ie New York boys will have een so far ahead of you that ery likely Streeter & Carr will ave forgotten they ever ad- ertised for a clerk."

"You are giving me a good nd off, at any rate," laughed loyd, as he clapped on his erby and flung open the door. Good by."

"You'll be home to dinner, loyd?"

Mrs. Abbott ran out and sent is question after her son just efore the door swung shut.

"If I don't get the place," as Lloyd's answer. Then the ate latch clicked and he was on a run for the station.

"Then I will go out and ake soft vanilla custard for essert," said Myra. "Poor oy, he's so fond of it, and 'll want to have something take the edge off his disap- ointed hopes."

"You feel sure that there is chance of his getting the osition then?"

Mrs. Abbott looked at her aughter anxiously. She could ot bear to have her only son enied anything on which he ad set his heart, even if that mething was daily toil which ould take him away from her x days in the week.

"Just consider the case a oment, mother, and you will nderstand for yourself Lloyd on't get to the store till long fter the choice has been ade, and even if he should in time to be considered, 's had no experience what- er in business."

"But he is certainly neat in ap- earance, can speak German and ves at home," faltered Mrs. Abbott.

"When they find that that home is Willoughby, I'm afraid that item on't weigh much in his favor."

"Then you hope he won't get it, Myra, do you?"

"I haven't said that. You know ough that I am opposed to his aving school this year."

"But he is such a proud spirited oy," interposed the mother. "Just ke his poor father. He cannot en- ure to feel that you are contributing the support of the family, to his pport, now that he is sixteen and er. It is hard enough for me to e him go out and face the world so oung, but I can understand per- ectly how he feels."

"Well," returned Myra, reflectively, I suppose I find it hard to regard in any other light than that of y little brother——"

"He is taller than you now, Myra," interjected Mrs. Abbott.

"Yes, I know he is, and very proud of him I am and I like to work for him as well as for you."

"But that's just what Lloyd doesn't want you to do, and for my part I hope against hope that he'll get that place."

Lloyd, meanwhile, had just caught the express and was being whizzed rapidly toward Hoboken. There were a lot of people he knew on the train, but he was rather shy of speaking to them.

He had been very sensitive this fall, especially since, in going through the long tunnel one afternoon, he had overheard Dave Hurd in the seat ahead of him say to Ned Baker that it seemed pretty unmanly in Lloyd Abbott to lie down and be supported by his sister, didn't he think so. Lloyd didn't hear Baker's reply because he got up at once and went into the next car at the risk of choking himself with smoke and steam on the platform.

But he was so choked by his own emotions that he cared not for physical discomfort. Both Hurd and Baker he regarded as among his best friends. They were all members of the athletic club; had grown up together in fact. And now——

But had Dave turned against him? Was it not the truth, what he had been saying?

Lloyd was glad that he could admit to himself that the chief element in the sensation he had experienced on overhearing the remark was not one of surprise. Ever since school opened that fall he had felt uncomfortable at the thought of Myra, singing in church on Sunday and giving lessons through the week to add to the slender income which was all the family had to live upon since Mr. Abbott's death three years before.

Now the matter had come to a head. If people outside had begun to talk, it was high time he should act.

This was a week ago, when he had been in to the city to buy a fall suit. Ever since he had watched the paper, on the lookout for a position. And this Saturday morning, when he was at liberty to go in and apply for it he had chanced upon the advertisement of Streeter & Carr, stationers and booksellers, who wanted "a young man as clerk, neat in appearance, living at home and with a knowledge of German."

The latter clause was what had especially inspired Lloyd with hope. He had been studying German for two years, and he felt that now he might reap practical benefit therefrom.

"If only they haven't engaged somebody already," he reflected.

When he reached New York, he pushed his way rapidly past the crowd and took an Elevated train up town to Streeter & Carr's store.

"I wonder what salary they pay," he said to himself. "I must remember that car fare here and commutation on the railroad is going to mount up."

He smiled to himself as he realized the mood of "is going."

"But won't it be a triumph for me if I can go home and say I've got it!"

He had long ago put away from him any ambition he may have cherished of keeping on at school long enough to fit himself for a profession or a position high up in the business world. The duty he owed to his mother and sister must be placed before everything else. Even now his cheeks burned as he recalled Dave Hurd's remark.

But here he was at the station nearest to the Streeter & Carr store. He looked at his watch—a handsome gold one that had once belonged to his father. It was half past nine.

It was five minutes later before he reached the roomy and well appointed book store. Evidently the firm enjoyed a good class of custom. There were several ladies wearing handsome wraps standing about the counters, looking over Christmas cards, for the holiday season was well under way.

A sallow faced young man, with a very small mustache, was telling them the prices, and after waiting for an instant or two, Lloyd said to him:

"You advertised for a clerk in this morning's paper. Is—the firm suited yet?"

"Just about. I should say. Excuse me;—that, madam, is fifteen cents."

The young man turned his back on Lloyd, not impolitely, but simply at the call of duty.

For one second Lloyd was minded to wheel about and walk out of the store. That would certainly have been the easiest thing for him to do.

But he lingered an instant to look at a picture of "Chilly Cupid" in a dainty white and gold frame, thinking how he should like to be able to give it to Myra for her Christmas. And in that instant something happened.

A door at the rear of the store opened and a portly gentleman, with a smooth, round, reddish face issued forth. He held a pair of gold rimmed eyeglasses in one hand, which he swung jauntily as he talked to a youth of about Lloyd's age, who was with him.

Instinctively Lloyd felt that this boy was the clerk who was "just about" engaged.

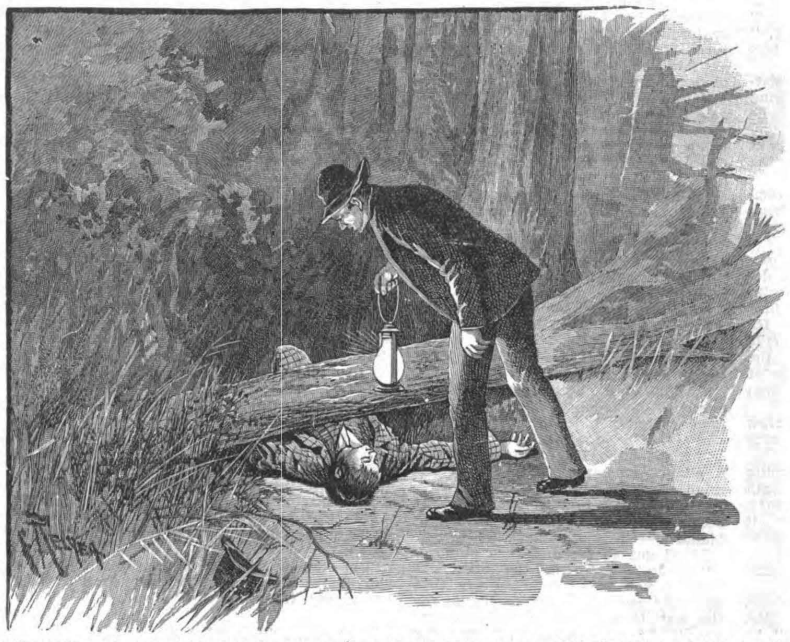
"Happy fellow," young Abbott reflected. "How elated he must feel!"

But somehow he did not look to be entirely at his ease. He was a slim fellow, wearing the latest shape in neckties and with his hair plastered down smoothly from a part in the center.

But he was glancing about him nervously, as though watching for some possible evil to assail him. What this was speedily made itself apparent.

"Culver," said the portly gentleman to the young clerk with whom Lloyd had exchanged his few words, "just hand me that last novel of Lindau's will you?"

Culver went over to the other side of the store, and soon came back with a book in his hand. Lloyd was interested in the proceedings, and under pretense of examining the holi-



HE HOLDS THE LANTERN CLOSE TO THE BOY'S FACE AND PEERS DOWN INTO IT, WITH A COLD, CRUEL GLITTER OF SATISFACTION IN HIS EYES.

day display on the counter, still further deferred his departure.

"Now," said the portly gentleman, opening the book and presenting it to the young man, "just translate the first paragraph on that page for me. I'm a great fellow for practical tests. A letter of recommendation don't mean as much to me as what I see with my own eyes and hear with my own ears."

The young fellow took the book and looked at it as if under a spell. His embarrassment was so great that Lloyd really felt sorry for him.

"Well?" said the portly gentleman with a touch of impatience in his tones.

"I'm a bit rusty, you see," the applicant stammered. "It takes a little time for me to get into the thing."

"It will take you a long time then, sir, to get into this store," and as he spoke the portly gentleman repossessed himself of the volume, and as he added, "Good morning, sir," closed it with a slam that spelt end to the interview.

CHAPTER II.
STARTING IN.

The fashionably attired young man appeared dazed for an instant by his summary dismissal. But he rallied at once and seemed inclined to argue the matter.

"I can read it all right, Mr. Streeter," he said, "after I once get in the way of it again. And you know you said I suited you in all——"

"And I also said 'Good morning,'" Mr. Streeter broke in upon him tartly.

He turned his back on the persistent young man, and this bringing him face to face with Lloyd, he asked: "Are you waited on?"

"No; that is, I came to see about that position, if you are not ...ed."

"Here, can you read this?" and Mr. Streeter opened the German book at random and thrust it under Lloyd's nose.

Profiting by his predecessor's discomfiture, young Abbott did not delay to ask where he should begin, but struck out at once at the first paragraph on which his eye fell. He did not translate it rapidly, but made no pauses to say "er" between the words, and at the end of a couple of sentences, Mr. Streeter patted him gently on the shoulder and said:

"Very good. That will do. Now come back into my private office with me."

"He's going to take me, he's going to take me," was the happy refrain that now sang itself in Lloyd's ears.

There was a jarring note in it though, as he caught the malignant glance darted at him by the discarded applicant, who still lingered in the aisle.

"But he has no reason to blame me," Lloyd told himself. 'Mr. Streeter knew nothing of me till he had dismissed him."

"Now then," began the head of the firm, when he had closed the door upon them in a pretty little room with pictures on the walls and a stenographer at work with her typewriter in a corner, "what is your name?"

"Lloyd Abbott."

"Good. I like that sort of name. The Abbotts are of fine stock. I shall expect great things of you. Have you any recommendations from your last employer?"

"I never had any employer before, sir," answered Lloyd. "I am in school yet."

"Ah so. One of our public schools I suppose?"

"No, sir. I live in Willoughby."

"Oh, out of town, eh!" and Mr. Streeter rubbed his chin reflectively, not to say doubtfully.

"But I live at home," Lloyd went on eagerly. "We own a house there, and there are any quantity of trains a day."

"Hum, yes," returned the senior proprietor, placing the finger tips of his two hands end to end and rocking them slowly back and forth. "We require our clerks to be here at eight o'clock in the morning."

"I could take the 6:50 train and do that, sir," returned Lloyd.

"And during the busy season upon which we are now entering, we keep open until ten in the evening."

"Yes, sir. Trains run out up to midnight."

"You are willing to put up with a good deal, I see," observed Mr. Streeter, "for the sake of securing the position."

"Positions are not easy to secure in these times," replied Lloyd simply.

"Very true. Well, Mr. Abbott, I like your name and I like your looks. You read German well, too. As to your character, of course I know nothing, but I think I will take you on trust, and start you at six dollars a week. Let me see, this is Saturday. You can begin on Monday. That is the first day of our evening opening. While this continues you will receive nine dollars a week, the surplus being for supper money. That is all I think now."

Lloyd picked up his hat.

"Good morning, sir," he said, and walked out through the store toward the street.

He felt as though he were moving on wings and yet as he passed the counters he took time to glance gratefully at the "Chilly Cupid" picture. If he had not stopped to look at this, he felt that he would not have obtained the position.

He puckered his lips to whistle a gay little air as the door closed behind him, but they fell apart when he saw the youth of the German fiasco standing in front of the window.

He had evidently been waiting for Lloyd, for now he came towards him at once.

"Did he give you that position?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," replied Lloyd, wishing the question had not been asked him.

He made as if to go on, but the other fell into step with him and kept along by his side.

"So you've done me out of a job," the stranger continued:

"I don't see that I have," Lloyd hastened to reply. "I heard Mr. Streeter tell you that he didn't want you before he saw me."

"All the same, I don't stand as good a chance of having him change his mind as if he hadn't hired you."

"But he had to hire somebody. It seems to me that the only person to blame is——"

Lloyd got so far and then stopped.

"Go on," broke in the other. "I suppose you were about to say that the only person I had to blame for the way things have turned out was myself. But it is all nonsense for Streeter to be such a stickler on that German business. He's a crank, any way. Now if he'd taken me, I'd have brought him a line of customers not to be despised. How much trade can you bring the store?"

"I don't know as I can bring any," Lloyd admitted without hesitation. "I never thought of the matter in that light." Then he added: "I'm sorry, of course, that you are disappointed about losing the place. I can understand how you feel, because I thought I had lost it myself. One of the clerks told me the matter was as good as settled, and it was only by chance I lingered in the store."

Lloyd had now reached the foot of the Elevated stairway and as he started to go up, his companion turned away, with the words:

"Oh, well, Streeter may be sorry for this some day."

Lloyd heard a train coming, and ran up, two steps at a time, to catch it. It seemed as if he could not get back to Willoughby quickly enough to tell his mother and Myra the good news.

He looked at the other passengers in the train and pitied them because they had not just made an engagement which would bring them in the first money they had ever earned in their lives. He wondered how long it would be before Ned Baker and Dave Hurd found out that he was going to work. He felt like leaving word of the fact at their home, but knew of course that this would never do.

Well, the family were as amazed as he expected them to be when he made his grand announcement.

"It's too bad though, Lloyd," Myra said, "for you to leave school. You know there's no real necessity of it."

But he seemed so happy that she had not the heart to protest more loudly.

Mrs. Abbott did not take kindly to the late hours' idea, although she did not in the least object to the early ones, although the latter would involve her rising before daybreak in winter to prepare the breakfast.

"I would almost rather you would board in the city during the busy season," she said.

"I wouldn't," laughed Lloyd. "Why, that would take all my earnings, perhaps more. And really, there would be more danger in going through the city streets late at night than in coming out here."

"But now you have to do both," returned his mother.

"Only for a little while, though. Besides, now I am a business man, and surely able to take care of myself."

Lloyd did not sleep very well on Sunday night, for fear of not waking up in season Monday morning. He had five minutes to wait at the station, as it turned out, and felt very important, mingling with the other clerks on the way to their places of business.

A slight sense of timidity, however, assailed him when the Elevated had deposited him within two blocks of Streeter & Carr's. The first day in business is no less trying than the first day at school, and when Lloyd entered the store, without knowing where he was to hang his coat or what he was to do first, his sense of elation was not so keen as it had been on Saturday.

"Is Mr. Streeter here?" he inquired of the clerk to whom he had addressed himself on his former visit, and who was sorting over some Christmas cards.

"No," was the reply. "He never gets here as early as this—except when we're late."

This last was added with a smile, which made things a little easier for Lloyd.

"I'm the—well, he's engaged me, you know," he said. "Where shall I put my things and what shall I do?"

"You can put your coat in that closet yonder," was the reply. "As to what you shall do, ask me something easier. Or no, there's a lady just come in. Suppose you go and wait on her. That'll break you in as quick as anything. See if you can make a sale."

CHAPTER III.
THE FIRST DAY AND AN ACCIDENT.

"Make a sale, eh!" Lloyd said to himself, as, with his overcoat still on, he walked around to take his place behind the counter in front of which the lady was standing. "How can I do that when I don't know the price of a single thing? But never mind; perhaps I'll find that marked somewhere."

The lady looked over at him a little doubtfully as if uncertain, owing to the overcoat, whether he was to be considered as official or not. Then, appearing to be reassured by Lloyd's removing his hat, she leaned forward and said in a confidential tone:

"Can you suggest a Christmas present for a young girl of sixteen? I have been giving her something every year since she was six, and really, my invention is quite exhausted."

Lloyd was a little staggered, to say the least. But he quickly reflected that the request was, after all, not an unreasonable one.

"A book, I should say, would be most appropriate," he replied.

The lady gave him a withering glance.

"A book!" she repeated. "If books were like pearls, all about alike and you had but to put your hand in the pile and pull one forth, your suggestion might be worth something."

Poor Lloyd wished that he were on the stage of a theater and that the curtain would descend to screen him from public view. But he determined not to be downed by the first set back. So he came up smiling and responded:

"If you have not a particular book in mind——" he had none himself, but his eye was glancing feverishly along the titles of the volumes on the counter as he spoke—"perhaps this would suit."

He held up a volume of Tennyson's poems, handsomely bound and beautifully illustrated.

But the lady waved it away from her with alacrity.

"Poetry!" she exclaimed. "I do not wish to put sentimental nonsense into Gertrude's head."

"Then I suppose the same objection would hold against novels," returned Lloyd. "Here is something very neat in the prayer book line. Perhaps——"

"Young man!" broke in the customer, "you are not aware that all our family come of blue Presbyterian stock. A prayer book indeed!"

Lloyd resolved to make one more attempt.

"How would a volume of Spurgeon's sermons then——"

But once more he was interrupted.

"My niece is not a prig, young man. Why, she would be insulted by such a gift."

Lloyd felt that he had played his last card from the book pack.

"If you will step over to the other counter," he said, "you will find some silver penholders, some handsome ink stands, and other furnishings of the desk which may prove to be what you want."

"I'll look at them," said the lady in rather a curt tone, as though she no longer had any faith in suggestions made by this particular clerk.

Lloyd led the way unconscious that Culver was closely observing him. But half way over his customer stopped before the same picture of "Chilly Cupid" that had attracted his own attention on Saturday.

"This is pretty," she said. "What is the price?"

Lloyd dodged quickly behind the frame and looked for a mark. He saw some figures scrawled in one corner and replied:

"Two and a half."

"I'll take it," said the lady promptly, much to the young salesman's surprise, for he thought an objection to Tennyson on account of sentiment would certainly extend to a pictured reproduction of the god of love. But then it is the unexpected that happens, as it did on more than one side of his case.

For when the picture had been wrapped up and the lady had departed with it under her arm and Lloyd had gone with the money to the cashier, Culver called out to him, no customers being then in the store:

"I say, how much did you charge her for that picture, Newly?"

"Two and a half. Wasn't that right?"

"No. Dead wrong. The price is three dollars."

"But two fifty was marked on the back."

"That's all right. That's the consignment number—something we have nothing to do with here; belongs to the receiving department down stairs. Why didn't you ask me about it?"

"Because I thought I knew and I didn't want to bother you. But I'll pay the difference. That'll teach me to go slower next time. How am I to tell the prices though if I can't rely on the markings?"

"Oh, I'll coach you a bit," said Culver good naturedly, and he set to work at once, explaining the meaning of certain caballistic signs on the front of books, on the back of pictures and across the bottom of ink stands.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you," Lloyd said to his fellow clerk at the conclusion of the "lesson." "I suppose I'm awfully green. This is my first day in business anywhere."

"Well, it's a good one on which to begin." returned Culver, glancing out at the driving rain which had just set in. "No fear of a rush today."

But if the storm was favorable to Lloyd in one particular, it worked against him in another, for Mr. Streeter was in bad temper, evidently put there by this same rain which interfered sadly with the success of his grand holiday opening.

"Well, so you've come," was his greeting to Lloyd when at last he happened to notice his new clerk, as he was straightening some pieces of bric-a-brac on one of the counters.

"Yes, sir," said Lloyd, although as a matter of fact his being there was self evident and thus the remark called for no reply.

"Well, see that you put in your time to advantage. Culver, show him where the dust cloth is and let him clean up that lot of books we had over from Boston last week."

Now Lloyd was perfectly willing to dust books, or even to sweep out the store, had this been required of him, but he did not like the innuendo that he would "loaf" if he got the chance. However, he knew that it was not his place to take exception to the manner in which he was addressed, so he set about his new duties without a word.

It had been clear when he left Willoughby that morning, so he had brought no umbrella. Now he could not help thinking of the wetting he would get going home that night.

"But a business man oughtn't to mind a thing like that," he told himself, adding, with rather inconsistent hopefulness: "Besides it may stop before dark."

It didn't, however, and after a day that seemed to Lloyd interminable, Mr. Streeter decided that he wouldn't keep open that evening and ordered the closing of the store at six.

"Which way do you go, Newly?" said Culver, as they put on their overcoats.

"My name is Abbott," replied Lloyd, who, foolishly perhaps, objected to the term by which he had been addressed.

"Oh, everybody fresh is Newly till the next one comes along," retorted Culver. "I was the last Newly, and naturally I don't feel inclined to let the next chap off. But if you haven't got an umbrella and are going my way, walk along under mine, if you like."

The invitation was not a very cordial one, and besides, Lloyd could ill brook the other's patronizing tone, for he looked to be little if any older than himself.

"I'm going around to the Fiftieth Street station of the Elevated," he said. "That's probably out of your way. But I've been brought up in the country so I don't——"

"Come along," broke in Culver. "I take the Elevated myself," and they went out together.

"Well, how do you like it as far as you've got?" he went on, when they had reached the street. "The old man was a terror today, wasn't he? But now you know the worst of him, that's one comfort. Do you live on the west side, too?"

"No. I live out in Willoughby."

"Oh, you do; I must get on your right side, so that you'll invite me out to spend Sunday with you next summer."

Luckily they reached the foot of the down town stairway just at this moment, so that Lloyd was spared from the necessity of making a reply to this rather fresh remark.

"I go this way. Thanks. Good night." He called out the foregoing in three quick sentences and sped up the stairway.

He decided to get off at Eighth Street and take a cross town car to the ferry. This would keep him comparatively dry till he reached Willoughby, when he would be home and could change his clothes. Then he could sit down at the cozy tea table with his mother and Myra, and tell them the experiences of his first day in business.

How they would laugh over his account of the lady who wanted a suitable present for her niece Gertrude!

Even the locomotive did not seem to go fast enough for him when he was finally aboard the train.

How it was storming though! The wind blew across the meadows with a force that seemed almost sufficient to overturn the cars, but by the time Newark was reached the rain ceased. The gale, however, appeared to increase in fury.

"I'm in luck though," thought Lloyd, "to have the rain stop."

He felt that this luck had deserted him when shortly afterwards the train came to a halt between stations for some unknown cause.

"What's the matter?" the passengers asked one another.

Lloyd got up and went out on the platform. But there was nobody who could give him any information here.

With boyish curiosity to know the why and wherefore he sprang down beside the track and started to walk forward toward the engine.

"Perhaps it's a break down," he thought.

Just then the whistle blew twice. Lloyd knew this was the signal to go ahead. He turned to spring aboard the nearest platform, but just then tripped over a tie that was lying beside the track.

He scrambled up again as quickly as he could, but when he had regained his feet, the last car had just flashed past him. He was left behind.

But he took the situation very philosophically. To be sure his overcoat was on the car, but the conductor knew him and would keep it safe for him. As for the inconvenience of being left by the wayside, Willoughby was the next station, and Lloyd knew a short cut through the woods that would bring him home within twenty minutes.

So he started off, thinking that this would be another experience to add to his budget for the delectation of his mother and sister.

The walking was pretty bad, however, and the wind was fairly howling through the trees. But Lloyd felt that he was nearly home now and paid but little attention to either.

Suddenly there was a short, sharp crack to his left; the next instant he felt a stunning blow, and then he knew nothing at all. But with the privilege accorded the author, we can be present, although invisible, and see what has happened.

Something pretty serious to all appearances. A half decayed tree has succumbed to the pressure of the wind, snapped off, and struck Lloyd in falling.

There he lies now beneath it, his white face turned toward the heavens. Time passes and still he lies there.

Has he been killed or only severely injured? There's no one here to give him aid. And he is so near home, too.

But what is this? A light coming through the woods. Is help arriving at last?

Yes, it is a man with a lantern, and he is coming straight toward the spot where Lloyd Abbott lies. Now he has seen him and hurries forward.

He holds the lantern close above the boy's face and peers down into it. But in his own there is neither pity, nor the desire to help; only a cold, cruel glitter of satisfaction in his eyes.

(To be continued.)

[This Story began in No. 574.]

A Mystery of the Forest.

BY E. E. YOUMANS,

Author of "The Lone Island," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NOCTURNAL SMOKER.

It was tobacco smoke. The spy had got a whiff of it, and came to a halt just in time. The fumes of a strong pipe permeated the atmosphere.

Not a word was spoken now, for there was no telling how near they might be to the smoker. They had halted under a large tree, and were careful to crouch back in the shadow of the trunk.

The detective drew his revolver and peered cautiously around. He could see nothing, but the strong smell of tobacco did not die out.

There was a smoker somewhere around, and he could not be far off. The fumes appeared to emanate from a point some distance in advance, and in this direction the detective strained his eyes.

He could detect nothing, neither could either of his companions, who were also looking ahead attentively. At last he decided to go forward, and reconnoiter.

"Wait here till I come back," he said, and the next moment he was moving away through the gloom.

He passed silently from tree to tree, the smell of tobacco becoming momentarily more pronounced. This proved he was drawing near the maker of it, and he advanced slower and even more cautiously.

Another step or two, and the smell was now so strong that the spy drew himself in close to a tree trunk, thinking that he was almost on top of the smoker.

And so he was.

Chancing to turn his eyes to the left, he almost betrayed his proximity by the start he gave as he beheld a little round speck of fire not more than a dozen feet from where he stood! It was the tobacco in the bowl of the smoker's pipe as he sat upon a fallen log puffing contentedly.

The fellow's face was turned slightly to one side, otherwise he must surely have discerned the shadowy outlines of the spy as he approached.

He smoked on, happily unconscious of the enemy lurking so near, and every time he drew on his pipe the light from the tobacco in the bowl flared up sufficiently for the silent watcher to catch a faint glimpse of his face. It was a villainous looking one, and the officer could not prevent a feeling of disgust as he studied it.

But what was the fellow doing here? That was the question, and one which the detective would have given a good deal to answer satisfactorily.

He did not appear to be giving much attention to anything but his pipe, the vigorous pulls on which continued to impregnate the atmosphere with a strong odor.

The spy soon found himself in something of a dilemma. He could not decide exactly how to handle the situation. Meanwhile precious time was passing, and the other side of the mountains still a long distance off.

"Confound it," he muttered at last; "I wish we'd taken another route. This fellow would not have been encountered then, and this loss of time have been avoided. What the dickens shall I do, anyhow?"

At the same moment the outlaw suddenly arose. Knocking the ashes from his pipe he slipped it into his pocket, and strode away from the log, coming directly toward the detective.

With a low exclamation the officer pressed close against the tree, and the next moment the man was within arm's length of him.

Then something occurred that changed the whole situation in a twinkling.

The outlaw stumbled and pitched forward. He threw out his arms to catch himself, and struck the spy full in the breast, nearly knocking him off his feet.

He uttered a yell of surprise and alarm, which the officer quickly stifled by dealing him a vigorous blow on the head with the stock of his revolver. It was the only thing he could do, and, as the man sank down with a groan, the spy turned to retrace his steps to the spot where the boys were waiting.

In his haste he made considerable noise, and the boys could hear him coming while still some distance off. They knew something unusual had occurred, and were not surprised when the spy came up in an excited manner.

"Give me a lift back here," was his hasty salutation. "I've knocked over one of the gang."

He led the way back to where the fellow was lying, and together they proceeded to bind and gag him with such means as came to hand. And these means were decidedly limited.

The outlaw's coat was cut into strips and used for the purpose, but there was some doubt in the detective's mind as to whether they would be sufficiently strong to hold him. The risk had to be taken, however, for although the officer would have preferred taking the prisoner with them, their limited time would not admit of it.

Extra attention was devoted to properly adjusting the gag, for it would not do to give the desperado any chance of making an outcry. This would draw the attention of his friends, and the spy's scheme would be ruined.

By the time they had completed the work the fellow manifested signs of returning consciousness. A groan escaped his lips, and he moved his body uneasily.

They had no time to waste unnecessarily, however, and the detective urged an immediate departure.

"We must leave him," he said. "There's too much at stake to delay longer."

"Do you think he can break loose?" asked George.

"I hope not. The deuce'd be to pay if he did. We can't do anything more, however. Come."

The rifle and revolvers of the captive were confiscated, and the party started once more for the mountain pass.

They pursued their way very cautiously now, for it was impossible to determine when another of the gang would be encountered, and they were anxious to guard against surprise.

As a consequence their progress was slower than before, and the night was well advanced when they finally reached the vicinity of the canyon. Here it was necessary to be extremely careful.

They knew from what they had overheard the outlaws say while concealed on the rock that some of the gang were in the pass, and the pos-

sibility of running upon them was by no means remote.

Then the fellows who had run off the oxen were also somewhere in the canyon, and the danger from an encounter with them was of sufficient importance to demand attention.

In a little while the entrance to the pass was reached.

CHAPTER XXI.
IN THE CANYON.

It was with somewhat uncertain feelings that the detective led the way in among the rocks and bowlders that lined the mountain pass. He was closely followed by the boys, who, with every sense on the alert and revolvers in hand, held themselves in readiness for any emergency that might suddenly present itself.

The pass was a wide one, and they picked their way through that portion where the rocks were fewer in number, as the possibility of being attacked by a concealed foe would thus be somewhat lessened.

The many bowlders offered excellent opportunity for ambush, and an enemy might lie in wait here without being discovered until a volley from their rifles should apprise the new comers of their presence. Then it would be too late to retreat, and almost impossible to offer a successful resistance so that the importance of guarding against such a calamity will readily be apparent.

The three were very cautious and watchful, and carefully reconnoitered every suspicious locality before passing it.

In this way they advanced for more than an hour. Nothing occurred to cause alarm, and they began to have hopes of reaching the other side in safety.

The pass was not more than three miles in extent, and half this distance had been accomplished. If they were not molested for the next hour they could complete the journey without fear.

But it was not to be so.

There was a point just ahead where the pass narrowed abruptly, the towering walls looming over it on either side, dark and somber.

As they drew near this defile they were conscious of a feeling of uneasiness, a sort of premonition that there was danger ahead. Even the detective, usually cool and self possessed, found himself growing nervous as this dark and grewsome place presented itself before them.

He presently called a halt, and turned toward his companions with the remark:

"Boys, I don't know what is the matter with me tonight, but I feel as if something is going to happen. I'm sure all is not right in that blackness ahead. If it were possible to climb the sides of the ravine and go round it, I'd suggest doing so.

"My uneasiness is not a foolish whim. Whenever I feel this way I can look out for trouble before long, and that spot must be carefully inspected before we enter it. Wait here till I come back."

He moved on, leaving the boys standing under a large rock, the sense of uneasiness steadily augmenting as time passed.

One, two, three minutes went by, but the stillness of the night was not broken. The detective's form had been swallowed up by the darkness ahead, and the boys were awaiting his reappearance with breathless expectancy.

Suddenly a sound was heard, not in advance but behind them! The next second footsteps were distinctly audible coming down the canyon.

"Hist!" whispered George, raising the hammer of his revolver; "be ready. We're in for it now I'm afraid."

They drew back close to the rock, and the person approaching came steadily on. A moment later two men, rifles in hand, passed close to where they stood.

They had scarcely gone three yards beyond the bowlder when there was a bright flash ahead, and the sharp report of a gun echoed through the canyon. With a cry of surprise the new comers sprang behind a rock just as another shot rang out from the defile in advance.

"The fellows have been attacked," the boys heard one of the men say. "I thought at first the shot was at us, but it's too far down for that. It must have been Jim and Bob firing on them ox drivers. I was sure they'd do it if they saw 'em."

"They're a pair of fools to give themselves away like that," answered the other angrily. "Now they'll have to catch the fellows, or they'll escape and squeal on us."

The boys were sure these were the men who had passed them while back on the rock, for the voice of the one was easily recognized. But what should they do?

What did those two shots ahead indicate? Had they been fired by the detective, or by an enemy? Perhaps the spy had been surprised and shot dead in his tracks. If so it was dangerous for them to remain here any longer; if not how could they warn the officer of the peril to be avoided in his return?

The two outlaws concealed so near would see him before he could have any idea of the new peril, and he would be riddled with lead without having a chance to defend himself.

These thoughts passed rapidly through their minds during the silence that succeeded the report of the guns, and though they realized the necessity of assisting their friend they were unable to decide how to do it.

Their own danger, too, was imminent. The enemy had only to cross over to the bowlder that sheltered them to be aware of their proximity, and it was possible they might do this at any moment.

Meanwhile the moments were passing, and no sound came from ahead. The outlaws remained behind their concealment, doubtless as anxious to understand the situation in advance as the boys.

There was only one way to do this. That was to go forward and investigate.

The boys had no thought of doing so, and the outlaws evidently did not consider it judicious, though from what they said from time to time it was apparent they had had it in mind.

Suddenly another flash flared through the darkness, and another report was heard. It was farther down than the others had been, and seemed to indicate that some one was stealing through the narrow limits of the pass followed and fired upon by a concealed foe.

"We ought to go down there, Casper," said one of the outlaws. "It must be something serious. The fel——"

At that moment another shot rang through the ravine, followed by the stern command:

"Halt!"

This was responded to by the sharp crack of a revolver succeded immediately by a cry of pain. Then came a yell of rage, another rifle shot and —silence.

With a savage imprecation one of the men stepped out from behind the rock, and, leveling his rifle, was about to shoot recklessly down the canyon when his companion grasped his arm.

"Stop, you fool," he said, in a low stern tone. "What do you want to do?"

"Help the boys of course. Don't you see there's something wrong down there?"

"Yes. That's no way to do though. Let's go down. Come."

This they were about to do when the trembling notes of a bird sounded on the air some distance below. It was the same signal that had attracted the attention of our friends, and warned them of the outlaws' presence while coming through the woods a few hours before, and which caused the two men to halt now while one of them sent back a response.

The signals were exchanged at intervals for a few minutes, then some one was heard coming up the gorge. A moment later two forms loomed through the gloom, and were challenged by the outlaws, who had stepped out from the bowlder.

"Who comes?" was asked.

"Jim and Bob," was the quick answer. "Is that you, Casper?"

"Yes. What's all that firing?"

"Somebody was sneaking through the cut and we tried to stop him, but he got away in the darkness. He shot Jim here in the leg."

The two men came up now, one limping badly, assisted by the other. Casper began swearing at them for allowing the unknown one to escape after he had fired upon them.

"Why didn't you follow him up and shoot him, Bob?" he angrily demanded. "Don't you see the whole gang are in danger now. That detective we've got back there in the cabin likely has friends hunting us out, and this fellow was one of 'em. Confound your stupidity anyhow."

"Go easy there, will you?" growled the other. "Jim was groaning badly, and I couldn't leave him. I thought he was hurt more than he is."

Casper would not listen. He continued to shower invectives upon his companion, which the fellow took in sullen silence. At last, however, he stopped and asked:

"Did you see anything more of the ox drivers while you've been here?"

"Yes. They've passed through the canyon with the oxen, and I suppose are on the other side now. We were goin' to stop 'em, but they seemed to be goin' about their business, and we didn't hinder 'em. I don't think they're spies."

"Well, I'm glad of that. I don't think they're spies either. It's a wonder you had sense enough to let 'em pass."

"Oh shut up, will you?" said the other in disgust. "We were on our way now to warn you that we'd better light out of this place, and that's what we get for it."

"Why had we better get out?" asked the leader.

"Because we think that fellow who passed us is an officer of some sort, and he'll be back after us with a posse."

The rage of the counterfeiter at this announcement was unbounded. He began hurling epithets at Bob again in a manner that made the boys shudder as they listened.

"It's all your fault," he raved. "Why did you allow him to escape? If we have to get out before we finish that queer, you'll hear from me again, let me tell you that."

"I don't fear you, Casper, and you know it," coolly answered Bob. "Instead of storming like a fool that way you'd better get back to the cabin, and prepare to leave. It's getting too hot for us here."

A few minutes later the men moved away, coming directly toward the rock that concealed the boys.

CHAPTER XXII.
ON THE BACK TRACK.

As the outlaws approached the boys, scarcely daring to breathe, shrank close against the bowlder, silently working their way around to the opposite side. They were sure they would be discovered, and tried to prepare themselves for the worst.

But the next moment the danger was past; the outlaws had gone by and continued up the canyon.

Evidently the information given by Bill had disturbed Casper so that he decided to act without delay. He realized the danger he and his men incurred by longer remaining in this locality, and he seemed to be anxious to return to the "coining room," finish up their work there, and leave as soon as possible.

This is the construction the boys put upon the men's conduct, and how to prevent them from carrying out their intention until the detective could secure his posse and make the attack was a matter to which they now turned their attention.

They did not look for the spy's return, for they knew that he must have passed safely through the defile, and was now making all haste to reach the other side and get his men together.

He had not intended to go on without them when he went forward to reconnoiter, but being surprised and attacked in his work, he was obliged to suddenly alter his plans and proceed alone. He had probably been half way or more through the ravine when first fired upon, and it was easier to advance than to retrace his steps.

He knew the boys would discover that something was wrong when they heard the firing and would look out for themselves accordingly. In the meantime he could hurry on through the canyon, get his men together and start back with all possible speed.

But even under the most favorable conditions it would be at least four hours before the detective could accomplish all this, and during that time the counterfeiters could finish up whatever business they had to adjust and make good their escape.

"We must prevent that if possible," said George emphatically. "To lose that reward now, after all we've gone through, is a little more than I care to think of, and I don't intend to allow it."

"I don't see what we can do," rejoined Charlie. "We certainly can't capture 'em alone, and it'll be some time before Wilson gets here with his men."

"We can go back to the tunnel, and keep watch until they come," George continued. "If the outlaws leave we can follow them and see where they go. It's my opinion they've got another retreat somewhere in the mountains, and they'll probably move everything there."

"If we do that Wilson won't know what to make of it when he returns and finds us gone," argued Charlie, who did not care to return to the scene of their recent adventures.

"I don't think that'll make any difference," replied George. "He'll come right on to the tunnel whether we're here or not, and we can meet him there, and perhaps have something important to tell him."

Charlie offered some further objections, and proposed waiting here for the detective's return or pressing on through the canyon to meet him, but George rejected these suggestions, averring that it would be a waste of time to do either.

"Our best course is to go back and watch the men," he affirmed, "and that's what I shall do. Of course I don't want you to go if you're not willing, and you can stay here until Wilson comes back."

"What do you take me for?" asked the other indignantly. "If you go, you know very well I'll go with you."

"Come on then; we must get there as soon as we can. Be careful now, and don't make any noise."

They stepped out from behind the rock, and, after listening a few moments to satisfy themselves it was safe to advance, started up the gorge. It was a perilous enterprise, but George's mind was fully made up and they did not falter.

The moon had risen some time before and was shedding its pale rays down into the gorge. They were careful to keep well in the shadow of the

bowlders as they advanced, at the same time maintaining a sharp look-out for the outlaws ahead.

They knew the wounded man could not get along very fast, and they expected to catch a glimpse of the enemy at any moment. But they pushed on until the end of the canyon was reached without coming upon them.

This was a trifle surprising. The fellow was apparently able to get over ground with more speed than they had supposed. Not more than half an hour had expired since the outlaw passed the bowlder, and the boys had lost no time in the pursuit after leaving the rock, so that they ought to have overhauled them by now.

"They've turned off, I reckon," said Charlie, as they halted under a rock at the mouth of the canyon.

"How could they do that?" demanded George. "They couldn't climb the walls of the ravine, and it'd be impossible to swerve from the course without doing that."

"Well, where are they then? They couldn't get so far ahead of us before we came in sight of 'em."

"Do you know what I think?" asked George suddenly, looking carefully back.

"What?" demanded Charlie quickly.

"We've passed 'em."

"Get out; how could we do that? They'd see us."

"Perhaps they have," said George uneasily.

He felt decidedly uncomfortable. He could not make himself believe that the men had got so far ahead, and if they had passed them in the ravine the outlaws were aware of it.

Why they had not been fired upon at the time he could not imagine, but it is likely the outlaws had some object in view in allowing them to pass. They had made a great blunder in coming along so fast, and George was sorry now that they had not been more cautious.

He was so sure the counterfeiters would continue straight on, however, and so anxious to overhaul them that he had neglected to take into consideration the possibility of their stopping. Now their own presence in the canyon was known, and the chance of following the outlaws with any degree of success was out of the question.

"I'm afraid we've ruined all, and got ourselves into considerable danger," said George looking around again apprehensively. "We shouldn't have been so confounded stupid."

"I don't see where we made a mistake," returned Charlie. "We came along without making any noise, and that's about all we could do."

"There's where you're wrong. We should have stopped at intervals to listen, and we ought to have examined every large rock and bowlder before passing it. I'm sure the men are behind us."

"Then they may sneak upon us unawares, and shoot us down before we know it," said Charlie in alarm.

"That's just what I'm afraid of," George answered. "I don't know why they didn't shoot when we passed them, but they must have had some good reason for it. Probably they wanted to see what we were after."

"What'll you do now?"

"I don't know yet. I suppose we ought to keep right on, but it's useless to do so if the men are behind us."

While George was trying to decide on their next move, a slight noise came to their ears from down the canyon. They looked quickly in that direction, but could discern nothing. They continued to stare, however, for the disturbance had been plainly detected, and they were positive something was approaching.

"Hist!" whispered George, an instant later; "there they come now!"

True enough. The moonlight revealed the forms of three men coming up the gorge.

(To be continued.)

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT.

Shun delays, they breed remorse;
Take thy time while time is lent thee;
Creeping snails have weakest force;
Fly their fault, lest thou repent thee.
Good is best when soonest wrought
Lingering labors come to naught.
—Southwell.

[*This Story began last week.*]

Brought to Book.

BY ANNIE ASHMORE,

Author of "The Hetherington Fortune," "Who Shall Be the Heir?" etc.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT REVELATION.

Aunt Amazine had left the hall lamp burning dimly, "In case of anything happening," she had said to herself, with that vague anxiety which is caused by anything unusual in the routine of daily life; and by this funereal ray Jean beheld her father sitting in the hall chair in an attitude of utter despair, as if he had had barely strength to reach his home, and had dropped into the first seat he came to; he crouched there with his face buried in his hands and these resting on his knees. His heavy overcoat had not been taken off, and his fur cap lay on the floor just where it had fallen unheeded from his head when he flung himself down. From time to time long sighs, or rather groans, convulsed his form.

The whole appearance of the man expressed such intense mental suffering that it is no wonder that a thrill of terror held the inexperienced girl motionless as she contemplated her father, ever so genial and companionable with his children, under this new and dreadful aspect, strange to her as the sinister face of misery itself.

She felt that she dared not intrude on this sorrow alone; she longed for Tom's support, Tom who was so brave and ready; and she softly stole back from the head of the stairs, and on to his room in the front of the house. To awake Tom from a sound sleep was not usually an easy thing, but there was something in Jean's low tone and in the nervous grip of her trembling hand on his arm which drew him from the depths of his first slumber into instant consciousness in a moment; and he sat bolt upright in bed in the dark, asking quickly:

"What's wrong, Jean?"

"I don't know, Tom," whispered the trembling girl, "but father's just got home, and is sitting in the hall. He's either sick or in dreadful trouble. I daren't go down alone—oh poor papa!"

A heavy sob burst from her as the pang of her words struck her, but she controlled herself under Tom's soothing hand.

"Go back to bed, Jean, I'll go to father, he may prefer it," he added gently as she would have objected. "You may be sure I'll call you if you can do anything."

With a sudden sense of grateful trust in this stout hearted brother who could guard and supplement her weakness so well, she threw her arms round him, and they kissed each other fervently, a rare concession from Tom, and then Jean stole back to her room and obediently lay down.

When Tom went down stairs his father had left the hall, but he heard his step in the small rear apartment he called his smoking room, and finding the door ajar, Tom entered.

There was no light lit, but the winter starlight rendered objects discernible, and the boy saw his father pacing back and forth with his head bowed on his breast, and his hands clasped behind him, while deep sighs burst from him from time to time. So absorbed was he in his own thoughts that he did not observe his son till Tom stood in his way, when he started back, exclaiming in a voice which he vainly strove to render natural, "What? Are you out of bed at this hour?"

His hoarse tone, his haggard look, shocked Tom; he could not speak, but gazed at his father with such grief and entreaty that the unfortunate man, exhausted by many hours of agony, broke down completely and threw himself into a chair with a heart broken groan.

Tom seized his cold hand eagerly, and, caressing it between his own warm ones, said earnestly:

"Father, whatever the trouble is, you know you can depend on me. Won't you let me help you, or share it, anyhow?"

The cold and passive hand pressed his convulsively. His father raised his pale face with a look of unutterable affection.

"My poor boy, I know the true stuff you are made of," said he brokenly, "but this trouble of mine is too crushing a burden for a young heart; would to heaven that I could bear it alone."

"No, no," urged Tom, "who can feel for you like your own son?"

"Too true, alas! Too true," said Mr. Latimer. "We stand or fall together, my poor Tom, and my ruin is yours, my disgrace your disgrace, or so the world will have it."

"Disgrace?" repeated Tom faintly, a sickening sense of having been prepared for this surging over him. "Oh, father, what has happened?"

Mr. Latimer gazed earnestly into his son's face, trying to read it by the faint light. He saw grief and amazement there, and honest sympathy, but no signs of distrust. He drew a long breath of relief; his son was incapable of suspecting that his disgrace was merited; he believed in his father's integrity.

The stricken man whispered a passionate thanksgiving to Heaven; his misfortune seemed robbed of half its bitterness.

Bidding Tom sit down beside him, he told him the following story:

Ten years before, while Mrs. Latimer was still alive, a friend of hers, a widow of the name of Merton, had some money which she wished to invest in some manufacturing concern, and asked Mr. Latimer's advice on the subject. As he knew that Grayley & Co. were anxious to get the use of more capital, and was a thoroughly solvent firm, he had suggested that she invest her money with them, and she had done so, sinking fourteen thousand dollars in their business and drawing the interest.

Several weeks previous she had written to Mr. Latimer, through whom all her business with the firm had continued to be transacted, requesting the return of the fourteen thousand dollars at Messrs. Grayley & Co.'s earliest convenience. She explained in confidence to her old friend that she had an unusually excellent chance to settle her young brother in business, and was eager to take advantage of it, as the young man had been a subject of great anxiety to her, and she recognized this as a providential opportunity to place him in a congenial sphere and beyond the influence of his old associates.

On representing the case to Grayley & Co., the firm resolved to repay the whole of the loan at once, and instructed Mr. Latimer to tell her so, and ask her how she would have the money forwarded. After some delay Mrs. Merton answered by a typewritten letter signed by herself. She had been dangerously ill, she said, and was still too weak to hold the pen, so had been glad to avail herself of the assistance of a typewriter who boarded in the same house. With regard to the money, she requested Grayley & Co. to send it in notes by express with the customary precautions, as she resided in an out of the way country place where there were no facilities for cashing checks and she was still too ill to travel to the nearest city.

"Mr. Grayley brought me the notes today, and we counted them over together in my own little office," continued Mr. Latimer. "Several of our drummers had just brought in their receipts, and the package was principally made up of notes on the banks of the various States canvassed by our agents, very few of them on New York. After Mr. Grayley left me I spent some considerable time taking down the numbers of the notes, and as usual clerks were coming in now and again for orders, though I can swear that no one approached my desk. I had finished my task and had the package made up, sealed and directed, and was just about to call the messenger to take it to the express office, when there was a loud explosion in the junior's room next to mine, and such cries of fear that I sprang to see what had happened.

"The room was white with gunpowder smoke, and the fumes were so pungent that I was taken with a violent fit of coughing, and groped my way to a window to throw it up. The clerks were clustered about the outer door, coughing and sneezing like myself. Seeing that no one was hurt they came in as soon as the smoke cleared a little. No one could explain the cause of the explosion till we found traces of a toy torpedo close to the door of my office; then one of the clerks remembered that he had fancied he saw a small boy in the street throw something in the direction of one of the windows which was open a little way from the top, but as he had noticed nothing fall, he had supposed the urchin was only making a feint at throwing to annoy the porter, as the street boys often do.

"But this was no ordinary toy torpedo; some ingredient had been introduced into it which had almost suffocated us, and had caused a confusion beyond what any common firework would have done. And when I returned to my desk the packet of bank notes was gone."

"Oh father!" exclaimed Tom in dismay.

"Yes, vanished as completely as if it had never been, leaving no trace," said Mr. Latimer hopelessly.

"You couldn't have put it somewhere and forgotten in the confusion? You looked everywhere?"

"Everywhere, Tom. No, no, I forgot nothing. During the few moments I was out of my room the packet was stolen."

"Could any of the clerks have done it?"

"The instant they were told that a package was missing—though the value was not announced—they demanded to be searched, and were searched. No, Tom, the young men are as guiltless as I am."

"And what does Mr. Grayley say?"

Mr. Latimer writhed as if in physical pain.

"Mr. Grayley's lips say little, but his looks declare his suspicion of me," was the reply.

"Of you! After all these years of faithful service!" cried Tom in burning indignation. "How cruel! how unjust!"

"He wishes to be neither," answered his father. "He is a keen business man who has outlived all his illusions, as he says; and he was swindled before by a man with as fair a record as mine. In fact he considers himself foolishly lenient in giving me time to restore the plunder before he denounces me. He told me significantly that of course he held me accountable for the missing cash, but would give me a reasonable period in which to make it good.

"Fourteen thousand dollars! If I

sold all I own in the world I could not realize half of it. And what about my children? This is a very bitter trial; I know not how to bear it. Ruin—disgrace—my dear ones cast on the world with no heritage save their father's shame—How—how shall I endure it?"

Murmuring these words in a voice of acute agony, the unhappy man sprang up and paced the room, while Tom could only watch him with swelling heart and his teeth buried in his lip to keep back the tears of pain and pity which threatened to burst forth.

But a slight figure stole in from the door where it had been hovering in timid doubt for some time, and running forward threw itself upon Mr. Latimer's breast, it's arms round his neck, with a sobbing cry of:

"Dear—dear papa, nothing can be so very bad while we have each other to love. What do we care about being poor, Tom and I? Nothing, if you are with us! Shame? We shall be proud to share it with you, our good, honorable father! We will all three stand together and fight with poverty and wrong till we conquer, and we will conquer!"

The last words Jean uttered in a burst of enthusiasm, and lifting her tear wet face with a smile which seemed almost inspired in the pallid starlight; and the sorely tried father pressed her in his arms, then held out his hand for his son's, saying with renewed courage:

"What man dare call his burden too heavy while he has such children to help him bear it? My little comforter, my Jean, and you, my loyal hearted boy, I thank you, for you have made me a man again."

CHAPTER V.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

Next morning before Mr. Latimer went to the city the whole family held a consultation on the altered prospects so unexpectedly opened up to them. Mrs. Ross had been told the sad story before his children came down, and although a timid and gently nurtured woman, she had accepted the terrible reverse in store for them all without a complaint, seeming only anxious to divert her brother's mind from the painful anxiety on their account which so heavily added to his burden.

She had inherited a small but sufficient competence from her late husband—a sea captain who had gone down with his ship many years ago—and on the death of Mrs. Latimer, she had gladly accepted her brother's invitation to make her home with him, and bring up his children. She had insisted on paying her share of the household expenses liberally in spite of Mr. Latimer's generous desire that she would save her money against a possible day of disaster.

She was true to her nature now in pressing upon her ruined brother the whole of her little capital to use as he judged best; but he, though deeply affected by her uncalculating devotion to him in this hour of trouble, forbade her to mention her proposition again.

"What would you think of a man, even were he drowning, who would drag down a loving woman with him in his craven struggle for life?" he asked her with an affectionate smile. "On me this trial has been laid, and with Heaven's help I will bear it as becomes a man and a Christian. All the same, Amazine, this evidence of your love and faith is unspeakably sweet to me," he added in a low voice. "It behooves me indeed to quit myself manfully when I can still count among my blessings you three dear ones."

Tom and Jean had entered while he was speaking, and perceiving that their aunt knew all, they gave way to a little natural emotion and then brightened up with the blessed elasticity of youth, and were ready to take spirited part in the discussion which followed their breakfast.

What to do now was the first question, for although they all cherished a secret hope that something might yet be discovered at Grayley's which would exonerate Mr. Latimer from all blame, and shift the responsibility from his shoulders, still it was recognized that they ought to be prepared for the worst, and not be caught unawares.

"The house must be sold as soon as possible," said Mr. Latimer resolutely, while his little audience strove to hide the thrill of pain which ran through them at the suggestion, prepared though they were for it. "The furniture, too; we can find purchasers for it any time. Then, as boarding is so expensive in the city, and my railroad ticket has still several months to run, we must try to find three rooms with one of our neighbors, and go into modest housekeeping."

"I can cook—I love it," cried Jean eagerly.

"And I can light the fires and carry the water," chimed in Tom. "I can do that before I go off to my work, for of course I must get some paying position at once."

Mr. Latimer glanced at him half proudly, half sadly; for he knew well what desire of his heart his boy was giving up without a sign in that speech; Tom's dear ambition had been to go to college and study for a professorship.

"And I am to be left out? Can I be of no use?" said Aunt Amazine with tears in her kind eyes.

"My dear sister, I cannot let you sacrifice yourself to us, I cannot!" cried Mr. Latimer; "our life will be full of privation for a time, and why should you suffer because we have to? I need not tell you what a grief it will be to us all to have you leave us, but it must be. At least for a time. Take this opportunity to pay that long promised visit to your old friend, Mrs. Grandon, in Brooklyn; you will be near enough to see us often."

"No no, I refuse," exclaimed Mrs. Ross with great emotion. "Let us stand or fall together, Thomas; it is my right if I claim it, and you can't be so cruel as to thrust me away."

"Let her come with us, dear Aunt Amazine!" cried Jean, throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her tenderly.

"She's right, father, you see we're all bound together and you can't shake one of us off," added Tom. "And how could we get along without our stern old aunt to keep us up to the scratch?" The last clause, we need scarcely say, was in fun, and was Tom's way of lightening the situation.

So it was decided that wherever they went, were it even into a hovel, they would keep together in adversity as they had in prosprity.

"Now, Tom, I think we ought to tell papa about Mrs. Tryder, we haven't had a chance before," said Jean brightly. "You didn't know that you had a hero of the first water for a son, did you, pa?"

Tom looked up with such a startled air that Jean checked herself in wonder, then the memory of Mrs. Tryder's ambiguous speech darted across her mind, and she returned Tom's look with one as significant.

"Did you ever know a Mrs. Tryder who has friends in this neighborhood, and who lives in St. Paul, Minnesota?" asked she very soberly.

"No, I never knew any one of the name," replied Mr. Latimer, after a moment's reflection.

Jean told her story much more seriously than she had set out to do, though she did full justice to Tom's feat in passing; but when she came to the lady's words she relinquished the narration to him, preferring to leave the quotation to his own discretion.

And Tom's discretion prompted him to spare his father the perplexity which Mrs. Tryder's utterance of the word "Disgrace" had caused him; since she was as much a stranger to his father as to himself he saw that the former could suggest no explanation of her choice of words, so why trouble him?

So he merely repeated the lady's kind request that he would apply to her if he was ever in need of a friend; and there the matter ended for the time.

But he had a good reason for informing his father of the second ambiguous speech uttered the previous evening—Walter Smythe's. Smythe was one of the junior clerks in Grayley & Co.'s, and must have been in the room with the others when the torpedo exploded.

Mr. Latimer listened to the account of the incident with close attention.

"Yes, Smythe was present at the time," said he. "In fact it was Smythe who saw the street boy throwing—or pretending to throw—something at the open window. The porter did not see him, nor did any one else, only Smythe. I can't understand why he should have implied that disgrace had fallen upon your home—not one in the firm is aware that it was money that was lost with the exception of Grayley and myself. The clerks were told that a package of papers had disappeared from my desk. As a matter of precaution Mr. Grayley made as little of the affair as he could, to spare me, no doubt," he added bitterly.

"It seems to me Smythe will bear watching," said Tom. "I don't want to prejudge him, but really a fellow who could act as he did last night seems capable of a good deal of shady business."

"Take care, my boy," rejoined his father, "it is fatally easy to suspect the innocent."

And Tom was silenced.

Mr. Latimer departed for the city, hoping against hope that something might occur through the day to prove to Mr. Grayley the injustice of his suspicions; but he returned at night more despondent than when he went away. He was worn out, too, with anxiety and lack of sleep; for he had remained in New York late the preceding night searching in every imaginable place for the missing package, and when he did arrive at Yantico had wandered about the silent streets for hours in agony of mind so that it was no wonder if he was exhausted now and ready to succumb to despair.

Mr. Grayley had plainly told him that until the mystery of the missing cash was cleared up he could not permit him to continue in his present position of trust, nor could he allow him to leave the firm and seek a situation elsewhere; and he had assigned him a desk in his own private office where his humble work was to add up long rows of figures all day long under his chief's severe eye—an eye which ever watched for some guilty sign.

Humiliated to the very dust, Mr. Latimer could only resign himself to the degradation.

Then he discovered that he was under surveillance all the way home—that Mr. Grayley had in fact a private detective on his track. It was no consolation to know that each of the junior clerks had his similar shadow; the man whose integrity had been so long without a flaw felt the insult almost more than he could bear. But he did not distress his family with this information.

A week—a month went by, and the situation remained the same at Grayley's. The various detectives discovered absolutely nothing to the disadvantage of one of the suspects, and at last even Mr. Latimer was relieved of his spy, as far as he could discover.

The fourteen thousand dollars seemed to have vanished forever; not one of them had been traced, though for that matter Mr. Grayley was free to speculate whether Mr. Latimer had not furnished him with a false list of their numbers, and whether he might not be working them off by degrees for less traceable property.

At all events he held Mr. Latimer sternly to account for them, so the pretty house was sold for three thousand dollars, and the furniture for one thousand more; and all save five hundred dollars was sent to Mrs. Merton, who answered as before by typewriter, acknowledging the receipt of the sum and urging the payment of the balance as soon as might be. Mr. Latimer had not as yet informed her of his misfortune, always hoping the money might be traced, and in the meanwhile he strained every nerve to send her something on account.

By the end of that wretched month the Latimers had left their home forever, and were installed in a few rooms at Farmer Bayers'.

CHAPTER VI.
IS IT A CLEW?

The downfall of the Latimers caused quite a sensation in Yantico, and the unfortunate family had their first taste of the trials peculiar to their position in the various styles in which their neighbors showed their consciousness of their altered fortunes.

Some, indeed, merely redoubled their kindness and respect, but too many betrayed the mean envy with which they had regarded the Latimers in their prosperity by their insulting pretense of pity or by their patronizing manners.

Among the former class—the friends indeed who were friends in need—was Will Golden's family, while among the latter, and perhaps the worst examples of them, we may count Walter Smythe and his father. The elder Smythe kept a general grocery store in Yantico, and was somewhat celebrated in the place as a man mean enough "to pick the coppers off a dead man's eyes."

However that might be, he was now loud in his reproaches of Mr. Latimer who had "cut such a dash" as he said, "on borrowed money, and had taken good care to fail when it was called in."

This rumor, set in circulation by the Smythes, soon reached Tom's ears, and one day when Will Golden was with him, he stopped Walt as he was trying to dodge him in the street, and accosted him.

"Look here, Smythe, I've something to say to you; Don't be in such a hurry."

"But I am in a hurry—can't wait—see you again," stammered Walt, looking frightened and trying to pass on. But Tom and his chum blocked the way before and behind, and the other had to listen whether or no.

"Your father told Mr. Golden the other day a scandalous story of my father," said Tom, and he repeated the calumny. "Now, sir, what authority had you for tattling the private business of Grayley & Co. to your father or anybody else?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," blustered Smythe. "My father isn't me—why bully me?"

"You repeated much the same lie to Harry Kendal, and bragged that you could have Latimer and all his tribe drummed out of Yantico if you chose to tell all you knew."

"I—I—never!—Harry yarns," stuttered the scandalmonger, looking nervously around for a chance to escape.

"Harry never yarns, but you do, and I'm going to thrash the bad habit out of you."

"You—you darsn't!" cried Smythe, now thoroughly scared. "My father's in the town council, and he can put you in jail in a minute."

"I'll risk that," laughed Tom grimly. "Put up your fists, Smythe, unless you prefer to take your thrashing meekly, because you know you deserve it."

"Two of you against one?" snarled Smythe, turning pale. "I'll shout for help if you touch me."

"Don't funk on my account, Walt Smythe," remarked Will dryly. "I won't touch you; Tom's bossing this job. But you've only to repeat the slander and I'll chip in with pleasure."

"Blackguards! Low rowdies!" almost sobbed the trembling dude, but his plaint was cut short by a howl, for he was in the hands of the avenger, and for a couple of minutes had no breath to spare for eloquence.

"Now, Smythe, I hope you'll take the lesson to heart," said Tom standing over his fallen foe and looking very grim and determined; "you know now what scandalmongering will bring you, and you may tell your father that Grayley & Co. will be informed that through his son Walter he appears to know more of their private business than they themselves do; they will probably be glad to hear any discoveries connected with their affairs that he has made. Get up and march now."

Smythe scrambled to his feet; he was greatly demoralized, not only as to his outer man, but his spirit was fainting within him, as it were.

"Say, Tom, if you tell Grayley that I'll be ruined!" exclaimed he piteously, and throwing himself on his chastiser's mercy with that "cheek" which Tom had already found so colossal. "You don't know what a dreadful scrape I'll be in; I wouldn't care so much for Grayley's, but it's——" He choked himself suddenly. In the fervor of his self pity he had forgotten to whom he was confessing himself. "They'll bounce me, sure," he continued awkwardly, "and father'll be furious. You won't make mischief for me, will you?"

"Look her, I'll make a bargain with you—Will shall be witness," said Tom. "If you'll tell me the whole truth about this business—all that you know about those missing papers, and what your reason is for blackening my father's good name—then I promise to say nothing more, to Grayley or anybody else, about the Smythe scandal."

Walt had looked pale enough in view of his thashing, but he looked positively deathly now.

"I don't know anything about the papers," protested he in a trembling voice. "I was only guessing about your father, because he's no longer manager and has been set to a junior's work. I'll never say another word—I swear I won't, if you'll only let up on me. You won't tell Grayley, will you?" he implored.

Tom and Will were exchanging glances of disappointment and disgust. They felt that Smythe was lying to them even while groveling at Tom's feet for mercy.

"Since you've nothing to conceal you needn't be afraid of Grayley," replied Tom, turning away; "you can explain your conduct to him in your own truthful way when he calls upon you to do so. Come, Will," and the friends continued on their way, leaving Smythe planted in the middle of the sidewalk in a state of panic which plunged them in speculation.

Since the malicious whispers had been going the rounds of Yantico Tom had confided something of the trouble to his friend; Will knew that Mr. Latimer held himself responsible for the lost money, and had sacrificed his home to pay part of the debt. But Tom had not thought right to tell him that his father was suspected by Mr. Grayley of having appropriated the money.

"Walt Smythe knows something about that cash," declared Will as they walked away; "could it be possible that he took it?"

"I can't see how, for the clerks were searched before they left the place," replied Tom; "in fact Smythe himself was the first to suggest that they should be searched, so father says."

"Rather queer idea considering that they weren't supposed to know that it was money that was missed," suggested Will. "Don't it strike you that Smythe seems to have had a good deal to say in the affair?"

"It does indeed, Will. Of course you remember that spiteful speech he made the night Amy fell into the ice, before we knew a word of father's trouble?"

Will nodded, opening his eyes wider.

"He and all the other clerks had been told that a package of papers was missing, there was no question of honor or dishonor in the case. At most somebody had blundered. Then what secret knowledge led him to prophesy disgrace upon our name? 'Look at home' he said, meaning poor father."

"Smythe knows something about that cash—perhaps all about it," exclaimed Will excitedly. "And he's trying to cast suspicion on Mr. Latimer to divert it from himself, the little traitor!"

"Yes, Will, I believe it's so," said Tom, "and as Walt has neither wit nor spunk enough to plan such a steal himself, somebody has put him up to it. Now who?"

"Skinflint Smythe himself, most likely," replied Will.

"Perhaps; I wish Walt could be watched, but even if I was free, detective business is an art beyond me. However, I believe I have a strong enough case against him now to tell father; he wouldn't let me talk of my suspicions before."

"Yes, and your father ought to tell Mr. Grayley; he's the one to deal with Walt," said Will.

But Tom returned no answer to that; he knew that his father's wounded pride would prevent him from directing Mr. Grayley's suspicions to any one else while he himself was suspected. Until Mr. Latimer had some proof of Walter Smythe's guilt to show, he would say nothing.

Will Golden's father was in the electric light business and had contracted to light the town; and when he heard that Tom was looking for work he had kindly made a place for him among his gang of men who were setting up the poles. Humble enough work for a college aspirant, but Tom had thankfully accepted it, not only because of the good pay, but because it permitted him to live at home. At present he felt that he could not have given up that consolation, and then his aunt and sister required all the cheering his bounding spirits could give them. For their experiences at Mr. Bayers' were not always pleasant, the farmer being unusually rough and ignorant, and making no secret of his opinion that "pride had gone before their fall," and hence that they deserved it.

Afterwards they discovered that he was a crony of Mr. Smythe's, and had accepted the honorable post of spy on Mr. Latimer's actions, under the firm belief that the latter was an undetected defaulter.

Mrs. Bayers was a timid, silent woman, whose lot in life it was to work hard, obey her husband's orders and hold her tongue; and even the gentle influence of Aunt Amazine had no more effect upon her stunted nature than dew upon a rock.

Jean had after anxious consideration, decided to make practical use of a certain modest ability she possessed—that of trimming a hat or bonnet stylishly; and by dint of calling round among her acquaintances to solicit custom, and promising to work cheaply, she had formed a respectable little clientele, and was able to contribute her portion towards defraying the expenses.

Aunt Amazine also contrived to earn money by her needle; she was an exquisite point-lace maker, and supplied a fancy work store with specimens of her beautiful art, but at the cost of many an hour of headache and pain in the eyes, of which she never spoke.

Tom opened his mind to his father about Walter Smythe that evening. Mr. Latimer did not seem surprised.

"I have come to believe with you, that young Smythe is implicated," he said. "Arkwright, the man who is filling my place at present, informed me some days since that Walter has been detected prowling about the office as if on the lookout for another snatch; Arkwright found him there twice, after a moment's absence. His excuse each time was so clumsy that it was obviously an invention. Arkwright laid the matter before Mr. Grayley, and Smythe is narrowly watched. Any day the truth may be revealed."

Next day, when Tom went home at noon for his dinner, accompanied as far as the door by Will, who worked with him (from pure comradeship for he ought to have been at school) Jean flew to meet them, fluttering a telegram above her head.

"News, boys—great news for us," she cried exultantly, then obesrving a big rough hand holding ajar the door of the Bayers' kitchen while the unctuous odors of the farmer's dinner of salt pork and sauerkraut filled the passage, she beckoned them into the Latimer sitting room, dining room and kitchen in one, and punctiliously closing the door, laid the open sheet in Tom's hands.

"Great news," he read aloud. "The suspect has betrayed himself. Let Tom come in by one thirty train. The chief would hear his story."

(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 XXXVIII.
CONCLUSION.

When Bernard left the cars and stepped on the platform of the Doncaster station, he saw Freedom Wentworth preparing to drive away on a store wagon.

"Give me a ride, Freed?" said Bernard.

Freedom Wentworth turned quickly, and seemed at first in doubt. Then he said, as his face lighted up, "Why, it's Bernard Brooks."

"The same, Freed. Shall I have the ride?"

"Yes, jump up. Why, you're looking fine. Where do you want to go?"

"To see my old friend, Professor Snowdon. How is he?"

"He isn't flourishing. He has lost half his scholars, and looks awfully shabby. Are you going to enter his school again?"

"Not much!"

"What are you doing? working?"

"I am living on my money."

"So am I," said Freedom, who thought it a good joke."

"But I am really. I have fifteen thousand dollars."

"You don't say! I won't tell you how much I have, but it isn't quite so much. Where did you get it?"

"I will tell you later. But who is that ahead of us? Isn't it Nat Barclay?"

"Yes."

"Nat!" called out Bernard.

Nat turned and eyed Bernard at first doubtfully. Then he looked overjoyed as he recognized his friend. He jumped into the wagon, and squeezing in between him and Freedom began to ply him with questions.

When they reached the Snowdon Institute Bernard jumped down.

"I'll see you later, Nat," he said.

"Come round to dinner, Bernard."

"I will."

Bernard plied the knocker at Professor Snowdon's front door. Clad in a ragged dressing gown the professor came to answer it. Being shortsighted he didn't at once recognize Bernard.

"Have you business with me, young gentleman?" he said respectfully, noticing Bernard's handsome attire.

"You don't seem to recognize me, professor."

"Have I seen you before?"

"I am Bernard Brooks."

"Is it possible. You—you seem to be prosperous."

"Yes, Professor Snowdon, I have fallen heir to fifteen thousand dollars."

"You don't tell me! Dear me, how fortunate! Do you wish to return to the Institute?"

"No, I think not. I shall live in New York for the present."

"I will take you cheap—very cheap! I always liked you, Bernard Brooks," and the professor squeezed Bernard's hand between his bony fingers.

"I am glad to hear it, but I thought you didn't. You used to call me a bad lot."

"A little harmless joke. I didn't mean it. Here, Septimus!"

Septimus came from the street, eying Bernard with curiosity.

"Septimus," said his father, "this is our old and favorite pupil, Bernard Brooks."

"How do you do, Bernard?" said Septimus, looking surprised.

"Very well, thank you!"

"Why, you're rigged out in tip top style!" went on Septimus, enviously.

"Septimus," said his father, "you will be glad to hear that our dear young friend has come into a fortune."

"Is that straight?" asked Septimus.

"A small fortune," said Bernard, "but I think I shall get my father's money besides soon. I am having negotiations with Mr. McCracken."

"Won't you come back here to live?" asked Septimus. "We'll have awful good times together."

"Yes," said the professor, "Septimus always loved you like a brother."

"Yes, I did," affirmed Septimus.

"It is pleasant to find you so glad to see me," said Bernard, smiling. "I am afraid I can't stay though. My friend, Mr. Cunningham of London, can't spare me. We shall stay in New York for the present."

"May I come to visit you?" asked Septimus.

"I am not sure that it would be convenient, but if you wish to make a trip to New York on your own account, this will help you to do it," and Bernard produced a five dollar bill which Septimus seized with avidity.

Later in the day Bernard called on Nat Barclay, and insisted on taking him to New York for a few days.

"You were my friend when I needed one, Nat. Now I have more than I want. Septimus and his father seem devoted to me."

"It is the way of the world," said Mr. Barclay. "Great is the power of money!"

It is not necessary to follow Bernard further. He is at present connected with Princeton College, and I hear is the captain of the football team. When he has completed his education he will make a tour round the world with Mr. Cunningham. Even Professor Snowdon does not now call him a bad lot, but speaks of him with pride as "my distinguished and favorite pupil."

"I wonder if the professor remembers when he chased me through the barn with a horsewhip," Bernard says to himself, with a smile. "I wasn't his favorite pupil then."

THE END.

NEW TO HER.

"Oh, mamma, look here," said a little visitor in the country who had got her eyes on a potato bug for the first time.

"What is it, dear?"

"A funny kind of fly with a tennis blazer."—Vogue.

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TO LIVE THEIR BOYHOOD O'ER AGAIN.

Of the organizing of clubs and associations there seems to be no end. The slightest pretext is made available for the starting of a fresh one. It would appear that man is afraid to stand alone, and when he has a new idea to exploit wants to be bolstered up by the companionship of his fellows.

An odd gathering, that has lately come under our notice, is the Boston Schoolboys' Society. To become eligible as a member the aspiring candidate must have been out of school at least half a century. The dean of the association is an ex-schoolboy, aged ninety seven.

Whether the society has any definite aim we do not know, but doubtless its reason for existence is thought to have been fulfilled if the veterans who compose it are made merry now and then by recounting to one another the pranks and plays and plans of their far away youth time.

"THE DAUGHTER OF FESTUS HANKS."

Do you know that a new serial is begun in the January number of Munsey's Magazine? Its title is "The Daughter of Festus Hanks," and in force and dramatic coloring, it will undoubtedly take high rank among the novels of the year. The story opens with two threads, which afterwards unite, affording opportunity for some very thrilling situations which are handled by the writer with rare skill.

Remember that this striking serial begins in the great Wall Street Number of Munsey's, for sale everywhere at ten cents a copy. This would be a good time to subscribe—twelve numbers for a dollar.

WAR ON THE TEETH.

As every cloud is said to have a silver lining, so inversely the progress of man to a higher condition of attainments would seem to be attended with constant drawbacks. Civilization, for example, is declared to be injurious to the teeth, and prophets not a few predict that ere many generations we shall be a toothless race.

Undoubtedly the variety displayed in the make up of the modern bill of fare is responsible for this state of things. With an infinite number of dishes appealing to his palate, man is not apt to stop to reflect, before making his choice, on the influence such and such a compound may have on his teeth.

In an examination of 4,000 children attending the London public schools, there were found to be only 707 with sound teeth, and recruits for the British army are being constantly rejected for dental reasons. In commenting on these statistics, the New York "Tribune" affirms that "decay of teeth has always attended the advance of civilization, and each barbaric invasion has been followed by a recovery of sound teeth in the Old World."

Now we are certain that nobody wishes to buy first class molars for his descendants at the price of becoming slaves to savages, and therefore it behooves us to ply diligently the tooth brush and eschew too many sweets.

HISTORY UP TO DATE.

At the Girls' Normal School in Philadelphia there has recently been inaugurated a course of study based on current topics as reported by the daily newspapers. The idea is one well worthy of imitation in all schools. The pupils would thus learn history while it is being made; and not only this, they would be incited to a study of the past in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the exciting events of the present.

And in these days, the teacher of such a branch will not lack for subjects. What with the constant ferment going on in Brazil; bomb throwing in the houses of government in France, the deficit in the English treasury, special convening of Congress in our own country, to say nothing of the situation in Hawaii, the budget of topics need never be a light one.

GOOD WORTH FOR THE MONEY.

Have you, reader, availed yourself of the reduced price at which the bound volumes of Munsey's Magazine are obtainable, viz., at one dollar each? Here is a specimen opinion from a purchaser of the entire set:

176 Federal St., Boston, Mass.
Dec. 11, 1893.

Gentlemen—

The 4 volumes of Munsey's Magazine r'cd this a. m. I am more than pleased with them. The best value for four dollars I ever had.

Simon Cohen.

GOING TO SLEEP PIECEMEAL.

Young people are not usually troubled with sleeplessness, but there may be some among the many readers of The Argosy who now and then find themselves the victims of insomnia. These will be interested, not to say comforted, by learning, on the authority of a famous London brain specialist, that lying awake at night is not so dangerous to the future health as it is unpleasant for the time being. He argues that many people who declare that they "have not slept a wink," have slumbered in sections, various brain centers dropping off at different times so that there are always some on guard.

This is a case, is it not, where sleeping at the post of duty would be visited with anything but punishment?

COMFORT OUT OF CONTRAST.

Which do you find it easier to endure—cold or heat? Perhaps in winter you will say heat, but as a matter of fact, excessive heat is more formidable than extreme cold. It is much easier, for instance, to obtain warmth when chilled than to get cool when oppressed by a high temperature. Again, who would not rather, if compelled to make the choice, be frozen, than roasted to death?

We suggest such thoughts as these as likely to serve a useful purpose on a freezing winter day. If your ear tips tingle and your finger ends grow numb, recall your feelings on some sweltering afternoon in August when you may have loudly voiced your preference for winter over summer "every time." Then make a report on the results of drawing on the reserve power of the imagination.

Rip Van Winkle In All Ages.

BY RICHARD MACE.

Almost every boy knows the story which Washington Irving has told with so much dry humor, of the good for nothing Dutchman who lived in the village of Falling Waters up the Hudson, and whose scolding wife Gretchen drove him out into the storm, and how he went off into the Katskills and drank rum with the ghosts of Hendrick Hudson and his crew. Most of the boys who live in large cities have seen the great actor, Joseph Jefferson, play the part of the jolly old fellow whom all the children love; have seen him wake up in the mountains after his twenty years' nap, to go home and find himself forgotten.

But perhaps not everybody knows that the story of the long sleep, and the dramatic awakening is one of the oldest stories in the world, and that every nation has one or two versions of it.

The first one is of the beautiful Grecian youth Endymion, who slept for one hundred years on Mount Latmus. He was kept young and beautiful by Diana, the moon, which came every night and bathed him in white light.

In Rome there was a legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, which is one of the best known. The Emperor Decius, who reigned in the year 439, persecuted the Christians, and sought out all who were supposed to belong to the hated faith. Seven noble youths who were under the ban concealed themselves in a cave. The emissaries of the emperor discovering that they were there, choked up the entrance with stones. The youths immediately fell into a sleep which lasted for 187 years. At the end of this time workmen took away the stones to use in building. When they awoke, the youths, like Rip Van Winkle, supposed that they had only been asleep over night, and being still in fear for their lives, they chose by lot, one of their number to take what they supposed to be the great risk of going into the city after food, for they had some coins in their pockets.

As the boy came out upon the hill where he could see the city, he was struck dumb with amazement. The city had spread away beyond his recollection; he did not know his native country. As he came down into the town he saw people walking about in strange costumes, and oddest of all, he saw a procession carrying a cross going about the streets unmolested. "Yesterday no one dared pronounce the name of Jesus!" he said wonderingly.

He took his coins into a shop and offered to buy bread with them. The baker looked at them curiously and called in his friends.

They hustled him through the market place and before the judges.

"Call my retainers," he said. "They are nobles in Ephesus." But when he mentioned their names, no one had ever heard of them.

"Where is the Emperor Decius?" he asked, and then he told his story.

The Bishop of Ephesus, and all the priests, and some accounts even say the Emperor Theodorus himself, visited the young men and heard their story, and the cave is a shrine to this day.

The legend varies in every country. In Wales there was a young boy named Taffy Ap Sion, who loved to hear the birds singing in the wood. One day he sat down to listen to the woodland music and it was so sad and sweet that he fell asleep. When he awoke he was surprised to find that he was in the midst of a great forest. Trees and vines were close all about him. The tree he sat on had grown to a mighty trunk, but it was dead. When he arose and went to his home, it had become to be almost a ruin. An old man came to answer to his knock at the tumble down door, and when he asked for his parents, he was recognized with fear.

"Taffy ap Sion!" exclaimed the old man. "My great grandfather told me of you as one who sat under the great sycamore in the forest, tied by a fairy spell which could only cease when the sap in the tree dried up!"

In China and Japan there are stories of the sleeper.

In Japan the legend is very picturesque, and in listening to the natives tell it one wonders if Mr. Rider Haggard did not hear it before he wrote "She." There was a young Japanese fisherman who worked to support his father and mother. One day there came up beside his boat a beautiful woman, who begged him to go with her to her home below the waves. He was so enamored of her beauty that he forgot everything and went.

After three days the thought of his poor old father and mother stirred his conscience. They must be starving with no one to care for them. He besought his entertainer, who was the goddess of the sea, to let him go. She gave him a golden casket with a key, and told him never to open it unless he was false to her, and was so won away by the world that he would not return to her. Then he was to accept its contents as her parting gift.

When he reached land again, his experience was like that of all his brother sleepers in all parts of the world. He finds the graves of his parents a hundred years old. The three days have been over a century long!

Thinking there must be some mystery, which perhaps the casket would explain, he opens it. From it there arises a grayish vapor which envelops him. He begins to experience a queer feeling. His voice gets husky in the vapor; he seems to shrink; his form loses its youth and roundness; his hair turns white. He falls to the earth an old man and dies.

In China two youths go out into the mountains to walk, and come to a ravine which is spanned by a beautiful bridge. Standing on the other side are two lovely young girls in flowing pink and blue silk gowns. Sometimes you may see the story painted on a fan. They call to the two young men and they cross the bridge. They think they are only staying a few hours, but when they return the bridge has vanished and they must go a long way around. They find when they reach home that some generations have gone by in their absence.

There is in almost every country a legend that in some dungeon or some grotto there sleeps to wake again one of the great heroes of antiquity. In Dionburg's fortress in Denmark, the legend says, there sleeps Ogier, the Dane. His beard has grown through the rocky wall. Once some young men found him, and he half arose.

"Is there manhood still left in Denmark?" he asked.

One of the young men put a bar of iron in his hand. Thinking it was the arm of a Danish youth he turned over, contented, to sleep again.

In Mexico the Aztecs believed that their god who was white, Quetzalcoatt, had gone away into the East, where he slept, and that when they needed him again, he would come. When Cortez, with his pale face came in to conquer he greatly resembled the picture of their god, and found many who fell down and worshipped him.

The story of the sleeping hero is all over Europe. Frederick Barbarossa and six of his warrior knights are said to sleep in Thurnigia in a great castle. Charlemagne, the Great is said to still sleep upon his throne with his crown upon his head.

In Switzerland William Tell is said to sleep in a cave. We love to think of the changes which time brings, and the story of the sleeper seems likely never to die.

GOLDEN THOUGHTS.

Thrift of time will repay you in after life with a usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams.—Gladstone.

There are few people more often in the wrong than those who cannot endure to be thought so.—Rochefoucauld.

THE TRUEST CONQUEROR.

Who quells a nation's wayward will
May lord it on a throne;
But he's a mightier monarch still
Who vanquishes his own.
No power of fortune lays him low;
No treacherous smile allures;
King of himself, through weal or woe—
He conquers who endures.

—Anon.

The Last Spread at Ripple Lake.

BY ARTHUR F. STANLEY.

"Is this seat engaged? Ah, thank you. Am sure I feel quite honored at being in such close proximity to these," and as he spoke the young man with the shaggy overcoat lightly touched one of the gleaming brass buttons on Ralph Clark's fatigue jacket.

This was Ralph's first year at Ripple Lake Military Academy, and he was quite ready to glow with pride at any remarks of admiration for his uniform. He was returning to school now after his Christmas holiday in New York, and, feeling a little blue, was rather glad than otherwise that a talkative stranger had asked to share his seat.

So he smiled at the allusion to his buttons, and this made it easy for the other to ask:

"Going back to school, I suppose, and wish you weren't?"

"Well, I don't know as I'd exactly say that," returned Ralph. "We fellows have a pretty good time at Ripple Lake. But of course it's nice to have a holiday."

"Ah, me, yes," assented the other, with a sigh. "But holidays with me mean just extra work. You see, we always give a matinee on those days."

"Oh, are you an actor?" exclaimed Ralph, roused to special interest at once.

"Well, I play at being one," was the other's modest remark. "I can't as yet command Booth or Irving prices, but—did you ever hear of the 'Mirth, Music and Jollity Company'?"

Ralph shook his head.

"No, I don't think I ever did," he replied. "Did they ever play at the Broadway or the Lyceum in New York?"

"N—no, not yet," answered the affable stranger, with evident reluctance. "Do you go to the theater often?"

"I do whenever I get the chance," rejoined Ralph, his eyes sparkling. "I think it must be great fun to be an actor."

"It is sometimes, but then one grows very weary of constantly traveling about. Just now we are playing one night stands."

"What does that mean?" asked Ralph.

"Staying only one night in each town. For instance, tonight we play in Ratskill and——"

"Oh, are you going to Ratskill, too?" exclaimed Ralph. "Our school is only a mile from that town. I wish I could come and see you play."

"Well, why can't you?"

"Oh, I couldn't ask permission to go out the first night I got back. I'd never get it."

"That's too bad. If it was a question of not having money enough, I might——"

"Oh, I've got the money," Ralph hastened to assure him, jingling the coins in his trousers' pockets. "We fellows are generally flush when we come back after the holidays, not only in the money that our fathers give us for Christmas, but in the pies and cakes with which our mothers load us down."

"For a midnight spread! Ah, sweet memories of my own boyhood! How I should rejoice to be able to see another such spread!"

A daring idea popped into Ralph's head. He was only fifteen and eager for sensations. What if he should invite this young actor to the spread he and Langdon Williams intended to give that night!

Their room was on the second floor and opened out on the piazza roof. His chum, Langdon, had manufactured a rope ladder which they could throw down at midnight for the guest to clamber up by. It would be exceedingly romantic, and impart an altogether novel element to the "spread."

Ralph made up his mind on the impulse of the moment.

"If you are going to be as near as Ratskill," he said, "and would really like to come, I should be happy to have you as a guest at a little supper I am going to give the fellows in my room tonight. It will be quite like the Lotos Club, having an actor for a guest."

"My dear young friend," exclaimed the stranger effusively, "you overwhelm me with honor. I should be only too pleased to come. Permit me to introduce myself as Dorchester Marks, at your service."

"And I am Ralph Clark. But——" Ralph hesitated a little—"you won't be able to come in by the front door. We have to have these affairs on the dead quiet."

"Beautiful! More memories of my youth stirred up. Trust a sleight of hand performer for introducing himself by hook or crook."

"Oh, can you do tricks?" exclaimed Ralph, delighted.

"Can I? That is one of my specialties with the company."

"And will you do some for us?"

"Won't I just? My very best ones. See that your guests comes with their pockets full of half dollars so that they can test my magic system of infinite reproduction. What time shall I appear?"

"Will twelve be too late?" queried Ralph, hesitatingly. "Shall you want to go to bed before that?"

Dorchester Marks laughed.

"No, indeed!" he said. "We don't finish the performance before eleven. Too bad you fellows can't get away. I should be delighted to give you as many complimentary tickets as you wanted. But you haven't told me how to get to the school."

"Oh, you keep right on the main road that runs back from the river, and past the hotel and the town hall. You can't miss it. It is a big white building on the left hand side. Come right in the campus gate and at the nearest corner of the front piazza you will see—no, you won't see, you will have to feel for it—Langdon's rope ladder among the grape vines. Climb that and tap on the center window. Of course you understand how important it is not to make any noise."

"YOU FELLOWS HAVE INTERRUPTED RALPH IN THE MIDST OF A MOST MOMENTOUS REVELATION."

"Certainly I do. It isn't so long since I've been a boy myself. I'm only twenty two now. Quite one of you, in fact."

"And you won't mind doing some of your tricks for us?"

"Why should I? Are you not going to entertain me sumptuously?"

"Oh, don't get your expectations raised too high."

"How many fellows will there be?" asked Marks, sobering down.

"Well, there'll be my chum, Williams. He's from Boston, and a mighty nice chap. He'll bring a lot of jam and stuff back with him, I expect. Then there's Murray Graves and Tom Selwyn, from across the hall. And Oakes, and Braintree, and I suppose we might ask Johnny Mapes, though he's only a kid."

"But how many in all, do you suppose?"

"Oh, not more than ten. You see, the room's small."

"And one thing more—I have to know so as to decide on the material for my tricks—will the fellows be in their night clothes or all dressed? Of course if I should ask for two or three watches it would be rather awkward for the gentlemen to be without even watch pockets."

"Oh, I'll see that the fellows bring their watches," laughed Ralph. "But here we are. There's the school stage and a lot of the fellows in it from the down train. Good by. Don't fail to come. Be there at twelve sharp."

By the time this speech was finished, Ralph was out on the platform, swinging his cap and shouting a cheery New Year to his mates. Once seated among them in the stage, there were so many hands to be shaken and questions about good times at home to be asked and answered, that he had no opportunity to think about Dorchester Marks until in the quiet of his room he was unpacking his valise just before tea.

Now that he looked back calmly upon the incident it struck him as rather queer that he should have invited to his room a man he had never seen before that afternoon.

"It was simply because he is connected with the theater," he told himself. "That will be a great card with the fellows. And then he seemed to feel so bad that he wasn't a boy still."

From all of which it will be perceived that Ralph Clark was a boy of very impressible nature.

"Hullo, glad to see you, old fellow," cried a cheery voice from the doorway at this instant.

It was Langdon Williams, just arrived from Boston.

"And I tell you, Ralph," he said, "I've got a dandy box of sweets this time."

"Good work," exclaimed Ralph. "And I've got something even better than that for our spread."

"What's that?"

Ralph beckoned mysteriously for his chum to approach closer, that he might convey the tidings in a whisper, when there was a knock at the door and Murray Graves and Tom Selwyn followed it up in such short order that there was no time for anybody to say "Come in."

"Hold hard," said Langdon, in a tone of mock solemnity, pausing in the act of giving his hand to Graves; "you fellows have interrupted Ralph in the midst of a most momentous revelation. Shall he not say on, oh friends? Ye are to be two of us at our spread tonight?"

"Well, I guess," rejoined Tom Selwyn, grasping Ralph by the hand. "What is it, my boy? Cold turkey and cranberry sauce, eh?"

"No, sir, it's nothing to eat."

Whereupon a universal groan went up.

"Oh, but I've got provisions, too," Ralph hastened to add. "This bright particular attraction is a distinct novelty, as the theater posters say, which reminds me to tell you that it smacks of the stage, too."

The boys were all curiosity now, and when Ralph finally told them that he had invited an actor to come to their spread their amazement was unbounded.

"However in the world did you come to do such a thing as that, Ralph?" demanded Langdon. "It was mighty risky, seems to me."

"Why, I thought you would be delighted," rejoined Ralph. "He's a sleight of hand performer, too, and is going to do some tricks for us."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Tom, beginning to enthuse.

And when Ralph proceeded to relate how cordial Dorchester Marks really was, and that he seemed to be just like a boy himself, the others began to grow quite excited over the unexpected addition to their party.

The other favored ones were duly invited, and "Put on your uniforms, fel-

lows," Ralph said to each one. "It will lend more eclat to the occasion."

The school duly retired to rest when taps sounded at nine. The teachers were not very strict on this first night after the Christmas vacation. They were most of them young men, and doubtless had not forgotten their own holiday season "spreads."

At any rate the six or eight fellows who assembled in Clark and Williams' room at quarter to twelve encountered no difficulty in passing through the halls.

"I hope your actor friend isn't a loud talker, Ralph," said Murray Graves, when they were all seated around the bountiful feast that had been set forth in the middle of the floor.

"Oh, he won't give us away. Hush, I think I hear his footsteps on the piazza roof now."

Cautiously Ralph pulled away a corner of the blanket that had been pinned over the windows, and peered out. Almost at the same instant there was a light tap on the pane.

Great but suppressed excitement prevailed in the room while Ralph was cautiously introducing the star of the assemblage. When Dorchester Marks finally appeared from behind the blanket, with one hand to his heart and the other doffing his derby, he bowed low, with the greeting:

"Most honored boys
It is of all the joys
To me the very most
That on this auspicious night
I am partaking of the right
Good cheer of him, your host,"

On hearing this the boys brought their thumb nails together in token of emphatic if soundless applause, and Dorchester Marks was at once taken in as one of themselves.

As the affair was necessarily late in commencing, the feast was first disposed of and then Ralph announced that Mr. Marks would favor them with a few of his feats of legerdemain. He had brought a small handbag, which together with his shaggy overcoat, he deposited by the window behind the blanket. He now brought out a white handkerchief on which he requested Tom Selwyn to blow.

"Ah, thank you, that is sufficient," he said, and taking the handkerchief again, proceeded to roll it between his fingers till half of it became red.

"And now if you will kindly breathe upon it an instant, my dear boy," he said, presenting the parti colored piece of linen to Ralph.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the actor, and once more rolling the handkerchief between his fingers he proceeded to twist out of them an American flag, complete in every detail.

The boys were so enraptured by this trick, that some of them almost forgot the necessity of caution and started to applaud loudly.

"But that is a back number," Marks hastened to assure them. "Let me show you now something completely new, quite up to date, in fact, and an invention of my own. And first I must ask each one of you to let me have his watch and a bill of some denomination in which to wrap it. Of course each of you will recognize his own watch and please note the date of the bill and the bank by which it is issued.

"In order to successfully carry out this trick," Marks continued, as he passed around his derby into which the fellows readily dropped their money and watches, "I must ask permission to take a chair and retire for a few moments behind the blanket."

"Certainly," said Ralph. "Here, Murray, let me have that one," and the young host made room for Graves beside him on the bed.

"Now, then," proceeded the artist in magic, after he had placed the chair and the hatful of materials behind the improvised curtain, "I must ask you to count thirty slowly, like this- one—two—three. You, Ralph, had better lead them, keeping time with your stick. Then at thirty all blow toward the blanket and be prepared to catch your property, which will be gently wafted back to you in the shape of butterfly wings, changing to the watches and your money as you grasp them."

With these words he disappeared behind the blanket and in low tones the company, led by Ralph began to chant "one—two—three," etc. When thirty was reached they all started to blow.

One, two, three minutes went by, and still nothing mysterious issued from the curtain.

"I wonder how long we're expected to keep this up?" Tom Selwyn relaxed his cheeks long enough to remark.

"He didn't tell us that, did he?" said Langdon Williams.

"Begins to look pretty queer, I think," added Murray Graves.

Ralph began to think the same thing himself. With a sudden impulse he sprang forward and disappeared behind the blanket. He came out again in an instant at the other end, his face pale and his voice all of a tremble.

"There's nobody here, fellows," he reported. "Only the chair, with its back turned the other way, and the overcoat's gone."

"Quick, look out on the roof!" cried Tom.

Langdon turned out the light and there was a general rush made for the window. Nobody was to be seen.

Ralph got out on the tin and crept cautiously to the end near the campus. Even the rope ladder had been carried off.

With a humiliation such as he had never felt in his life before, he returned to his friends with the announcement that Dorchester Marks had succeeded in getting clear away with the watches and money.

"It is all my fault, too," he added. "I had no business to take up with a perfect stranger in that way. How—how much is gone altogether?"

A hasty computation was made, with the result that four watches, one of them gold—Ralph's own—and nine dollars in money footed up the loss.

"I'll make it good to you before the term is out," Ralph declared. "Giving up all my own pocket money will help me to remember never to be such a fool again."

The fellows protested that they were as much to blame as Ralph himself, but Ralph stuck to his determination, and by dint of denying himself the bicycle he had been promised for his birthday in March, managed to square all accounts before Easter.

"But why didn't you make some effort to catch the fellow that night?" one of his New York friends asked him when he heard the story.

"We didn't dare," replied Ralph. "You see we were afraid to raise a fuss at that hour because we were transgressing rules ourselves. I tell you it don't pay to try and deceive the teachers. It comes back on you in the end like a boomerang."

And this is why that midnight spread was the last one held at Ripple Lake Academy.

[*This Story began in No. 505.*]

Belmont;

OR,

MARK WARE'S COLLEGE LIFE.

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT,

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

CHAPTER XLV.

REVELATIONS.

There was an awkward pause, while Herbert and Mark stared at each other.

"It is a forgery," answered Herbert.

The cashier of the bank, who was standing a short distance away, turned quickly at these words, and came up.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

The circumstances were related to him.

"What did the fellow who presented the draft look like?" he asked.

The clerk gave as accurate a description as he could.

"Do you recognize him?" asked the cashier, turning to Herbert.

"Perfectly. His name is Chapin," answered Herbert. "He left town on the 12.05 train—I suppose for home."

"Where is that?"

"New York."

"Chapin, Chapin!" echoed the cashier, "I wonder if he is any relative of D. H. Chapin the New York banker and broker?"

"He is his son."

"Are you sure?"

"I ought to know," answered Herbert. "Chapin was my room mate, and I have visited him at his home. I know his father."

"Did you know that his father had failed?"

Herbert looked surprised.

"No. Is it true?"

"It is all in this morning's paper," said the cashier, "and it looks as if D. H. Chapin was a swindler. An examination of the affairs of the concern is to be made at once."

"Has Mr. Chapin been arrested?"

"No. The paper says he can't be found. If this young forger is really Chapin's son, he has probably gone to join his father."

"I know it is Chapin."

"And I can easily believe it," said the cashier. "He is probably a chip of the old block, and when he got wind of his father's troubles—as no doubt he did in good time—he made up his mind to get all he could lay his hands on and run under cover somewhere. If you can follow him up you can probably catch the father, too. Better make a report at once to the police."

"I—I will see what can be done," answered Herbert.

"Don't lose any time. Telegraph ahead, and catch him before he gets to New York," said the cashier, as the two boys went out.

Once on the pavement outside, Mark drew a long breath.

"Well, Chapin has left us both something to remember him by," he exclaimed.

"Something we are sure to remember, too."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing."

"It is a criminal offense, Herbert. Have we the right to keep quiet?"

"Slim chance of our catching the fellow if I reported it, and—well, I don't want to catch him—that's the amount of it.

"It would be an awfully ugly thing all through. You would have to testify against him, and ——"

"I won't take a single step towards prosecuting him," said Herbert, determinedly. "He has robbed me. Well, that is my affair. If I don't want to make any charge against him, there is nothing to be done."

"How about your two hundred dollars?"

"I can afford to lose that. To tell the whole truth, Mark, I owe Chapin nearly that amount. He was always very generous with his money, and often helped me when I was hard up and didn't want to ask father for more. I suppose he didn't look on this as actually stealing. When he heard of his father's difficulties, and things got so hot for him here, he no doubt looked upon this as the only way to get what he felt was due him. He naturally wanted to get out of town just as soon as he could after seeing this morning's papers."

"Of course," said Mark. "He would not dare stay here and face the fellows after they knew of his father's disgrace."

"He has trouble enough. I won't add to it by hounding him down."

"Nor would I," agreed Mark. "It is bad enough now."

"I will consider the loss as a repayment of my indebtedness to him—and let it drop there."

"It is only a pity that you have no acknowledgment of it from him—that you haven't his name in indorsement, instead of mine."

Herbert smiled bitterly.

"That's all right. Chapin will never come back to dun me. His chapter is closed."

And so indeed it was, as many a fellow in the class found out to his grief. Of these Tracy Hollis and Carver were chief mourners, each of them being losers to the extent of twenty dollars, but fully a dozen others had a story to tell of smaller amounts of money borrowed by Chapin and never returned. If, as Herbert said, Chapin was generous with money, he could certainly afford to be, for it cost him nothing. Where he loaned one dollar he borrowed five.

There was considerable excitement for a week or so, while the news of the swindling transactions of the banking house of D. H. Chapin & Co. kept coming in. The newspapers were eagerly bought and read. Each day new facts concerning the broker were brought to light, till at length a series of frauds extending over a number of years was revealed. In view of this it was a matter of no surprise to any one that D. H. Chapin could not be found. He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, and with him his son.

The latter's sudden departure from Belmont now seemed so natural that no one ever suspected that he might have reasons of his own for leaving. The debts he left behind him were all that the college generally held against him. Of his appropriation of the burial committee funds only Mark and Herbert knew. The costumer's claims were settled by the latter in the course of a week.

On leaving the bank with Mark, Herbert had gone at once to his room and written a letter to his father that brought the old colonel to Belmont by the first train. Then Herbert made a clean breast of the whole affair, expecting to meet with a storm of indignation. On the contrary, he found his father relieved that things were not worse.

"I worried myself sick," he said, "fearing that you may have been complicated with the transactions of this young rascal. As it is now, you have but to pay off the claim of the costumer's, and the whole affair is closed. You are well rid of him, and lucky to be rid of him at that price."

It was a long and sober conference that the colonel held with Herbert that afternoon—a conference that Herbert never forgot. It meant a turning point in his life.

No secrets now stood between father and son. Herbert's college career—his wasted opportunities, and bad habits were frankly and honestly acknowledged and discussed; and a resolution was then and there formed that re-shaped his whole life.

"You have still time to regain your old place in the college ranks," said the colonel encouragingly. "You can still make up for lost opportunities, but to do so you must work hard and unceasingly. You know it is a great deal harder to stop a stone that has started running down hill than it is to push one steadily along. You must check yourself and fight your way up."

"I have had a check that will stop me, father," answered Herbert, "and, as for the work in the future, you have my promise—a promise I will never break."

"I believe you, Herbert," said the old gentleman. "I know your purpose is set toward the right, and I know you will do your best. But resolution and work are not all. You must change completely the influences that surround you. You must rid yourself of the companions that have led you into bad habits. Without that your work will be largely in vain. You must throw off these evil associations and take on better ones. Keep away from these fast companions—go back to your old Medford chums. They are your best friends. Above all stand close by Mark—the best friend of all. We have both of us done him an injustice that it will take years to repair. We failed him when he most needed our trust, and—and—where is the boy any way."

"In his room I think."

"Let us find him at once," said the colonel, putting on his hat.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FOOTBALL PLANS.

There had been a meeting of the football team that afternoon—the most interesting meeting of the year. The games with Halford and Park had been played, and once again the banner of Belmont had been trailed in the dust.

For two years now the boys had been compelled to submit to humiliating defeat, and they were almost discouraged. After the first game—the game with Halford—Percy Randall appeared on the scene. He had come clear from New York, where he was now in business—determined to stir up and spur on the disheartened team. Under his inspiring coaching the boys did their best during the few days left before the Park game, but they were unequal to the strong team

opposed to them, and had to yield the championship to Park after a plucky, but unsuccessful fight.

The next day the team met and elected its captain for the ensuing year. For this position there were two lively candidates—Tracy Hollis and Mark, and both of them were nominated. The voting resulted in the election of Mark by a majority of three—a result that did not in the least affect the good feeling between the two candidates. Tracy was the first to congratulate Mark, and he did so with a sincerity that was unmistakable.

Now that this important point was settled, Mark, Tracy, and Percy were in Tracy's room, busily discussing the future football interests, and laying plans.

"Mind now, boys" said Percy, after an hour's talk. "I shall be on hand bright and early next year. This down hill run must be stopped. There is good stuff in the team and we must develop it to some purpose."

"What we need is proper coaching," put in Tracy. "Our fellows were not in decent shape for a game. They were tame and spiritless."

"Yes, and half beaten before the games began," added Mark. "My idea is that the graduate players ought to turn up here once in a while and coach the boys—keep them keyed up to the right pitch, and cheer them on. Look how the old Park players come back each fall to help their teams."

"That's it exactly—that's what we need," said Percy, "and I for one shall do my duty. Next September I will run down here, and look after things. I'll bring Richards with me, too. We'll start in at the beginning of the term and make things hum."

"And I will see that the team works hard and well," answered Mark. "If we don't win back the championship next year it won't be for lack of the right spirit."

"Nor for lack of the right material," said Tracy. "We have the men for the best team in the field."

"Nor for lack of the right captain," added Percy.

"Hear! Hear!" exclaimed Alfred Chase, while Mark laughed with pleasure.

"That's so," continued Percy. "No joking. I put lots of faith in Mark. I prophesied his electfon two years ago. He has worked like a Trojan, and deserves the position."

"And I am glad he won it," added Tracy generously. "He's the only man on the team I would care to work under."

"I never expected to be elected," said Mark, with an amused expression.

"Oh, go 'way!" exclaimed Percy.

"Isn't he sweet and modest!" said Alfred Chase. "He will be blushing next—the coy thing."

"I don't mean that," laughed Mark, in answer to this sarcasm. "I was only thinking of what Percy told me when I went over to 15 Warburton Hall. How about the traditions of the room, Percy? I supposed my chances of being elected captain were done for when I came back here."

"Hasn't that matter between you and Morgan been patched up lately?" asked Percy.

"Oh yes," answered Mark. "Herbert and I are better friends than ever."

"Well then, since Chapin has left college, more than likely you will take his place—and there you are, the football captain in No. 15 Warburton, the right man in the right place. By George, if Morgan don't speak to you I will give him a hint."

"No, don't!" exclaimed Mark, sobering at once.

"Why not? What claim has he to the room any way? I didn't have him in mind when I disposed of it. It was you, and you remember I told you so at the time. It made me mad when I heard about his ousting you. If he can't do the square thing now. I'll see what I can——"

Curiously enough it was at this moment that Herbert and his father made their entrance.

CHAPTER XLVII.
MORE REVELATIONS.

There was a moment of awkwardness. Colonel Morgan had not expected a group of boys. He greeted the others pleasantly, and then turned to Mark.

"I have to leave town tonight, Mark," he said, "and I wanted to have a talk with you before I go. Will you come over to Herbert's room for a short time? Can your friends spare you?"

Mark excused himself hastily and accompanied the colonel and Herbert out of the room. There was an affecting interview when the three reached number 15 Warburton Hall—a full and complete reconciliation, in which all wounds were healed and the most affectionate feelings prevailed.

"I leave Herbert to keep the peace now," said the colonel when the time came for him to go, "and I know he will do it. I don't think you boys will part again—now will you?"

The fervency of their response left the colonel no room for doubt on that point.

"Mark," said Herbert, when the colonel had gone, "there is one thing I must ask you at once—the one thing that has been uppermost in my mind since—well since all this trouble. I have'spoken of it to father and we are of one mind."

Mark looked at his friend inquiringly.

"I want your companionship again, Mark," continued Herbert. "I want you to come back and take your old place—to share rooms with me again."

Mark started. This request came so pat on what Percy Randall had said, that he could not help a momentary feeling of surprise at the coincidence.

"I want your friendship—and I need it," said Herbert. "I have fallen behind in everything, and your companionship will be a stimulus to me. It always was. And then, more than all, I want to try to undo what I have done. I want to make everything just like it was before we drifted apart. While you remain over in Colver Hall I will always be reminded of our quarrel and misunderstanding. Will you come back, old man?"

"Why, certainly," said Mark. "Nothing would please me better. I have already felt like an intruder over in Tracy's room—a third man crowds them I know, though they won't acknowledge it. I will be perfectly delighted to come back."

"Good! Good! Then the sooner the better. Will you speak to Tracy and Alfred tomorrow?"

"Yes, and I'm sure they will let me go willingly enough. They must have felt cramped while I was there."

"Do you think they would take it amiss?"

"No, I am confident they would not. They understand all the circumstances."

"To make sure let me speak to them. I will tell them that I want you to come back to your old quarters, and ask them to let you go."

"All right"

"You don't know what a help you will be to me, Mark," continued Herbert. "I have a great deal to overcome—bad habits and—and——"

"Never mind. You can do it," interrupted Mark. Herbert was silent a moment.

"Let me show you your old bedroom," he said at length.

His peculiar tone aroused Mark's curiosity. He watched Herbert closely as the latter walked over to one of the bedroom doors, took out a key and unlocked it.

"There, look at that," he said, throwing the door open.

Mark stepped inside. The room was quite barren of bedroom furniture. All that it contained was a peculiar looking oval table in the center of the room and a number of chairs.

"What is this for?" asked Mark bending forward.

"Roulette," answered Herbert.

Mark started violently.

"Why—why, how did this come?" he asked.

"An idea of Chapin's. He saw a roulette table in France a few years ago. Probably his father gambled there often. At any rate Chapin was fascinated with the game, and insisted on my learning to play. In freshman year when I visited Chapin in New York he took me to a place where it was played and I lost all my money. That was the reason I had to borrow from you when I came back to college. There is a place in town too and there I won that day and so returned you your money, as you remember.

"The place in town is notorious, and we were afraid of being seen there, so Chapin proposed our making a little game of our own. It was only your presence that prevented. When you left all was clear, and Chapin got that table in. It has been kept in your old bedroom under lock and key. Only about twenty fellows in college know of it. A certain set has been in the habit of meeting here night after night and gambling. When summer came we took it apart and stowed it away."

"So that is the way Chapin made money."

"Little money he made this fall. He used to win heavily, but lately he has been in hard luck."

"And so had to borrow from everybody."

"That was the reason, yes. Last week, however, just the night before all the trouble began about those receipted bills, he won a large sum of money, and it was then that he loaned me the necessary amount for me to pay off my losses. That was how I came to owe him money."

"Why, Herbert," exclaimed Mark, "this is awful. Just think of the risks you have run. If the faculty ever discovered this you would be expelled from college at once."

"I know it. I have felt uneasy all along, but Chapin insisted that there was no cause for fear—that we could always keep the door bolted and no one would suspect. And then there was a certain fascination about it that—that—oh Mark, what a load it lifts off my mind to know that I can now be rid of it! It has absolutely haunted me of late. You can now easily understand how anxious I was to have Chapin go.

"Driven to desperation as he was, he could turn and expose me. He had me completely in his power. His ruin meant my ruin—but now, now he has gone, all is well. I have only to destroy these evidences of my past life, and I can make a new start. It seems like waking from a bad dream. I can hardly believe it is true."

"How about Granby and Hall. They will betray nothing?"

"No. It is as much to their interest as mine to keep the secret. I only feared Chapin, for he was desperate and had nothing to lose—and he is gone—gone for good."

"You are very fortunate, Herbert, no doubt of that, but you must lose no time in getting rid of that table. The risk is terrible."

"I will take it apart tonight. Tomorrow I will have it split up and carried away It is a simple affair, constructed in town here under Chapin's directions. By tomorrow night there won't be a trace of it left."

While Herbert was speaking, he was fumbling in one of the bottom compartments of his writing desk.

"This, too, must be disposed of," he said.

He held up a long, straight pipe—the stem quite thick, the bowl very small and conical.

"What is that?" asked Mark uneasily.

"Another piece of Chapin's property—an opium pipe."

"Herbert!" cried Mark, "you haven't—"

"Only once or twice," interrupted Herbert, "though that was not Chapin's fault. He tried to get me to try it oftner, but I wouldn't. It made me deathly sick."

The recollection of that night back in freshman year, when Herbert was brought to the room by two upper classmen, flashed on Mark's mind.

"That night in the old room, in Colver Hall," he exclaimed, "you—you—"

"Yes—that was the first time, and the last time I meant it to be, too, but Chapin urged me and laughed me into two or three other trials. He was quite used to opium and often smoked it."

"And this is the fellow you have made a friend of, Herbert! How did you do it? What attracted you in him?"

Herbert shook his head.

"I don't know—now. But I used to think a lot of him. You see he was dashing, and he seemed to know everything about the world, and carried himself with such an easy air that he completely took me. I must say even now that he was very generous and kind in many ways. I thought nothing of his bad habits—they seemed only like a little wild oats. I never suspected him of being dishonest—in fact I can see now that I never really knew him until just lately, and it was a rude awakening when it did come."

"I am mighty glad you woke in time—and now that you have told me so much, Herbert, let me tell you that I think you have carried yourself uncommonly well through it all."

"I do not think that I have been harmed seriously," answered Herbert. "Of one thing I am sure; with your help and company all will go well. The past is done for—like that!"

Herbert snapped the pipe he was holding into several pieces and tossed them into the fire, where they were soon cinders and ashes.

"And now one thing more, Mark," he said. "Let me ask you again a question I asked you first in freshman year—and I won't take no this time. Will you join the glee club?"

Mark hesitated.

"You will find the crowd very different now. There is a great deal of new blood in the club—a new and nicer set."

"I know that," answered Mark. "But is there really a place for me?"

"Yes, more than ever, for now our only warbler, Chapin, has gone, and you are the only man for the vacancy. I ask you with some authority, for I am on the committee of selection."

"It seems to me I am slipping into all of Chapin's shoes," laughed Mark.

"No. They should always have been yours. They never fitted him. Come, will you join the club?"

"Yes, old man—if you want me."

(*To be continued.*)

[*This Story began in No. 577.*]

Rupert's Ambition.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.,

Author of "Chester Rand," "Lester's Luck," "Ragged Dick Series," etc.

CHAPTER XIII.
CLAYTON'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

Josiah Onthank never for a moment doubted the good faith of the clever swindler who was dazzling him with the prospect of a fine situation for his son. He was a man well to do, and over and above his farm was easily worth five thousand dollars in bonds and money interest.

Still he was reluctant to part with a hundred and fifty dollars, for this seemed to him a good deal of money. Yet if it would secure his son a position in the city with a large income it would be worth while. At any rate he would lay the matter before Rupert, and ask his advice.

During the afternoon he had a chance to speak with the bell boy.

"I've got something to tell you," he said.

"All right, sir."

"I've seen the young man I spoke to you about."

"Did he make you any offer?"

"Yes; he promised to give my son a place in his office at seventy five dollars a month."

"Where is his office?"

"In Wall Street. It's big and fine. He must do a raft of business."

"He is very kind to give your son a place."

"Yes, but he wants a premium of a hundred and fifty dollars. That's what bothers me. A hundred and fifty dollars is a pile of money. What do you think of it?"

"If you could really get a place for your son at seventy five dollars a month—a permanent place—it would be worth the money."

"So 'twould, so 'twould. Then you'd advise me to pay the money?"

"He wants it in advance, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Did you go into the office?"

"Yes."

"How do you know it is his?"

"He told me so," answered Mr. Onthank in surprise.

"Is that all the evidence you have?"

"He went and spoke to one of the men—his cashier, he told me. You don't think there's anything wrong, do you?"

"I think, Mr. Onthank, the man is trying to swindle you."

"You don't say!" ejaculated the farmer.

"Have you given him any money?"

"No. Yes, come to think on't, I have. I gave him five dollars for a refusal of the place. He said another man was after it."

"You haven't lost much yet. If you should give him a hundred and fifty dollars you would lose it all."

"What makes you think so? He seems like a gentleman."

"My information comes from a private detective."

"Well, well, I guess I've been a fool," said the farmer, in a tone of disappointment and mortification. "What do you advise me to do?"

"I will consult with the detective first, and tell you."

The next day Clarence Clayton made his appearance. Though not quite so sanguine as at first he still hoped to carry out his original plan, and obtain possession of the bulk of the farmer's money.

He found Mr. Onthank waiting for him in the reading room.

"Well, my friend," he said, "I presume you have made up your mind to secure a position for your son."

"You don't think you could let me have it for less?" asked Mr. Onthank, who had been instructed what to say.

"I don't see how I can. Nor can I give you long to decide. The other party is waiting for me at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and if you don't come to terms he will."

"You see it's rather a risk," said the farmer. "Suppose I pay my money and you don't keep your part of the agreement."

"You seem to be very suspicious, Mr. Onthank," returned Clayton, assuming indignation. "I am well known in the city as a man of the highest honor."

"Just so!" said the farmer. "Still, I should like to have you give me a paper, agreein' to give Ephraim a position. Then I should feel safe."

"I see no objection to that," said Clayton. "I'll make it out here."

He sat down at the table, and in a few minutes handed Ezekiel Onthank the following agreement:

"In consideration of a hundred and fifty dollars paid to me by Mr. Ezekiel Onthank, of Orange County, New York, I hereby promise to give his son Ephraim a place in my Wall Street office, with a salary to begin with of seventy five dollars per month. The engagement is to commence on the first of next month.

Clarence Clayton."

"Is that satisfactory, Mr. Onthank?" he asked.

"I reckon so," said the farmer, reading the document slowly. "Do you want the money today?"

"Certainly."

"Then I will go and get it."

Mr. Clayton leaned back in his chair, in a pleasant frame of mind. He chuckled to himself as he thought of the ease with which he had imposed upon his rural dupe.

"Mr. Onthank thinks he is sharp," he soliloquized. "He may change his opinion after a while."

The farmer did not keep him waiting long. He re-entered the reading room, but not alone. Richard Darke was with him.

Clarence Clayton started to his feet in dismay. He recognized the detective at once.

"Sit down, Mr. Clayton," said Darke smoothly. I see you have been doing a stroke of business with my friend, Mr. Onthank."

Clayton did not speak. He did not know what to say.

"Let me see the paper, Mr. Onthank."

The farmer handed it to the detective, who read it aloud slowly.

"You agree to give his son a situation in your Wall Street office? By the way, where is the office?" and the detective bent a penetrating glance on the face of the adventurer.

"I believe I made a little mistake," muttered Clayton. "Give me back the paper, and I will correct it."

"It is quite immaterial. It will do as it stands. You have not told me where your office is?"

"I took him into it."

"Have you given him any money, Mr. Onthank?"

"I gave him five dollars yesterday."

"What for?"

"To get the refusal of the place."

"Very good! I see Mr. Clayton is a man of business. On the whole, however, I don't think you have got full value for your money. Young man, I will trouble you to return the five dollars to my country friend."

"I—I am afraid I haven't got it with me," said Clayton uncomfortably.

"How much have you?"

After searching his pockets the adventurer produced two dollars.

"Will it be convenient for you to remain in the city and prosecute this man?" asked the detective, turning to the farmer.

"No—no, I want to leave town this afternoon."

"Then I am afraid we shall have to let him go. The three dollars you have lost you must consider paid for experience. If it makes you more cautious in future it will be well expended."

"So 'twill, so 'twill!" said the farmer. "Much obleeged to ye, squire, for gettin' me out of a scrape."

"You are still more indebted to the young bell boy," indicating Rupert. "Let me suggest that you can't do better than to offer him the money you have saved from our sharp friend here."

"I'll do better than that," said the farmer. "I will give him ten dollars. He has saved me from makin' a fool of myself."

"You see, Clayton," said the detective, "that it is better to be honest than a knave. The bell boy has made more in this affair than you."

"Can I go?" asked Clayton, crestfallen.

"Yes, and don't let me see you here again. I shall have my eye on you, and the next time you won't get off so easily."

Clayton lost no time in availing himself of this permission. In sadness and disappointment he left the hotel, inwardly resolving never to enter it again.

"Why wasn't I satisfied with the five dollars?" he asked himself. "Confound that young bell boy! He has spoiled my game. But for him I would be able to live in clover for a couple of months."

The farmer started on his return to Orange County in the afternoon. Before going he handed Rupert a ten dollar bill.

The bell boy was surprised. He knew nothing of Mr. Darke's recommendation, and did not expect such liberality from Ezekiel Onthank, whom he looked upon as a poor man.

"I don't think I ought to take it, Mr. Onthank," he said.

"You needn't hesitate, sonny. I can afford it. I don't wear as good clothes as the young sprig that tried to swindle me, but I ain't a poor man by no means. If you ever have time to pay me a visit in Orange County, I'll make you welcome and see that you have a good time."

"Thank you, Mr. Onthank. If I should hear of a good situation for your son I will let you know, and I won't charge a hundred and fifty dollars for it either. I haven't got an office in Wall Street though."

"That was a good joke. That 'ere Clayton was a pooty smart rascal after all."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the farmer. "Shall you invite him to visit you in Orange County, Mr. Onthank?"

"I guess he wouldn't accept. We live plain, and he's a rich Wall Street broker. But we'll be glad to see you at any time."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YOUNG NEWSBOY.

Rupert had engaged a room on Bleecker Street. It is not a fashionable locality, but the time was when A. T. Stewart and other men of social standing lived upon it.

Rupert's room, a small hall bedroom, cost him two dollars per week. It was rather large for a hall room, and was clean and well furnished, beyond the average of such rooms in that locality. The house was kept by a widow, a Mrs. Stetson, a good hard working woman, who deserved a better fate than the position of a lodging house keeper.

Usually Rupert reached his room about eight o'clock in the evening. He left the hotel at seven, and stopped for supper on the way. Arrived at his room he generally spent an hour in reading or studying (he had undertaken to review his arithmetic, thinking that some time he might obtain a situation where a good knowledge of that science might be needed.)

He had nearly reached the house where he lodged on the evening after the departure of Mr. Onthank from the Somerset Hotel, when his attention was drawn to a boy of ten with a bundle of the "Evening News" under his arm. He was shedding tears quietly. Rupert had a warm heart and was always kind to younger boys.

He was touched by the little fellow's evident distress and spoke to him.

"What is the matter, Johnny?" he asked.

"I can't sell my papers," answered the boy.

"How many have you got left?"

"Twelve copies."

"How many did you have in the first place?"

"Twenty."

"Then you have only sold eight?"

"Yes sir."

"So that you are behind hand unless you sell more. Have you a father and mother living?"

The boy answered in the affirmative.

"I shouldn't think they would let you go out selling papers so late."

"They are very poor," answered the boy in a sorrowful tone.

"Doesn't your father work?"

"Yes, he works for Mr. Lorimer on Third Avenue."

Rupert's attention was aroused. This Lorimer, as the reader has already been told, was his father's former partner, and as Rupert believed, the cause of his failure.

"If your father has a position I should think he would be able to support his family."

"Mr. Lorimer only pays him five dollars a week," explained the boy.

"Only five dollars a week!" repeated Rupert in amazement. "Doesn't he pay more to his other salesmen?"

"Yes, but he knew father was poor, so he told him he must work for that or leave the store."

Rupert was not altogether surprised to hear this, as he knew that Lorimer was a mean man who had no consideration for the poor.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"In that big house," answered the boy, pointing to a tall tenement, one of the shabbiest on the street. "We live on the fifth floor, but I guess we'll have to move out tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Father hasn't been able to save enough to pay the rent."

"What rent do you pay?"

"Six dollars. Father has only got three dollars towards it."

"What is your name?"

"Harry Benton."

"Well, Harry, I am not very rich, but I can help you a little. I will take all your papers, to begin with."

The little boy's face brightened.

"You are very kind," he said.

"And now you may take me to your home. Perhaps I can think of some way to relieve your father."

"Come this way, then," said Harry.

Rupert followed him to the entrance of the tenement house.

"I don't know but you'll be tired going up so many stairs," he said. "We live on the top floor."

"I'm not a very old man yet," laughed Rupert. "I guess I can stand it if you can."

The halls were dark and dingy, and there was an unwholesome tenement house odor. Through one open door Rupert caught sight of a drunken man lying prone on the floor. Evidently the occupants of the house were for the most part of a low class. But when Rupert followed his little guide into the home of his parents on the upper floor he found respectable, and not squalid, poverty. There was an air of neatness pervading the room, while Harry's parents looked thoroughly honest. Mr. Benton gazed inquiringly at Rupert.

"I hope you'll excuse my intrusion," said Rupert politely, "but your little boy seemed in trouble and I ventured to come up stairs with him."

"I couldn't sell my papers," explained Harry. "He took all I had left," indicating Rupert.

"You were very kind to my little boy," said Mrs. Benton gratefully. "Won't you sit down? This is my husband."

Mr. Benton was a man of medium size. His features were worn and sad.

"Pray take a seat," he said. "We haven't many callers and still fewer friends. We can appreciate kindness as we meet with it so seldom."

"Harry tells me you are in the employ of Mr. Lorimer on Third Avenue."

"Yes."

"He says you are poorly paid."

"Five dollars a week can hardly be considered liberal," returned Mr. Benton with a faint smile.

"Mr. Lorimer is a very mean man."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes. He was my father's partner in Buffalo."

"Your father is not in business with him now?"

"My poor father died. I have every reason to think that Mr. Lorimer swindled him out of a large sum of money, and brought on his financial ruin."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Benton gravely.

"Does he pay other salesmen as poorly as he pays you?"

"There may be two or three others as poorly paid, but I think that he knew of my poverty and took advantage of it. At any rate he called me to the office one day, and told me that I must accept a reduction from eight dollars to five, or leave his service. You can imagine how I decided. With my wife and child to be supported I had no choice. That was a month since, and my life has been a hard struggle from that time. I have been obliged to let Harry sell papers in the street, though the poor boy cannot earn more than from ten or fifteen cents a day in that way."

"Harry told me that you would have difficulty in paying your rent."

"Yes," answered Mr. Benton despondently. "We lack three dollars of the sum required, and our landlord is a hard man. I am afraid we shall be turned into the street."

"If you will allow me I will lend you the amount you need."

"But I am afraid I shall not be able to repay you."

"I will take my risk of that."

"Then I will not refuse. It will lift a burden from my mind. But how can you afford to be so kind? You don't look rich."

"I am a bell boy in a hotel, but I

am pretty well paid, and I received today a handsome present from a guest. It is because I am poor myself that I can sympathize with the poor. Besides you have suffered from the meanness of the man who ruined my poor father. That alone gives you a claim upon me."

"I should like to know the name of my new friend."

"My name is Rupert Rollins."

"I shall remember it. I hope you will come to see us sometimes."

"I shall be glad to do so."

"Are none of your family living?"

"Yes, I have a mother and sister in Rutherford, a few miles from the city. They are pleasantly situated, and mother is earning her living as a housekeeper. But I won't intrude on you longer tonight. I will call again soon."

It seemed strange to Rupert that he should again be reminded of his father's old partner. Mr. Lorimer apparently had not changed for the better since he had removed from Buffalo to New York. He was the same mean, selfish man he had always been. Yet he seemed to be prosperous, while his victims were suffering the ills of poverty.

Rupert could not understand it. It was a difficult problem for him to solve. This is not surprising, for it has puzzled a great many older and wiser persons than Rupert.

"Well," he reflected, "I have parted with three dollars out of the ten that Mr. Onthank gave me. But no matter! the three dollars will do more good to the Bentons than to me. I can spare it, and I would not care to have it back."

An idea came to Rupert. The hall bedroom which he occupied was lonely and not homelike. If he could only make his home with a refined family like the Bentons he would find it much more agreeable. If they with the help of the eight dollars a month which his rent cost him could take a small flat, it would be a good arrangement all round.

At present there were difficulties in the way, as they were unable to raise even the small rent which they were paying now. Still circumstances might change. He resolved to keep up the acquaintance and watch for some way of helping Mr. Benton to a better position. Even ten dollars a week would be a poor salary for a good dry goods salesman, yet upon this he would be able to live comfortably.

Rupert had the curiosity to enter a drug store and look up the name of Mr. Lorimer in the directory. He ascertained that the dry goods merchant lived on Lexington Avenue between Thirty Fourth and Thirty Fifth streets. This was a desirable location, and the house, as he afterwards learned, was a handsome high stoop residence, probably worth twenty five thousand dollars.

But Rupert did not envy his father's old partner. "I would rather be poor and honest," he reflected, "than live in a fine house surrounded by luxury, gained by grinding the faces of the poor."

CHAPTER XV.

MR. SYLVESTER'S BIRTHDAY.

The next day Rupert received a letter at the Somerset Hotel. It was signed Frank Sylvester, and ran thus: "Dear Rupert—

Tomorrow is my birthday. Come and spend the evening with me. I will wait dinner till you come.

Your friend,
Frank Sylvester."

Rupert decided at once to accept the invitation. He had learned to like Sylvester, as indeed he had reason to do.

He was in doubt as to whether there would be much company, but he was not provided with a nice suit, so that he need not be ashamed of his appearance. Arrived at his friend's residence, he found to his surprise that there was but one other guest besides himself, a Mr. Maxwell, a stout, pleasant looking man of forty five.

"Rupert," said Sylvester, "this is my cousin John Maxwell. He is not an idler like myself, but is a partner in a large dry goods house down on Grand Street. John, this is a special friend of mine. When we first met he was able to do me a serivice which I shall long remember. I am rather young to adopt him, having only reached the age of twenty five."

"Quarter of a century," laughed Maxwell.

"That sounds older, to be sure. At any rate I look upon him as a younger brother, and so have invited him here at my birthday dinner, as a relative."

"You don't seem to have many relatives, Mr. Sylvester," said Rupert. "I thought there might be quite a party."

"Most of my relatives live at the West. However, I am satisfied to have you here and my cousin John."

"If you are Frank's brother, I suppose I am your cousin also, Rupert," said Mr. Maxwell.

"I shall feel proud to have you regard me so, Mr. Maxwell."

"May I ask if you are in the same business as Frank?"

"Doing nothing at all," laughed Sylvester.

"I am a bell boy at the Somerset Hotel," answered Rupert.

He watched Maxwell to see if the revelation of his position would affect that gentleman's opinion of him.

"I hope you are well paid."

"Yes; I receive five dollars a week and my board."

"That is better than you would do with us."

"Mr. Maxwell," said Rupert with a sudden thought, "I wish I knew you better."

"Why?"

"Because then I might ask you a favor."

"To enter our employment? I will take you if you wish, but I advise you to stay where you are."

"It is not for myself that I ask, but for an experienced salesman who is in very hard luck. He is working for Stephen Lorimer of Third Avenue, at five dollars a week."

"Five dollars!" exclaimed Maxwell in surprise. "And you say he is an experienced salesman?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why should he work for such low wages then?"

"Mr. Lorimer knew that he was poor, had a family, and was therefore in his power. He told him to choose between five dollars a week and dismissal."

"That is like Lorimer. He has the reputation of being the meanest man in the business. How did you become acquainted with the man you recommend?"

Rupert told the story, and both Sylvester and Maxwell were interested.

"I suppose you don't know Mr. Lorimer?" said Maxwell.

"I know him only too well," answered Rupert. "He was my father's partner in Buffalo and was the cause of his ruin and death."

"Was the firm name 'Rollins & Lorimer'?" asked Maxwell.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I have met your father. I was for several years a traveling salesman, and sold goods to the firm in Buffalo. I always preferred dealing with your father. I didn't like Lorimer."

"I am very glad to meet any one who knew my father," said Rupert, brightening up.

"I can hardly refuse your request now, Rupert. Tell your friend—what's his name?"

"Henry Benton."

"Tell Mr. Benton to call at our store early next Monday morning and inquire for me. Give him a letter, so that I may know he is the right party. We are not taking on any salesmen, but one in the dress department is about to leave us and enter the employment of a firm in Chicago. I will put your friend in his place at a salary of twelve dollars a week."

"I can't tell you how much I thank you," said Rupert gratefully. "You will bring happiness to a deserving family, and I don't think you will have occasion to regret it."

The dinner was an excellent one, and was enjoyed by the small company who partook of it.

"I must tell you, Rupert," said Sylvester, "that I have peculiar reasons for enjoying my twenty fifth birthday, even if I have, as cousin John expresses it, lived a quarter of a century. An old uncle left me fifty thousand dollars some years ago, directing that it should pass into my possession at the age of twenty five."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Sylvester. I am sure you will make good use of it."

"I am not so sure of that, but I hope so. I have begun to make use of it already. You shake your head, Cousin John, but I don't think you will disapprove my expenditure. I have invested seventy five dollars in a gold watch for Rupert, and thirty five more in a gold chain."

He drew from his pocket a watch and chain which he handed to the astonished bell boy.

"I don't know what to say, Mr. Sylvester," said Rupert gratefully.

"Your face speaks for you. I want no other thanks."

"I don't know what they will say at the hotel. They will think I am putting on style for a bell boy."

"I want some one to share my good fortune. I believe it is the best way to show my gratitude to Providence. As Cousin John has done something for your new friend, Mr. Benton, I will follow his example. Here are twenty five dollars which you may give him with my best wishes."

"This gives me even more pleasure than the watch," said Rupert with radiant face. "I wish you could see how much happiness your gift will carry to a worthy family."

"I will call with you and make their acquaintance some day."

The evening passed pleasantly, and it was with a happy heart that Rupert returned to his humble home. That is it seemed humble compared with the fine house in which he had spent the evening.

It was not until the next night that he was able to call on his friends in Bleecker Street.

He toiled up to the fifth floor, and knocked at the door.

There was a low "Come in," and he lifted the latch and entered.

He was startled to see that Mrs. Benton had been shedding tears, and her husband was leaning back in his chair with a look of sadness and despondency.

"What is the matter?" he asked quickly.

"I thought we could not be any worse off," said Mrs. Benton tearfully, "but I was mistaken. Today, Mr. Lorimer discharged my husband."

"What, in the middle of the week?"

"No; he is to leave on Saturday."

"But why is this?"

"I will tell you," said Mr. Benton. "Do you know Mr. Benton's son, Julian?"

"Yes, he is a very disagreeable boy."

"I got into trouble with him today. He interfered with me in my work, and I reproved him. The consequence is that he spoke to his father against me, and got me discharged."

"You can imagine what this means to us," said Mrs. Benton. "It was hard enough to live on five dollars a week, even with the help of the few pennies that Harry brings in, but now we must live on nothing. I don't know what will become of us."

"But Mr. Benton may secure another position."

"There is very little chance of it. No one is taking on new salesmen."

"Nevertheless Mr. Benton can go to work next Monday in a store on Grand Street at a salary more than double what he is now getting."

"Surely you are not in earnest?"

"Quite so. I will give him a letter to Gilbert & Maxwell, and he will be set to work at once."

"But this seems incredible!"

"I will explain it to you."

"You are our good angel," said Mrs. Benton when Rupert had concluded his account. "You come to us in our sorrow with the best news we have had for many a day."

"Now Mr. Benton, I have a proposal to make. I want you to hire a nice flat in a better neighborhood, and take me as a lodger. I am willing to pay you eight dollars a month. For twenty I think you can hire a desirable tenement, which will only leave you twelve dollars to pay."

"We shall be very much pleased to do so. If only we had a little ready money——"

"I came near forgetting something important. I am the bearer of a gift to you from a good friend of mine, Mr. Sylvester of Harlem. Yesterday was his birthday. He has given me a gold watch and chain, and to you he sends twenty five dollars!"

Mrs. Benton's joy can be imagined.

"You have indeed proved a friend," she said.

"It is a satisfaction to me to feel that the malice of Julian Lorimer will be disappointed. If I see him tomorrow I shall not hesitate to give him a piece of my mind."

CHAPTER XVI.

JULIAN HAS TWO DISAPPOINTMENTS.

Had Julian Lorimer been older, and in political life, he would have aspired to the position of a boss. He enjoyed power, and desired to have his authority acknowledged by others. When Mr. Benton reproved him for interfering with him he felt outraged and determined to have revenge upon the independent salesman. Therefore he complained to his father, and a discharge was the result.

Mr. Lorimer, however, regretted afterwards giving in to the wishes of his son. He recognized the fact that Benton was an experienced salesman whose services were valuable, and that he was getting these at an extraordinarily low rate of wages. He could secure a man in his place doubtless, but it would not be so easy to get one so competent as cheaply.

Accordingly on the morning succeeding the dismissal he had a conversation with Julian at the breakfast table.

"I think I shall have to take Benton back, Julian," he said.

"What, after his impudence to me?" exclaimed Julian, frowning.

"Probably you provoked him. At any rate he is a valuable man. I don't see how I can spare him."

"There are lots of clerks out of employment."

"That may be, but he has long experience."

"If you take him back pa, he will insult me again. I should think you would have more consideration for me."

"I can require him to apologize to you. The man is poor as poverty, and won't dare to refuse."

"Can't you cut down his pay?"

"Not very well. I pay him very little now. You see, Julian, this is a matter of business. I think you are too much in the store, as you have no employment there. If you want to go to work, that will be a different matter."

"No, thank you. When I go into

business I want to be a banker, or a wholesale merchant."

"If you will be at the store at noon I will have Benton apologize to you."

Mr. Benton was at work in his place when Julian passed through the store and paused in front of his counter.

"Pa wants to see you in the office," he said abruptly.

"Very well, as soon as I fold up these goods," answered the salesman.

"You'd better hurry up, if you know what's best for yourself."

"And you'd better cease talking to me in that way or I may teach you better manners."

Julian Lorimer flushed, and his eyes blazed with anger.

"Oho!" he said, "you don't seem to know who I am."

"I know that you are an impudent boy."

Julian nodded vigorously, and went at once to his father.

"Well, I told Benton to come, and he said he'd come as soon as he got ready."

"Are you repeating what he said exactly?"

"Yes, that is, he said he'd come when he had folded up some goods."

"That is a different matter."

"He called me an impudent boy and threatened to lick me."

Mr. Lorimer did not reply to this, He had a suspicion that Julian had represented matters worse than they were.

Two minutes later Henry Benton presented himself at the office. He was quiet and calm.

"I understand you wish to see me, Mr. Lorimer," he said.

"Yes. My son has complained of you."

"You will excuse my saying that I am not in his employ, but in yours. If he were your partner he would have a right to speak to me about my work. As it is he is only your son, and I don't concede his right."

"As my son he is entitled to your respect."

"He would have been treated with respect had he treated me respectfully."

"Did you ever hear the like?" Julian burst in.

"Silence, Julian!" said his father. "In your circumstances, Mr. Benton, I think you have acted very unwisely."

"How?" asked Benton briefly.

"You depend upon the wages I pay you for your livelihood."

"Very well, sir."

"And you make an enemy in my family, and endanger your remaining in my service."

"I understood that you discharged me yesterday."

"Ahem! yes, but I don't want to be too hard upon you. You have a family, have you not?"

"I have a wife and young son."

"If I should discharge you they would suffer."

"What does this mean?" thought Benton.

"Therefore I have decided to recall the discharge, on condition that you will apologize to Julian for treating him with insolence."

"If I am to retain my position on that condition, Mr. Lorimer, I prefer to leave the store."

"I am surprised at your folly!" said the merchant sharply. "Here, I give you a chance to retain your place and your ill timed pride steps in and interferes with your interest."

"May I ask what I am to apologize to your son for, Mr. Lorimer?"

"You did not treat him with the respect due to my son," answered Mr. Lorimer pompously.

"Do you sustain him in interfering with my work?" asked Benton calmly.

"I see you are incorrigible," said Lorimer angrily. "If your family suffers in consequence of your obstinacy, don't blame me."

"I shall not have occasion to blame you or any one else."

"What do you mean by that? I don't understand you."

"I mean only that though I shall leave your employment I have another place waiting for me. I shall not be idle for a day."

"Is this true?" asked Lorimer, astonished.

"Yes, sir, quite true."

"For whom are you going to work?"

"You must excuse my keeping that a secret for the present."

"When did you make application for a place?"

"I made no application at all. It was offered to me."

"I shall not give you any recommendation."

"None will be necessary, sir. I have worked elsewhere, and my former employer will recommend me."

"I don't believe he's got a place, pa," put in Julian. "I'll bet he's bluffing."

Benton regarded Julian with contempt, but did not say a word.

"What pay are you to get?" asked Lorimer.

"More than twice what you are paying me, sir. You took advantage of my poverty and my necessities to reduce me to five dollars a week, a lower price probably than is paid by any dry goods merchant in the city to an experienced salesman."

"It seems to me you are getting very independent," said Lorimer, annoyed.

"I feel more independent than I did yesterday. I have one favor to ask."

"I have already told you that I cannot give you a recommendation."

"I don't care for one. If you can conveniently spare me I should like to retire from your service today."

"Let him go, pa!"

But Mr. Lorimer did not agree with Julian.

"I prefer that you should remain here till your week expires. If there is any failure to get the situation you expect, I will continue you in my service at six dollars a week."

"Thank you, sir, but I don't think there is any doubt about my situation. If you have nothing further to say to me I will return to my work."

When Benton had retired Mr. Lorimer turned to Julian angrily.

"There," he said, "I have lost one of my best salesmen whom I was getting dirt cheap on account of your misconduct."

Julian was rather taken aback at this reproach.

"You can get lots of men in his place, pa," he said.

"Not at the same wages. Now go away, I am busy."

"I wish I knew where he is going to work," thought Julian. "I might write an anonymous letter to his employer. I hate him. He puts on too many airs for a cheap clerk."

Julian's malicious plot had certainly failed signally. The next day about one o'clock he was passing the Somerset Hotel on lower Broadway, just as Rupert was coming out on an errand.

Julian at once noticed the watch chain. As he had never known of Rupert's owning a watch, his curiosity was excited.

"What time is it?" he asked jeeringly.

Rupert took out his watch.

"Five minutes after one," he answered.

The watch was a handsome one as Julian noticed.

"Is that your watch?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes."

"Is it oroid?"

"No; it is gold. Do you wish to look at it?"

Julian's curiosity was such that he took it in his hand. He could see at once that it was a genuine and probably expensive gold watch.

"You must be making high pay to afford a watch like this," he said in a tone of annoyance.

"It was a present."

"From whom?"

"A friend up town."

Julian dropped the watch and went on his way in an ill humor. He had a watch himself, but it was of less than half the value of Rupert's. He inwardly resolved to ask his father for a new one.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. PACKARD, OF COLORADO.

In a short time the Bentons were settled in a neat flat located near Washington Square. They purchased additional furniture on the installment plan, and were able to offer Rupert a home more desirable than the room he had occupied. The new prosperity was reflected in the faces of the now happy wife and mother.

"It is you who have brought this happy change in our circumstances, Rupert," she said. "I tremble to think what would have been our condition but for you."

"In return you give me a pleasant home," said Rupert.

At the hotel things went on pleasantly. Rupert's services were appreciated, and this was pleasant, though his salary had not been increased.

Clarence Clayton never entered the hotel now. Rupert wondered what had become of him. But one Thursday afternoon—his afternoon off—he strayed down to the Battery.

Seated on one of the benches, looking out towards Governor's Island, Rupert's attention was drawn after a while to two men who occupied a neighboring bench. One of those he recognized at once as Clayton. The other he also recognized as a guest at the Somerset Hotel, a new arrival. He was a man of middle age who had the apearance of a Westerner. Rupert now remembered that he had entered himself on the hotel register as from Colorado.

"I wonder what mischief Clayton is up to now?" Rupert asked himself.

The benches were so near that he was able to hear the conversation between the two men. Clayton had a showy gold watch in his hand which he was endeavoring to sell to his new acquaintance.

"The fact is, my friend," Rupert heard him say, "I am awfully hard up. I need money badly, and that is why I offer you such a bargain. This watch is nearly new and cost me one hundred and fifty dollars in cold cash. I offer it to you for fifty."

"How did you get so hard up?" asked the stranger.

"I took a flyer in Wall Street. I have a friend who is a broker, and he gave me a pointer. I don't blame him, for he believed in it, and invested himself. However, things didn't turn out as we expected, and I was cleaned out."

"How about him?"

"He lost a good deal more than I did, but he could stand it, and I couldn't."

The Western man took the watch in his hand.

"It seems a good watch," he said. "I suppose it is solid gold?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I don't know much about watches myself, though I come from a mineral producing State. We have plenty of miners there, but I am a cattle man."

"Indeed! Is that a paying business?"

"Well, I've made a little money at it," said the other in a complacent tone.

"I am looking for a paying business myself."

The stranger laughed.

"You are a city man," he said. "You wouldn't do for the West. You wouldn't make much of a cowboy."

"I don't suppose I should."

"You couldn't wear patent leather shoes in Colorado."

"Then I'll give it up if you say so. To tell the truth, I am better fixed than you would suppose. I have an income of a thousand dollars a year, paid me quarterly by the trustees of my late uncle's estate, but the next payment won't come due for a month. I must tide over till then. That is why I offer you this watch for fifty dollars."

"I shouldn't think you would like to make such a sacrifice."

"Oh, well, I need the money. Besides what is my loss is your gain."

"You seem to take matters philosophically."

"That's my way. Seriously, though, it will be a great favor to me if you take the watch. Fifty dollars isn't much, but with economy it will carry me through till my next payment."

"Well, if you put it on that ground, I don't know but I will oblige you."

The Colorado man took from his pocket a large wallet evidently stuffed with bills, and was about to consummate the bargain when Rupert rose from his seat hastily. He felt that it was about time for him to take a hand in the transaction.

"Mr. Packard," he said, "you'll excuse my interfering, but I advise you not to buy that watch."

Clarence Clayton looked up quickly. He recognized Rupert only too well, and would like to have pitched him into the bay. What was to be done? He determined to brazen it out.

"Young man," he said sharply, "you had better mind your own business."

"How do you know my name?" asked the man from Colorado, not recognizing Rupert.

"I am one of the bell boys at the Somerset Hotel where you are boarding."

"Why do you give this warning? Can you judge of the value of the watch?"

"No, sir, but I know this man."

"That is false," asserted Clayton, "I never saw you before to my knowledge."

"I don't know what to think," said the cattle man, looking puzzled. "You say you know this man?"

"Yes. He came near cheating one of our guests not long since by offering to give his son a place in an office in Wall Street for a hundred and fifty dollars."

"The boy lies," exclaimed Clayton. "I have a good mind to give you in charge, you young rascal."

"You are quite welcome to do it," said Rupert coolly.

"I hope my word is as good as this boy's," continued Clayton.

"Don't take either, Mr. Packard. I am no judge of watches. Suppose you go to a jeweler's and ask him the value of it. If it is worth even a hundred dollars, you can venture to give this man what he asks, that is, supposing he has come by it honestly."

"That is a sensible proposal. I accept it."

"But I don't!" said Clayton. "I feel that I have been insulted, and I decline to sell the watch. As for you, you young rascal, I shall remember your interference with me in my business."

He rose and went off with his head very high in the air.

"Sit down and tell me all about this fellow," said the cattle man. "I suspect you have saved me from being imposed upon."

Rupert told the story, and the stranger thanked him heartily.

"I have always been told that I must look out for myself in New York, and I begin to realize it. How does it happen you are so far away from the hotel?"

"It is my afternoon off."

They sat and chatted of Colorado, about which Rupert felt considerable curiosity. At the end of fifteen minutes their attention was drawn to a man of prosperous appearance who seemed in trouble. He paused as he reached their bench, and asked anxiously, "Has either of you seen a young man nicely dressed, and carrying a cane?" and he went on to describe Clarence Clayton.

(To be continued.)

POINTS FOR PATENTEES.

eaders of The Argosy now and then write
is to inquire about the procedure in the
ent office when a man wishes to secure
rights on an article he has invented. Not
y these particular individuals, but our
ders generally will be interested in the
owing details:

) Write to the Commissioner of Patents,
shington, D. C., requesting a copy of the
ules of Practice," which he will send free.
en carefully read from page 9 to page 17.
ut the articles which may be patented,
the form of application and drawings.
another part of the pamphlet there are
cimen applications and drawings.

) Prepare an application in accordance
h the rules, make or procure drawings
h as the Patent Office requires, make
h to your papers, and send to the Com-
ssioner of Patents with $15. This is the
government fee. Later, if you require
ice that a patent will be issued, then a
ond government fee of $20 must be paid.

) Some people are able to prepare their
n papers and drawings properly; but
se who are not consult a lawyer and em-
y a draughtsman. Patent lawyers' charges
y according to the importance of the
e; but they seldom ask less than $20 or $30,
d sometimes more, besides the cost of the
wings.

) If an inventor is afraid that some one
ll steal his idea before he can put it in
ape, he can protect himself in two ways.
st, he can make out a paper called a
'aveat," and send to the Commissioner of
tents. This document briefly describes
invention, and declares that he has not
rfected it. It will be good for a year, if no
e else has got ahead of him; and it may be
newed for another year. The caveat is de-
ribed on pages 52 and 53 of "Rules of Prac-
e," and a specimen caveat is given further
ng in that publication. A fee of $10 must
paid to Uncle Sam for each year a
veat is in force. Another way to guard
e's rights is to tell a trusty friend about the
ict nature of the proposed invention, and
ve that friend make a record of the date,
that, if necessary, he can swear to it, and
us prove priority of invention, if some one
e wrongfully claims the credit. This plan
as good as the other.

) Some inventors take the precaution to
ve an expert in Washington search the
tent Office files, to discover whether any-
dy has already patented his idea. Such
perts can be hired for between $2 and $5.

) If a person cannot easily raise the money to pay the government and his attorney, he can sometimes sell a quarter or a half of his right to a manufacturer or other person for enough to cover the outlay. In order to perfect the invention, some expense for material and experiment is often incurred; and this, perhaps, can be met in the same way. If no lawyer or manufacturer is willing to advance a cent for this purpose, the inventor may well doubt the value of his idea. Money is often wasted by patenting a worthless article.

NOT TO BE LEARNED AT SCHOOL.

Do you think you could do well in a newspaper office, young man? Do you realize that you have a fair, all-round education and that consequently the press is just the line in which to make use of it? To gain an inkling of requirements that would come in handy for others besides proof readers, make a note of points brought out in the following letter, written once by Horace Greeley, founder of the New York *Tribune*, to an aspiring young friend of his:

"I think it very probable you might prove a good reporter, and will commend you as such to our city editor, Mr. Otterson, should you come here, but I cannot attempt to overrule him. He is responsible for his department, and could not be justly held unless he had full liberty in the choice of his subordinates. I think I shall never advise any man to come to this city, in view of the suffering which now prevails. Should you resolve to come here on your own motion, about the 28th of April should find you here. You must take your chance of starving if you come.

"As to proof reading, I think a first rate proof reader could always find a place in our concern within a month. But the place requires far more than you can learn; it requires a universal knowledge of facts, names and spelling. Do you happen to know off hand that Stephens, of Georgia, spells his name with a ph, and Stevens, of Michigan, with a v in the middle? Do you know that Elliot, of Massachusetts, has but one l in his name, while Elliot (lately in the House from Kentucky), has two? Do you know the politics and prejudices of Oliver, of Missouri, and Oliver, of New York, respectively, so well that when your proof says 'Mr. Oliver' said so and so in the House, you know whether to insert 'of Mo.' or 'of N. Y.' after his name? Would you choose to strike out 'of Mo.' and put in 'of N. Y.' if you perceived the speech taking a particular direction respecting slavery, which shows that it must be wrongly attributed in the telegraph dispatch? My friend, if you are indeed qualified for a first rate proof reader, or can easily make yourself so, you need never fear. But don't fancy the talent and knowledge required for a mere Secretary of State, President, or any such trust will be sufficient.

"Yours, HORACE GREELEY."

BOILING WATER THAT ISN'T HOT.

Nature seems to play queer pranks sometimes, as when she thrusts a glacier out into a sunny valley, where its icy surface sparkles in the warm sunshine and its foot rests on daisy starred turf. And now comes a writer in the "Times Democrat" of New Orleans, who calmly assures us that boiling water is not always hot. This is the way it happens, he says:

When water boils ordinarily it is because great heat has separated the tiny particles of the water, forcing upward and outward in lively bubbles the air which is contained in them. This is done in spite of the downward pressure of the atmosphere. After the water has become hot enough to boil it can get no hotter, because the air escapes as fast as it is sufficiently heated to do so.

There are places on the earth where the pressure of the atmosphere upon the water is so slight that it requires but little heat to push apart the particles and set free the air bubbles which are confined in the water, so it begins to boil before it becomes very hot. It ought hardly to be called cold water, perhaps, but it is certainly far from being as hot as ordinary boiling water. This state of things is found on all high mountain tops, as the atmosphere grows weaker and its pressure less as one ascends.

A gentleman traveling at a great elevation in the Andes Mountains, put some potatoes in a pot of water over a hot fire. The water began to boil almost immediately, but the potatoes did not cook. All the afternoon and all night the water bubbled and boiled, but still the potatoes were not cooked. The boiling water was not hot enough.

THE HEIGHT OF REALISM.

Laudleigh—"That snowstorm you have painted is wonderfully realistic!"

Daubleigh—"It must be. A tramp got into my studio one day, caught sight of the picture, and unconsciously put on my fur overcoat before he went out."—Exchange.

AFTER THE SNOW BALL.

"Well," said one market man to another, cheerily, "how did the snow strike you?"

"In the back of the neck mostly," was the reply, "but it depended a good deal on the aim of the boy who threw it."—Washington Star.