

Brave and Bold

Horatio Alger, Jr.

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THE FORTUNES OF ROBERT RUSHTON

By

HORATIO ALGER JR.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG RIVALS.

The main schoolroom in the Millville Academy was brilliantly lighted, and the various desks were occupied by boys and girls of different ages from ten to eighteen, all busily writing under the general direction of Professor George W. Granville, Instructor in Plain and Ornamental Penmanship.

Professor Granville, as he styled himself, was a traveling teacher, and generally had two or three evening schools in progress in different places at the same time. He was really a very good penman, and in a course of twelve lessons, for which he charged the very moderate price of a dollar, not, of course, including stationery, he contrived to impart considerable instruction, and such pupils as chose to learn were likely to profit by his instructions. His venture in Millville had been unusually successful. There were a hundred pupils on his list, and there had been no disturbance during the course of lessons.

At nine precisely, Professor Granville struck a small bell, and said, in rather a nasal voice:

"You will now stop writing."

There was a little confusion as the books were closed and the pens were wiped.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the professor, placing one arm under his coat tails and extending the other in an oratorical attitude, "this evening completes the course of lessons which I have had the honor and pleasure of giving you. I have endeavored to impart to you an easy and graceful penmanship, such as may be a recommendation to you in after life. It gives me pleasure to state that many of you have made great proficiency, and equaled my highest expectations. There are others, perhaps, who have not been fully sensible of the privileges which they enjoyed. I would say to you all that perfection is not yet attained. You will need practice to reap the full benefit of my instructions. Should my life be spared, I shall hope next winter to give another course of writing lessons in this place, and I hope I may then have the pleasure of meeting you again as pupils. Let me say, in conclusion, that I thank you for your patronage and for your good behavior during this course of lessons, and at the same time I bid you good-by."

With the closing words, Professor Granville made a low bow, and placed his hand on his heart, as he had done probably fifty times before, on

delivering the same speech, which was the stereotyped form in which he closed his evening schools.

There was a thumping of feet, mingled with a clapping of hands, as the professor closed his speech, and a moment later a boy of sixteen, occupying one of the front seats, rose, and, advancing with easy self-possession, drew from his pocket a gold pencil case, containing a pencil and pen, and spoke as follows:

"Professor Granville, the members of your writing class, desirous of testifying their appreciation of your services as teacher, have contributed to buy this gold pencil case, which, in their name, I have great pleasure in presenting to you. Will you receive it with our best wishes for your continued success as a teacher of penmanship?"

With these words, he handed the pencil to the professor and returned to his seat.

The applause that ensued was terrific, causing the dust to rise from the floor where it had lain undisturbed till the violent attack of two hundred feet raised it in clouds, through which the figure of the professor was still visible, with his right arm again extended.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he commenced, "I cannot give fitting utterance to the emotions that fill my heart at this most unexpected tribute of regard and mark of appreciation of my humble services. Believe me, I shall always cherish it as a most valued possession, and the sight of it will recall the pleasant, and, I hope, profitable hours which we have passed together this winter. To you, in particular, Mr. Rushton, I express my thanks for the touching and eloquent manner in which you have made the presentation, and, in parting with you all, I echo your own good wishes, and shall hope that you may be favored with an abundant measure of health and prosperity."

This speech was also vociferously applauded. It was generally considered impromptu, but was, in truth, as stereotyped as the other. Professor Granville had on previous occasions been the recipient of similar testimonials, and he had found it convenient to have a set form of acknowledgment. He was wise in this, for it is a hard thing on the spur of the moment suitably to offer thanks for an unexpected gift.

"The professor made a bully speech," said more than one after the exercises were over.

"So did Bob Rushton," said Edward Kent.

"I didn't see anything extraordinary in what he said," sneered Halbert Davis. "It seemed to me very commonplace."

"Perhaps you could do better yourself, Halbert," said Kent.

"Probably I could," said Halbert, haughtily.

"Why didn't you volunteer, then?"

"I didn't care to have anything to do with it," returned Halbert, scornfully.

"That's lucky," remarked Edward, "as there was no chance of your getting

appointed."

"Do you mean to insult me?" demanded Halbert, angrily.

"No, I was only telling the truth."

Halbert turned away, too disgusted to make any reply. He was a boy of sixteen, of slender form and sallow complexion, dressed with more pretension than taste. Probably there was no boy present whose suit was of such fine material as his. But something more than fine clothes is needed to give a fine appearance, and Halbert's mean and insignificant features were far from rendering him attractive, and despite the testimony of his glass, Halbert considered himself a young man of distinguished appearance, and was utterly blind to his personal defects.

What contributed to feed his vanity was his position as the son of the richest man in Millville. Indeed, his father was superintendent, and part owner, of the great brick factory on the banks of the river, in which hundreds found employment. Halbert found plenty to fawn upon him, and was in the habit of strutting about the village, swinging a light cane, neither a useful nor an ornamental member of the community.

After his brief altercation with Edward Kent, he drew on a pair of kid gloves, and looked about the room for Hester Paine, the lawyer's daughter, the reigning belle among the girls of her age in Millville. The fact was, that Halbert was rather smitten with Hester, and had made up his mind to escort her home on this particular evening, never doubting that his escort would be thankfully accepted.

But he was not quick enough, Robert Rushton had already approached Hester, and said, "Miss Hester, will you allow me to see you home?"

"I shall be very glad to have your company, Robert," said Hester.

Robert was a general favorite. He had a bright, attractive face, strong and resolute, when there was occasion, frank and earnest at all times. His clothes were neat and clean, but of a coarse, mixed cloth, evidently of low price, suiting his circumstances, for he was poor, and his mother and himself depended mainly upon his earnings in the factory for the necessaries of life. Hester Paine, being the daughter of a well-to-do lawyer, belonged to the village aristocracy, and so far as worldly wealth was concerned, was far above Robert Rushton. But such considerations never entered her mind, as she frankly, and with real pleasure, accepted the escort of the poor factory boy.

Scarcely had she done so when Halbert Davis approached, smoothing his kid gloves, and pulling at his necktie.

"Miss Hester," he said, consequentially, "I shall have great pleasure in escorting you home."

"Thank you," said Hester, "but I am engaged."

"Engaged!" repeated Halbert, "and to whom?"

"Robert Rushton has kindly offered to take me home."

"Robert Rushton!" said Halbert, disdainfully. "Never mind. I will relieve him of his duty."

"Thank you, Halbert," said Robert, who was standing by, "I won't trouble you. I will see Miss Paine home."

"Your escort was accepted because you were the first to offer it," said Halbert.

"Miss Hester," said Robert, "I will resign in favor of Halbert, if you desire it."

"I don't desire it," said the young girl, promptly. "Come, Robert, I am ready if you are."

With a careless nod to Halbert, she took Robert's arm, and left the schoolhouse. Mortified and angry, Halbert looked after them, muttering, "I'll teach the factory boy a lesson. He'll be sorry for his impudence yet."

CHAPTER II.

PUNISHING A COWARD

Mrs. Rushton and her son occupied a little cottage, not far from the factory. Behind it were a few square rods of garden, in which Robert raised a few vegetables, working generally before or after his labor in the factory. They lived in a very plain way, but Mrs. Rushton was an excellent manager, and they had never lacked the common comforts of life. The husband and father had followed the sea. Two years before, he left the port of Boston as captain of the ship Norman, bound for Calcutta. Not a word had reached his wife and son since then, and it was generally believed that it had gone to the bottom of the sea. Mrs. Rushton regarded herself as a widow, and Robert, entering the factory, took upon himself the support of the family. He was now able to earn six dollars a week, and this, with his mother's earnings in braiding straw for a hat manufacturer in a neighboring town, supported them, though they were unable to lay up anything. The price of a term at the writing school was so small that Robert thought he could indulge himself in it, feeling that a good handwriting was a valuable acquisition, and might hereafter procure him employment in some business house. For the present, he could not do better than to retain his place in the factory.

Robert was up at six the next morning. He spent half an hour in sawing and splitting wood enough to last his mother through the day, and then entered the kitchen, where breakfast was ready.

"I am a little late this morning, mother," he said. "I must hurry down my breakfast, or I shall be late at the factory, and that will bring twenty-five cents fine."

"It would be a pity to get fined, but you mustn't eat too fast. It is not healthful."

"I've got a pretty good digestion, mother," said Robert, laughing. "Nothing troubles me."

"Still, you mustn't trifle with it. Do you remember, Robert," added his mother, soberly, "it is just two years to-day since your poor father left us for Boston to take command of his ship?"

"So it is, mother; I had forgotten it."

"I little thought then that I should never see him again!" and Mrs. Rushton sighed.

"It is strange we have never heard anything of the ship."

"Not so strange, Robert. It must have gone down when no other vessel was in sight."

"I wish we knew the particulars, mother. Sometimes I think father may have escaped from the ship in a boat, and may be still alive."

"I used to think it possible, Robert; but I have given up all hopes of it. Two years have passed, and if your father were alive, we should have seen him or heard from him ere this."

"I am afraid you are right. There's one thing I can't help thinking of, mother," said Robert, thoughtfully. "How is it that father left no property? He received a good salary, did he not?"

"Yes; he had received a good salary for several years."

"He did not spend the whole of it, did he?"

"No, I am sure he did not. Your father was never extravagant."

"Didn't he ever speak to you on the subject?"

"He was not in the habit of speaking of his business; but just before he went away, I remember him telling me that he had some money invested, and hoped to add more to it during the voyage which proved so fatal to him."

"He didn't tell you how much it was, nor how it was invested?"

"No; that was all he said. Since his death, I have looked everywhere in the house for some papers which would throw light upon it; but I have been able to find nothing. I do not care so much for myself, but I should be glad if you did not have to work so hard."

"Never mind me, mother; I'm young and strong, I can stand work--but it's hard on you."

"I am rich in having a good son, Robert."

"And I in a good mother," said Robert, affectionately. "And, now, to change the subject. I suspect I have incurred the enmity of Halbert Davis."

"How is that?" asked Mrs. Rushton.

"I went home with Hester Paine, last evening, from writing school. Just as she had accepted my escort, Halbert came up, and in a condescending way, informed her that he would see her home."

"What did she say?"

"She told him she was engaged to me. He said, coolly, that he would relieve me of the duty, but I declined his obliging offer. He looked mad enough, I can tell you. He's full of self-conceit, and I suppose he wondered how any one could prefer me to him."

"I am sorry you have incurred his enmity."

"I didn't lose any sleep by it."

"You know his father is the superintendent of the factory."

"Halbert isn't."

"But he may prejudice his father against you, and get you discharged."

"I don't think he would be quite so mean as that. We won't borrow trouble, mother. But time's up, and I must go."

Robert seized his hat and hurried to the mill. He was in his place when the great factory bell stopped ringing on the stroke of seven, and so escaped the fine, which would have cut off one-quarter of a day's pay.

Meanwhile, Halbert Davis had passed an uncomfortable and restless night. He had taken a fancy to Hester Paine, and he had fully determined to escort her home on the previous evening. As she was much sought after among her young companions, it would have gratified his pride to have it known that she had accepted his company. But he had been cut out, and by Robert Rushton--one of his father's factory hands. This made his jealousy more intolerable, and humiliated his pride, and set him to work devising schemes for punishing Robert's presumption. He felt that it was Robert's duty, even though he had been accepted, to retire from the field as soon as his, Halbert's, desire was known. This Robert had expressly declined to do, and Halbert felt very indignant. He made up his mind that he would give Robert a chance to apologize, and if he declined to do so he would do what he could to get him turned out of the factory.

At twelve o'clock the factory bell pealed forth a welcome sound to the hundreds who were busily at work within the great building. It was the dinner hour, and a throng of men, women and children poured out of the great portals and hastened to their homes or boarding houses to dine. Among them was Robert Rushton. As he was walking homeward with his usual quick, alert step, he came upon Halbert Davis, at the corner of the street.

Halbert was dressed carefully, and, as usual, was swinging his cane in his gloved hand. Robert would have passed him with a nod, but Halbert, who was waiting for him, called out:

"I say, you fellow, stop a minute. I want to speak to you."

"Are you addressing me?" asked Robert, with a pride as great as his own.

"Yes."

"Then you had better mend your manners."

"What do you mean?" demanded Halbert, his sallow face slightly flushing.

"My name is Robert Rushton. Call me by either of these names when you speak to me, and don't say 'you fellow.'"

"It seems to me," sneered Halbert, "that you are putting on airs for a factory boy."

"I am a factory boy, I acknowledge, and am not ashamed to acknowledge it. Is this all you have to say to me? If so, I will pass on, as I am in haste."

"I have something else to say to you. You were impudent to me last evening."

"Was I? Tell me how."

"Did you not insist on going home with Hester Paine, when I had offered my escort?"

"What of that?"

"You forget your place."

"My place was at Hester Paine's side, since she had accepted my escort."

"It was very presumptuous in a factory boy like you offering your escort to a young lady like Miss Paine."

"I don't see it," said Robert, independently; "and I don't think it struck Hester in that light. We had a very agreeable walk."

Halbert was provoked and inflamed with jealousy, and the look with which he regarded our hero was by no means friendly.

"You mustn't regard yourself as Miss Paine's equal because she condescended to walk with you," he said. "You had better associate with those of your own class hereafter, and not push yourself in where your company is not agreeable."

"Keep your advice to yourself, Halbert Davis," said Robert, hotly, for he felt the insult conveyed in these words. "If I am a factory boy I don't intend to submit to your impertinence; and I advise you to be careful what you say. As to Miss Hester Paine, I shall not ask your permission to walk with her, but shall do so whenever she chooses to accept my escort. Has she authorized you to speak for her?"

"No; but----"

"Then wait till she does."

Halbert was so incensed that, forgetting Robert's superior strength, evident enough to any one who saw the two, one with his well-knit, vigorous figure, the other slender and small of frame, he raised his cane and struck our hero smartly upon the arm.

In a moment the cane was wrested from his grasp and applied to his own person with a sharp, stinging blow which broke the fragile stick in two.

Casting the pieces upon the ground at his feet, Robert said, coolly:

"Two can play at that game, Halbert Davis. When you want another lesson come to me."

He passed his discomfited antagonist and hastened to the little cottage, where his mother was wondering what made him so much behind time.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPECIAL DEPOSIT.

Stung with mortification and more incensed against Robert than ever, Halbert hastened home. The house in which he lived was the largest and most pretentious in Millville--a large, square house, built in modern style, and with modern improvements, accessible from the street by a semi-circular driveway terminating in two gates, one at each end of the spacious lawn that lay in front. The house had been built only three years, and was the show-place of the village.

Halbert entered the house, and throwing his hat down on a chair in the hall, entered the dining-room, his face still betraying his angry feelings.

"What's the matter, Halbert?" asked his mother, looking up as he entered.

"Do you see this?" said Halbert, displaying the pieces of his cane.

"How did you break it?"

"I didn't break it."

"How came it broken, then?"

"Robert Rushton broke it."

"The widow Rushton's son?"

"Yes; he's a low scoundrel," said Halbert bitterly.

"What made him break it?"

"He struck me with it hard enough to break it, and then threw the pieces on the ground. I wouldn't mind it so much if he were not a low factory boy, unworthy of a gentleman's attention."

"How dared he touch you?" asked Mrs. Davis, angrily.

"Oh, he's impudent enough for anything. He walked home with Hester Paine last evening from the writing school. I suppose she didn't know how to refuse him. I met him just now and told him he ought to know his place better than to offer his escort to a young lady like Hester. He got mad and struck me."

"It was very proper advice," said Mrs. Davis, who resembled her son in character and disposition, and usually sided with him in his quarrels. "I should think Hester would have more sense than to encourage a boy in his position."

"I have no doubt she was bored by his company," said Halbert, who feared on the contrary that Hester was only too well pleased with his rival, and hated him accordingly; "only she was too good-natured to say so."

"The boy must be a young brute to turn upon you so violently."

"That's just what he is."

"He ought to be punished for it."

"I'll tell you how it can be done," said Halbert. "Just you speak to father about it, and get him dismissed from the factory."

"Then he is employed in the factory?"

"Yes. He and his mother are as poor as poverty, and that's about all they have to live upon; yet he goes round with his head up as if he were a prince, and thinks himself good enough to walk home with Hester Paine."

"I never heard of anything so ridiculous."

"Then you'll speak to father about it, won't you?"

"Yes; I'll speak to him to-night. He's gone away for the day."

"That'll pay me for my broken cane," said Halbert, adding, in a tone of satisfaction: "I shall be glad to see him walking round the streets in rags. Perhaps he'll be a little more respectful then."

Meanwhile Robert decided not to mention to his mother his encounter with the young aristocrat. He knew that it would do no good, and would only make her feel troubled. He caught the malignant glance of Halbert on parting, and he knew him well enough to suspect that he would do what he could to have him turned out of the factory. This would certainly be a serious misfortune.

Probably the entire income upon which his mother and himself had to depend did not exceed eight dollars a week, and of this he himself earned six. They had not more than ten dollars laid by for contingencies, and if he were deprived of work, that would soon melt away. The factory furnished about the only avenue of employment open in Millville, and if he were discharged it would be hard to find any other remunerative labor.

At one o'clock Robert went back to the factory rather thoughtful. He thought it possible that he might hear something before evening of the dismissal which probably awaited him, but the afternoon passed and he heard nothing.

On leaving the factory, he chanced to see Halbert again on the sidewalk a little distance in front and advancing toward him. This time, however, the young aristocrat did not desire a meeting, for, with a dark scowl,

he crossed the street in time to avoid it.

"Is he going to pass it over, I wonder?" thought Robert. "Well, I won't borrow trouble. If I am discharged I think I can manage to pick up a living somehow. I've got two strong arms, and if I don't find something to do, it won't be for the want of trying."

Two years before, Captain Rushton, on the eve of sailing upon what proved to be his last voyage, called in the evening at the house of Mr. Davis, the superintendent of the Millville factory. He found the superintendent alone, his wife and Halbert having gone out for the evening. He was seated at a table with a variety of papers spread out before him. These papers gave him considerable annoyance. He was preparing his semi-annual statement of account, and found himself indebted to the corporation in a sum three thousand dollars in excess of the funds at his command. He had been drawn into the whirlpool of speculation, and, through a New York broker, had invested considerable amounts in stocks, which had depreciated in value. In doing this he had made use, to some extent, of the funds of the corporation, which he was now at a loss how to replace. He was considering where he could apply for a temporary loan of three thousand dollars when the captain entered. Under the circumstances he was sorry for the intrusion.

"Good-evening, Captain Rushton," he said, with a forced smile. "Sit down. I am glad to see you."

"Thank you, Mr. Davis. It will be the last call I shall make upon you for a considerable time."

"Indeed--how is that?"

"I sail to-morrow for Calcutta."

"Indeed--that is a long voyage."

"Yes, it takes considerable time. I don't like to leave my wife and boy for so long, but we sailors have to suffer a good many privations."

"True; I hardly think I should enjoy such a life."

"Still," said the captain, "it has its compensations. I like the free, wild life of the sea. The ocean, even in its stormiest aspects, has a charm for me."

"It hasn't much for me," said the superintendent, shrugging his shoulders. "Seasickness takes away all the romance that poets have invested it with."

Captain Rushton laughed.

"Seasickness!" he repeated. "Yes, that is truly a disagreeable malady. I remember once having a lady of rank as passenger on board my ship--a Lady Alice Graham. She was prostrated by seasickness, which is no respecter of persons, and a more forlorn, unhappy mortal I never expect to see. She would have been glad, I am convinced, to exchange places with her maid, who seemed to thrive upon the sea air."

"I wish you a prosperous voyage, captain."

"Thank you. If things go well, I expect to come home with quite an addition to my little savings. And that brings me to the object of my visit this evening. You must know, Mr. Davis, I have saved up in the last ten years a matter of five thousand dollars."

"Five thousand dollars!" repeated the superintendent, pricking up his ears.

"Yes, it has been saved by economy and self-denial. Wouldn't my wife be surprised if she knew her husband were so rich?"

"Your wife doesn't know of it?" asked the superintendent, surprised.

"Not at all. I have told her I have something, and she may suppose I have a few hundred dollars, but I have never told her how much. I want to surprise her some day."

"Just so."

"Now, Mr. Davis, for the object of my errand. I am no financier, and know nothing of investments. I suppose you do. I want you to take this money, and take care of it, while I am gone on my present voyage. I meant to make inquiries myself for a suitable investment, but I have been summoned by my owners to leave at a day's notice, and have no time for it. Can you oblige me by taking care of the money?"

"Certainly, captain," said the superintendent, briskly. "I shall have great pleasure in obliging an old friend."

"I am much obliged to you."

"Don't mention it. I have large sums of my own to invest, and it is no extra trouble to look after your money. Am I to pay the interest to your wife?"

"No. I have left a separate fund in a savings bank for her to draw upon. As I told you, I want to surprise her by and by. So not a word, if you please, about this deposit."

"Your wishes shall be regarded," said the superintendent. "Have you brought the money with you?"

"Yes," said the captain, drawing from his pocket a large wallet. "I have got the whole amount here in large bills. Count it, if you please, and see that it is all right."

The superintendent took the roll of bills from the hands of his neighbor, and counted them over twice.

"It is quite right," he said. "Here are five thousand dollars. Now let me write you a receipt for them."

He drew before him a sheet of paper, and dipping his pen in the inkstand, wrote a receipt in the usual form, which he handed back to the captain, who received it and put it back in his wallet.

"Now," said the captain, in a tone of satisfaction, "my most important business is transacted. You will keep this money, investing it according to your best judgment. If anything should happen to me," he added, his

voice faltering a little, "you will pay it over to my wife and child."

"Assuredly," said the superintendent; "but don't let us think of such a sad contingency. I fully expect to pay it back into your own hands with handsome interest."

"Let us hope so," said the captain, recovering his cheerfulness. "Our destinies are in the hands of a kind Providence. And now good-by! I leave early to-morrow morning, and I must pass the rest of the evening with my own family."

"Good-night, captain," said the superintendent, accompanying him to the door. "I renew my wish that you have a prosperous and profitable voyage, and be restored in good time to your family and friends."

"Amen!" said the captain.

The superintendent went back to his study, his heart lightened of its anxiety.

"Could anything be more fortunate?" he ejaculated, "This help comes to me just when it is most needed. Thanks to my special deposit, I can make my semi-annual settlement, and have two thousand dollars over. It's lucky the captain knows nothing of my Wall Street speculations. He might not have been quite so ready to leave his money in my hands. It's not a bad thing to be a banker," and he rubbed his hands together with hilarity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE.

When the superintendent accepted Captain Rushton's money, he did not intend to act dishonestly. He hailed it as a present relief, though he supposed he should have to repay it some time. His accounts being found correct, he went on with his speculations. In these he met with varying success. But on the whole he found himself no richer, while he was kept in a constant fever of anxiety.

After some months, he met Mrs. Rushton in the street one day.

"Have you heard from your husband, Mrs. Rushton?" he inquired.

"No, Mr. Davis, not yet. I am beginning to feel anxious."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Between seven and eight months."

"The voyage is a long one. There are many ways of accounting for his silence."

"He would send by some passing ship. He has been to Calcutta before, but I have never had to wait so long for a letter."

The superintendent uttered some commonplace phrases of assurance, but in his own heart there sprang up a wicked hope that the _Norman_ would never reach port, and that he might never set eyes on Captain Rushton again. For in that case, he reflected, it would be perfectly safe for him to retain possession of the money with which he had been intrusted. The captain had assured him that neither his wife nor son knew aught of his savings. Who then could detect his crime? However, it was not yet certain that the _Norman_ was lost. He might yet have to repay the money.

Six months more passed, and still no tidings of the ship or its commander. Even the most sanguine now gave her up for lost, including the owners. The superintendent called upon them, ostensibly in behalf of Mrs. Rushton, and learned that they had but slender hopes of her safety. It was a wicked thing to rejoice over such a calamity, but his affairs were now so entangled that a sudden demand for the five thousand dollars would have ruined him. He made up his mind to say nothing of the special deposit, though he knew the loss of it would leave the captain's family in the deepest poverty. To soothe his conscience--for he was wholly destitute of one--he received Robert into the factory, and the boy's wages, as we already know, constituted their main support.

Such was the state of things at the commencement of our story.

When the superintendent reached home in the evening, he was at once assailed by his wife and son, who gave a highly colored account of the insult which Halbert had received from Robert Rushton.

"Did he have any reason for striking you, Halbert?" asked the superintendent.

"No," answered Halbert, unblushingly. "He's an impudent young scoundrel, and puts on as many airs as if he were a prince instead of a beggar."

"He is not a beggar."

"He is a low factory boy, and that is about the same."

"By no means. He earns his living by honest industry."

"It appears to me," put in Mrs. Davis, "that you are taking the part of this boy who has insulted your son in such an outrageous manner."

"How am I doing it? I am only saying he is not a beggar."

"He is far below Halbert in position, and that is the principal thing."

It occurred to the superintendent that should he make restitution Robert Rushton would be quite as well off as his own son, but of course he could not venture to breathe a hint of this to his wife. It was the secret knowledge of the deep wrong which he had done to the Rushtons that now made him unwilling to oppress him further.

"It seems to me," he said, "you are making too much of this matter. It is only a boyish quarrel."

"A boyish quarrel!" retorted Mrs. Davis, indignantly. "You have a singular way of standing by your son, Mr. Davis. A low fellow insults and abuses him, and you exert yourself to make excuses for him."

"You misapprehend me, my dear."

"Don't 'my dear' me," said the exasperated lady. "I thought you would be as angry as I am, but you seem to take the whole thing very coolly, upon my word!"

Mrs. Davis had a sharp temper and a sharp tongue, and her husband stood considerably in awe of both. He had more than once been compelled to yield to them, and he saw that he must make some concession to order to keep the peace.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Want you to do! I should think that was plain enough."

"I will send for the boy and reprimand him."

"Reprimand him!" repeated the lady, contemptuously. "And what do you think he will care for that?"

"More than you think, perhaps."

"Stuff and nonsense! He'll be insulting Halbert again to-morrow."

"I am not so sure that Halbert is not in fault in some way."

"Of course, you are ready to side with a stranger against your own son."

"What do you want me to do?" asked the superintendent, submissively.

"Discharge the boy from your employment," said his wife, promptly.

"But how can he and his mother live?--they depend on his wages."

"That is their affair. He ought to have thought of that before he raised his hand against Halbert."

"I cannot do what you wish," said the superintendent, with some firmness, for he felt that it would indeed be a piece of meanness to eject from the factory the boy whom he had already so deeply wronged; "but I will send for young Rushton and require him to apologize to Halbert."

"And if he won't do it?" demanded Halbert.

"Then I will send him away."

"Will you promise that, father?" asked Halbert, eagerly.

"Yes," said Mr. Davis, rather reluctantly.

"All right!" thought Halbert; "I am satisfied; for I know he never will consent to apologize."

Halbert had good reason for this opinion, knowing, as he did, that he had struck the first blow, a circumstance he had carefully concealed from his father. Under the circumstances he knew very well that his father would be called upon to redeem his promise.

The next morning, at the regular hour, our hero went to the factory, and taking his usual place, set to work. An hour passed, and nothing was said to him. He began to think that Halbert, feeling that he was the aggressor, had resolved to let the matter drop.

But he was speedily undeceived.

At a quarter after eight the superintendent made his appearance, and after a brief inspection of the work, retired to his private office. Ten minutes later, the foreman of the room in which he was employed came up to Robert and touched him on the shoulder.

"Mr. Davis wishes to see you in his office," he said.

"Now for it!" thought Robert, as he left his work and made his way, through the deafening clamor of the machinery, to the superintendent's room.

CHAPTER V.

DISCHARGED.

The superintendent sat at an office table writing a letter. He did not at first look up, but kept on with his employment. He had some remnants of conscience left, and he shrank from the task his wife had thrust upon him.

"Mr. Baker tells me you wish to see me, Mr. Davis," said Robert, who had advanced into the office, by way of calling his attention.

"Yes," said the superintendent, laying down his pen, and turning half round; "I hear a bad account of you, Rushton."

"In what way, sir?" asked our hero, returning his look fearlessly.

"I hear that you have been behaving like a young ruffian," said Mr. Davis, who felt that he must make out a strong case to justify him in dismissing Robert from the factory.

"This is a serious charge, Mr. Davis," said Robert, gravely, "and I hope you will be kind enough to let me know what I have done, and the name of my accuser."

"I mean to do so. Probably it will be enough to say that your accuser is my son, Halbert."

"I supposed so. I had a difficulty with Halbert yesterday, but I consider he was in fault."

"He says you insulted and struck him."

"I did not insult him. The insult came from him."

"Did you strike him?"

"Yes, but not until he had struck me first."

"He didn't mention this, but even if he had you should not have struck him back."

"Why not?" asked Robert.

"You should have reported the affair to me."

"And allowed him to keep on striking me?"

"You must have said something to provoke him," continued the superintendent, finding it a little difficult to answer this question, "or he would not have done it."

"If you will allow me," said Robert, "I will give you an account of the whole affair."

"Go on," said the superintendent, rather unwillingly, for he strongly suspected that our hero would be able to justify himself, and so render dismissal more difficult.

"Halbert took offense because I accompanied Hester Paine home from the writing school, evening before last, though I did with the young lady's permission, as he knew. He met me yesterday at twelve o'clock, as I was going home to dinner, and undertook to lecture me on my presumption in offering my escort to one so much above me. He also taunted me with being a factory boy. I told him to keep his advice to himself, as I should not ask his permission when I wanted to walk, with Hester Paine. Then he became enraged, and struck me with his cane. I took it from him and returned the blow, breaking the cane in doing it."

"Ahem!" said the superintendent, clearing his throat; "you must have been very violent."

"I don't think I was, sir. I struck him a smart blow, but the cane was very light and easily broken."

"You were certainly very violent," continued Mr. Davis, resolved to make a point of this. "Halbert did not break the cane when he struck you."

"He struck the first blow."

"That does not alter the question of the amount of violence, which was evidently without justification. You must have been in a great passion."

"I don't think I was in any greater passion than Halbert."

"In view of the violence you made use of, I consider that you owe my son an apology."

"An apology!" repeated Robert, whose astonishment was apparent in his tone.

"I believe I spoke plainly," said the superintendent, irritably.

"If any apology is to be made," said our hero, firmly, "it ought to come from Halbert to me."

"How do you make that out?"

"He gave me some impertinent advice, and, because I did not care to take it, he struck me."

"And you seized his cane in a fury, and broke it in returning the blow."

"I acknowledge that I broke the cane," said Robert; "and I suppose it is only right that I should pay for it. I am willing to do that, but not to apologize."

"That will not be sufficient," said the superintendent, who knew that payment for the cane would fall far short of satisfying his wife or Halbert. "The cost of the cane was a trifle, and I am willing to buy him another, but I cannot consent that my son should be subjected to such rude violence, without an apology from the offender. If I passed this over, you might attack him again to-morrow."

"I am not in the habit of attacking others without cause," said Robert, proudly. "If Halbert will let me alone, or treat me with civility, he may be sure that I shall not trouble him."

"You are evading the main point, Rushton," said the superintendent. "I have required you to apologize to my son, and I ask you for the last time whether you propose to comply with my wishes."

"No, sir," said Robert, boldly.

"Do you know to whom you are speaking, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am not only the father of the boy you have assaulted, but I am also the superintendent of this factory, and your employer."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"I can discharge you from the factory."

"I know you can," said Robert.

"Of course, I should be sorry to resort to such an extreme measure, but, if you defy my authority, I may be compelled to do so."

So the crisis had come. Robert saw that he must choose between losing his place and a humiliating apology. Between the two he did not for a moment hesitate.

"Mr. Davis," he said, boldly and firmly, "it will be a serious thing for me if I lose my place here, for my mother and I are poor, and my wages make the greatest part of our income. But I cannot make this apology you require. I will sooner lose my place."

The bold and manly bearing of our hero, and his resolute tone, impressed the superintendent with an involuntary admiration. He felt that Robert was a boy to be proud of, but none the less he meant to carry out his purpose.

"Is this your final decision?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are discharged from the factory. You will report your discharge to Mr. Baker, and he will pay you what you have earned this week."

"Very well, sir."

Robert left the office, with a bold bearing, but a heart full of trouble. If only himself had been involved in the calamity, he could have borne it better, but he knew that his loss of place meant privation and want for his mother, unless he could find something to do that would bring in an equal income, and this he did not expect.

"Mr. Baker," he said, addressing the foreman of his room, on his return from the superintendent's office, "I am discharged."

"Discharged?" repeated the foreman, in surprise. "There must be some mistake about this. You are one of our best hands--for your age, I mean."

"There is no dissatisfaction with my work that I know of, but I got into a quarrel with Halbert Davis yesterday, and his father wants me to apologize to him."

"Which you won't do?"

"I would if I felt that I were in fault. I am not too proud for that. But the fact is, Halbert ought to apologize to me."

"Halbert is a mean boy. I don't blame you in the least."

"So I am to report my discharge to you, and ask you for my wages."

This account was soon settled, and Robert left the factory his own master. But it is poor consolation to be one's own master under such circumstances. He dreaded to break the news to his mother, for he knew that it would distress her. He was slowly walking along, when he once more encountered Halbert Davis. Halbert was out for the express purpose of meeting and exulting over him, for he rightly concluded that Robert would decline to apologize to him. Robert saw his enemy, and guessed his object, but resolved to say nothing to him, unless actually obliged to do so.

"Where are you going?" demanded Halbert.

"Home."

"I thought you worked in the factory?"

"Did you?" asked Robert, looking full in his face, and reading the exultation he did not attempt to conceal.

"Perhaps you have got turned out?" suggested Halbert, with a malicious smile.

"You would be glad of that, I suppose," said our hero.

"I don't think I should cry much," said Halbert. "It's true then, is it?"

"Yes; it's true."

"You won't put on so many airs when you go round begging for cold victuals. It'll be some time before you walk with Hester Paine again."

"I shall probably walk with her sooner than you will."

"She won't notice a beggar."

"There is not much chance of my becoming a beggar, Halbert Davis; but I would rather be one than be as mean as you. I will drop you a slight hint, which you had better bear in mind. It won't be any safer to insult me now than it was yesterday. I can't lose my place a second time."

Halbert instinctively moved aside, while our hero passed on, without taking farther notice of him.

"I hate him!" he muttered to himself. "I hope he won't find anything to do. If he wasn't so strong, I'd give him a thrashing."

CHAPTER VI.

HALBERT'S DISCOMFITURE.

Great was the dismay of Mrs. Rushton when she heard from Robert that he was discharged from the factory. She was a timid woman, and rather apt to take desponding views of the future.

"Oh, Robert, what is going to become of us?" she exclaimed, nervously. "We have only ten dollars in the house, and you know how little I can earn by braiding straw. I really think you were too hasty and impetuous."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear mother," said Robert, soothingly. "I am sorry I have lost my place, but there are other things I can do besides working in the factory. We are not going to starve yet."

"But, suppose you can't find any work?" said his mother.

"Then I'll help you braid straw," said Robert, laughing. "Don't you think I might learn after a while?"

"I don't know but you might," said Mrs. Rushton, dubiously; "but the pay is very poor."

"That's so, mother. I shan't, take to braiding straw except as a last resort."

"Wouldn't Mr. Davis take you back into the factory if I went to him and told him how much we needed the money?"

"Don't think of such a thing, mother," said Robert, hastily, his brown cheek flushing. "I am too proud to beg to be taken back."

"But it wouldn't be you."

"I would sooner ask myself than have you do it, mother. No; the superintendent sent me away for no good reason, and he must come and ask me to return before I'll do it."

"I am afraid you are proud, Robert."

"So I am, mother; but it is an honest pride. Have faith in me for a week, mother, and see if I don't earn something in that time. I don't expect to make as much as I earned at the factory; but I'll earn something, you may depend upon that. Now, how would you like to have some fish for supper?"

"I think I should like it. It is a good while since we had any."

"Then, I'll tell you what--I'll borrow Will Paine's boat, if he'll let me have it, and see if I can't catch something."

"When will you be home, Robert?"

"It will depend on my success in fishing. It'll be half-past nine, very likely, before I get fairly started, so I think I'd better take my dinner with me. I'll be home some time in the afternoon."

"I hope you'll be careful, Robert. You might get upset."

"I'll take care of that, mother. Besides, I can swim like a duck."

Robert went out into the garden, and dug some worms for bait. Meanwhile, his mother made a couple of sandwiches, and wrapped them in a paper for his lunch. Provided thus, he walked quickly to the house of Squire Paine, and rang the bell.

"Is Will home?" he asked.

"Here I am, old fellow!" was heard from the head of the stairs; and William Paine, a boy of our hero's size and age, appeared. "Come right up."

"How did you happen to be at leisure?" he asked. "I supposed you were at the factory."

"I'm turned off."

"Turned off! How's that?"

"Through the influence of Halbert Davis."

"Halbert is a disgusting sneak. I always despised him, and, if he's done such a mean thing, I'll never speak to him again. Tell me all about it."

This Robert did, necessarily bringing in Hester's name.

"He needn't think my sister will walk with him," said Will. "If she does, I'll cut her off with a shilling. She'd rather walk with you, any

day."

Robert blushed a little; for, though he was too young to be in love, he thought his friend's sister the most attractive girl he had even seen, and, knowing how she was regarded in the village, he naturally felt proud of her preference for himself over a boy who was much richer.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Will, with interest.

"The first thing I am going to do is to catch some fish, if you'll lend me your boat."

"Lend you my boat? Of course I will! I'll lend it to you for the next three months."

"But you want it yourself?"

"No. Haven't you heard the news? I'm going to boarding school."

"You are?"

"It's a fact. I'm packing my trunk now. Come upstairs, and superintend the operation."

"I can't stay long. But, Will, are you in earnest about the boat?"

"To be sure I am. I was meaning to ask you if you'd take care of it for me. You see, I can't carry it with me, and you are the only fellow I am willing to lend it to."

"I shall be very glad of the chance, Will. I've been wanting a boat for a long time, but there wasn't much chance of my getting one. Now I shall feel rich. But isn't this a sudden idea, your going to school?"

"Rather. There was a college classmate of father's here last week, who's at the head of such a school, and he made father promise to send me. So I'm to start to-morrow morning. If it wasn't for that, and being up to my ears in getting ready, I'd go out fishing with you."

"I wish you could."

"I must wait till vacation. Here is the boat key."

Robert took the key with satisfaction. The boat owned by his friend was a stanch, round-bottomed boat, of considerable size, bought only two months before, quite the best boat on the river. It was to be at his free disposal, and this was nearly the same thing as owning it. He might find it very useful, for it occurred to him that, if he could find nothing better to do, he could catch fish every day, and sell at the village store such as his mother could not use. In this way he would be earning something, and it would be better than being idle.

He knew where the boat was usually kept, just at the foot of a large tree, whose branches drooped over the river. He made his way thither, and, fitting the key in the padlock which confined the boat, soon set it free. The oars he had brought with him from his friend's house.

Throwing in the oars, he jumped in, and began to push off, when he heard himself called, and, looking up, saw Halbert Davis standing on the bank.

"Get out of that boat!" said Halbert.

"What do you mean?" demanded Robert.

"You have no business in that boat! It doesn't belong to you!"

"You'd better mind your own business, Halbert Davis. You have nothing to do with the boat."

"It's William Paine's boat."

"Thank you for the information. I supposed it was yours, from the interest you seem to take in it."

"It will be. He's going to let me have it while he's away at school."

"Indeed! Did he tell you so?"

"I haven't asked Ma yet; but I know he will let me have it."

"I don't think he will."

"Why not?"

"If you ever want to borrow this boat, you'll have to apply to me."

"You haven't bought it?" asked Halbert, in surprise. "You're too poor."

"I'm to have charge of the boat while Will Paine is away."

"Did he say you might?" asked Halbert, in a tone of disappointment and mortification.

"Of course he did."

"I don't believe it," said Halbert, suspiciously.

"I don't care what you believe. Go and ask him yourself, if you are not satisfied; and don't meddle with what is none of your business;"

"You're an impudent rascal."

"Have you got another cane you'd like to have broken?" asked Robert, significantly.

Halbert looked after him, enviously, as he rowed the boat out into the stream. He had asked his father to buy him a boat, but the superintendent's speculations had not turned out very well of late, and he had been deaf to his son's persuasions, backed, though they were, by his mother's influence. When Halbert heard that William Paine was going to boarding school, he decided to ask him for the loan of his boat during his absence, as the next best thing. Now, it seemed that he had been forestalled, and by the boy he hated. He resolved to see young Paine himself, and offer him two dollars for the use of his boat during the coming term. Then he would have the double satisfaction of using the boat and disappointing Robert.

He made his way to the house of Squire Paine, and, after a brief pause,

was admitted, He was shown into the parlor, and Will Paine came down to see him.

"How are you, Davis?" he said, nodding, coolly, but not offering his hand.

"I hear you are going to boarding school?"

"Yes; I go to-morrow."

"I suppose you won't take your boat with you?"

"No."

"I'll give you two dollars for the use of it; the next three months?"

"I can't accept your offer. Robert Bashton is to have it."

"But he doesn't pay you anything for it. I'll give you three dollars, if you say so?"

"You can't have it for three dollars, or ten. I have promised it to my friend, Robert Rushton, and I shall not take it back."

"You may not know," said Halbert, maliciously, "that your friend was discharged from the factory this morning for misconduct."

"I know very well that he was discharged, and through whose influence, Halbert Davis," said Will, pointedly. "I like him all the better for his misfortune, and so I am sore will my sister."

Halbert's face betrayed the anger and jealousy he felt, but he didn't dare to speak to the lawyer's son as he had to the factory boy.

"Good-morning!" he said, rising to go.

"Good-morning!" said young Paine, formally.

Halbert felt, as he walked homeward, that his triumph over Robert was by no means complete.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRANGE PASSENGER.

Robert, though not a professional fisherman, was not wholly inexperienced. This morning he was quite lucky, catching quite a fine lot of fish--as much, indeed, as his mother and himself would require a week to dispose of. However, he did not intend to carry them all home. It occurred to him that he could sell them at a market store in the village. Otherwise, he would not have cared to go on destroying life for no useful end.

Accordingly, on reaching the shore, he strung the fish and walked homeward, by way of the market. It was rather a heavy tug, for the fish

he had caught weighed at least fifty pounds.

Stepping into the store, he attracted the attention of the proprietor.

"That's a fine lot of fish you have there, Robert. What are you going to do with them?"

"I'm going to sell most of them to you, if I can."

"Are they just out of the water?"

"Yes; I have just brought them in."

"What do you want for them?"

"I don't know what is a fair price?"

"I'll give you two cents a pound for as many as you want to sell."

"All right," said our hero, with satisfaction. "I'll carry this one home, and you can weigh the rest."

The rest proved to weigh forty-five pounds. The marketman handed Robert ninety cents, which he pocketed with satisfaction.

"Shall you want some more to-morrow?" he asked.

"Yes, if you can let me have them earlier. But how is it you are not at the factory?"

"I've lost my place."

"That's a pity."

"So I have plenty of time to work for you."

"I may be able to take considerable from you. I'm thinking of running a cart to Brampton every morning, but I must have the fish by eight o'clock, or it'll be too late."

"I'll go out early in the morning, then."

"Very well; bring me what you have at that hour, and we'll strike a trade."

"I've got something to do pretty quick," thought Robert, with satisfaction. "It was a lucky thought asking Will Paine for his boat. I'm sorry he's going away, but it happens just right for me."

Mrs. Rushton was sitting at her work, in rather a disconsolate frame of mind. The more she thought of Robert's losing his place, the more unfortunate it seemed. She could not be expected to be as sanguine and hopeful as our hero, who was blessed with strong hands and a fund of energy and self-reliance which he inherited from his father. His mother, on the other hand, was delicate and nervous, and apt to look on the dark side of things. But, notwithstanding this, she was a good mother, and Robert loved her.

Nothing had been heard for some time but the drowsy ticking of the

clock, when a noise was heard at the door, and Robert entered the room, bringing the fish he had reserved.

"You see, mother, we are not likely to starve," he said.

"That's a fine, large fish," said his mother.

"Yes; it'll be enough for two meals. Didn't I tell you, mother, I would find something to do?"

"True, Robert," said his mother, dubiously; "but we shall get tired of fish if we have it every day."

Robert laughed.

"Six days in the week will do for fish, mother," he said. "I think we shall be able to afford something else Sunday."

"Of course, fish is better than nothing," said his mother, who understood him literally; "and I suppose we ought to be thankful to get that."

"You don't look very much pleased at the prospect of fish six times a week," said Robert, laughing again. "On the whole, I think it will be better to say twice."

"But what will we do other days, Robert?"

"What we have always done, mother--eat something else. But I won't keep you longer in suspense. Did you think this was the only fish I caught?"

"Yes, I thought so."

"I sold forty-five pounds on the way to Minturn, at his market store--forty-five pounds, at two cents a pound. What do you think of that?"

"Do you mean that you have earned ninety cents to-day, Robert?"

"Yes; and here's the money."

"That's much better than I expected," said Mrs. Rushton, looking several degrees more cheerful.

"I don't expect to do as well as that every day, mother, but I don't believe we'll starve. Minturn has engaged me to supply him with fish every day, only some days the fishes won't feel like coming out of the water. Then, I forgot to tell you, I'm to have Will Paine's boat for nothing. He's going to boarding school, and has asked me to take care of it for him."

"You are fortunate, Robert."

"I am hungry, too, mother. Those two sandwiches didn't go a great ways. So, if you can just as well as not have supper earlier, it would suit me."

"I'll put on the teakettle at once, Robert," said his mother, rising. "Would you like some of the fish for supper?"

"If it wouldn't be too much trouble."

"Surely not, Robert."

The usual supper hour was at five in this country household, but a little after four the table was set, and mother and son sat down to a meal which both enjoyed. The fish proved to be excellent, and Robert enjoyed it the more, first, because he had caught it himself, and next because he felt that his independent stand at the factory, though it had lost him his place, was not likely to subject his mother to the privations he had feared.

"I'll take another piece of fish, mother," said Robert, passing his plate. "I think, on the whole, I shan't be obliged to learn to braid straw."

"No; you can do better at fishing."

"Only," added Robert, with mock seriousness, "we might change work sometimes, mother; I will stay at home and braid straw, and you can go out fishing."

"I am afraid I should make a poor hand at it," said Mrs. Rushton, smiling.

"If Halbert Davis could look in upon us just now, he would be disappointed to find us so cheerful after my losing my place at factory. However, I've disappointed him in another way."

"How is that?"

"He expected Will Paine would lend him his boat while he was gone, but, instead of that, he finds it promised to me."

"I am afraid he is not a very kind-hearted boy."

"That's drawing it altogether too mild, mother. He's the meanest fellow I ever met. However, I won't talk about him any more, or it'll spoil my appetite."

On the next two mornings Robert went out at five o'clock, in order to get home in time for the market-wagon. He met with fair luck, but not as good as on the first day. Taking the two mornings together, he captured and sold seventy pounds of fish, which, as the price remained the same, brought him in a dollar and forty cents. This was not equal to his wages at the factory; still, he had the greater part of the day to himself, only, unfortunately, he had no way of turning his time profitably to account, or, at least, none had thus far occurred to him.

On the morning succeeding he was out of luck. He caught but two fish, and they were so small that he decided not to offer them for sale.

"If I don't do better than this," he reflected, "I shan't make very good wages. The fish seem to be getting afraid of me."

He paddled about, idly, a few rods from the shore, having drawn up his line and hook.

All at once, he heard a voice hailing him from the river bank:

"Boat ahoy!"

"Hallo!" answered Robert, lifting his eyes, and seeing who called him.

"Can you set me across the river?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring in your boat, then, and I'll jump aboard. I'll pay you for your trouble."

Robert did as requested, with alacrity. He was very glad to earn money in this way, since it seemed he was to have no fish to dispose of. He quickly turned the boat to the shore, and the stranger jumped on board. He was a man of rather more than the average height, with a slight limp in his gait, in a rough suit of clothes, his head being surmounted by a felt hat considerably the worse for wear. There was a scar on one cheek, and, altogether, he was not very prepossessing in his appearance. Robert noted all this in a rapid glance, but it made no particular impression upon him at the moment. He cared very little how the stranger looked, as long as he had money enough to pay his fare.

"It's about a mile across the river, isn't it?" asked the stranger.

"About that here. Where do you want to go?"

"Straight across. There's an old man named Nichols lives on the other side, isn't there?"

"Yes; he lives by himself."

"Somebody told me so. He's rich, isn't he?" asked the stranger, carelessly.

"So people say; but he doesn't show it in his dress or way of living."

"A miser, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"What does he do with his money?"

"I only know what people say."

"And what do they say?"

"That he is afraid to trust banks, and hides his money in the earth."

"That kind of bank don't pay very good interest," said the stranger, laughing.

"No; but it isn't likely to break."

"Here? boy, give me one of the oars. I'm used to rowing, and I'll help you a little."

Robert yielded one of the oars to his companion, who evidently

understood rowing quite as well as he professed to. Our hero, though strong-armed, had hard work to keep up with him.

"Look out, boy, or I'll turn you round," he said.

"You are stronger than I am."

"And more used to rowing; but I'll suit myself to you."

A few minutes brought them to the other shore. The passenger jumped ashore, first handing a silver half-dollar to our hero, who was well satisfied with his fee.

Robert sat idly in his boat, and watched his late fare as with rapid steps he left the river bank behind him.

"He's going to the old man's house," decided Robert. "I wonder whether he has any business with him?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD FARMHOUSE.

The stranger walked, with hasty strides, in the direction of an old farmhouse, which could be seen a quarter of a mile away. Whether it had ever been painted, was a question not easily solved. At present it was dark and weather-beaten, and in a general state of neglect.

The owner, Paul Nichols, was a man advanced in years, living quite alone, and himself providing for his simple wants. Robert was right in calling him a miser, but he had not always deserved the name. The time was when he had been happily married to a good wife, and was blessed with two young children. But they were all taken from him in one week by an epidemic, and his life was made solitary and cheerless. This bereavement completely revolutionized his life. Up to this time he had been a good and respected citizen, with an interest in public affairs. Now he became morose and misanthropic, and his heart, bereaved of its legitimate objects of affection, henceforth was fixed upon gold, which he began to love with a passionate energy. He repulsed the advances of neighbors, and became what Robert called him--a miser.

How much he was worth, no one knew. The town assessors sought in vain for stocks and bonds. He did not appear to possess any. Probably popular opinion was correct in asserting that he secreted his money in one or many out-of-the-way places, which, from time to time, he was wont to visit and gloat over his treasures. There was reason also to believe that it was mostly in gold, for he had a habit of asking specie payments from those indebted to him, or, if he could not obtain specie, he used to go to a neighboring town with his bank notes and get the change effected.

Such was the man about whom Robert's unknown passenger exhibited so much curiosity, and whom it seemed that he was intending to visit.

"I wonder whether the old man is at home!" he said to himself, as he

entered the front yard through a gateway, from which the gate had long since disappeared. "He don't keep things looking very neat and trim, that's a fact," he continued, noticing the rank weeds and indiscriminate litter which filled the yard. "Just give me this place, and his money to keep it, and I'd make a change in the looks of things pretty quick."

He stepped up to the front door, and, lifting the old-fashioned knocker, sounded a loud summons.

"He'll hear that, if he isn't very deaf," he thought.

But the summons appeared to be without effect. At all events, he was left standing on the doorstep, and no one came to bid him enter.

"He can't be at home, or else he won't come," thought the visitor. "I'll try him again," and another knock, still louder than before, sounded through the farmhouse.

But still no one came to the door. The fact was, that the old farmer had gone away early, with a load of hay, which he had sold; to a stable-keeper living some five miles distant.

"I'll reconnoiter a little," said the stranger.

He stepped to the front window, and looked in. All that met his gaze was a bare, dismantled room.

"Not very cheerful, that's a fact," commented the outsider. "Well, he don't appear to be here; I'll go round to the back part of the house."

He went round to the back door, where he thought it best, in the first place, to knock. No answer coming, he peered through the window, but saw no one.

"The coast is clear," he concluded. "So much the better, if I can get in."

The door proved to be locked, but the windows were easily raised. Through one of these he clambered into the kitchen, which was the only room occupied by the old farmer, with the exception of a room above, which he used as a bedchamber. Here he cooked and ate his meals, and here he spent his solitary evenings.

Jumping over the window sill, the visitor found himself in this room. He looked around him, with some curiosity.

"It is eighteen years since I was last in this room," he said. "Time hasn't improved it, nor me, either, very likely," he added, with a short laugh. "I've roamed pretty much all over the world in that time, and I've come back as poor as I went away. What's that copy I used to write?--'A rolling stone gathers no moss.' Well, I'm the rolling stone. In all that time my Uncle Paul has been moored fast to his hearthstone, and been piling up gold, which he don't seem to have much use for. As far as I know, I'm his nearest relation, there's no reason why he shouldn't launch out a little for the benefit of the family."

It will be gathered from the foregoing soliloquy that the newcomer was a nephew of Paul Nichols. After a not very creditable youth, he had gone to sea, and for eighteen years this was his first reappearance in his

native town.

He sat down in a chair, and stretched out his legs, with an air of being at home.

"I wonder what the old man will say when he sees me," he soliloquized. "Ten to one he won't know me. When we saw each other last I was a smooth-faced youth. Now I've got hair enough on my face, and the years have made, their mark upon me, I suspect. Where is he, I wonder, and how long have I got to wait for him? While I'm waiting, I'll take the liberty of looking in the closet, and seeing if he hasn't something to refresh the inner man. I didn't make much of a breakfast, and something hearty wouldn't come amiss."

He rose from his chair, and opened the closet door. A small collection of crockery was visible, most of it cracked, but there was nothing eatable to be seen, except half a loaf of bread. This was from the baker, for the old man, after ineffectual efforts to make his own bread, had been compelled to abandon the attempt, and patronize the baker.

"Nothing but a half loaf, and that's dry enough," muttered the stranger. "That isn't very tempting. I can't say much for my uncle's fare, unless he has got something more attractive somewhere."

But, search as carefully as he might, nothing better could be found, and his appetite was not sufficiently great to encourage an attack upon the stale loaf. He sat down, rather discontented, and resumed the current of his reflections.

"My uncle must be more of a miser than I thought, if he stints himself to such fare as this. It's rather a bad lookout for me. He won't be very apt to look with favor on my application for a small loan from his treasure. What's that the boy said? He don't trust any banks, but keeps his money concealed in the earth. By Jove! It would be a stroke of luck if I could stumble on one of his hiding places! If I could do that while he was away, I would forego the pleasure of seeing him, and make off with what I could find. I'll look about me, and see if I can't find some of his hidden hoards."

No sooner did the thought occur to him than he acted upon it.

"Let me see," he reflected, "where is he most likely to hide his treasure? Old stockings are the favorites with old maids and widows, but I don't believe Uncle Paul has got any without holes in them. He's more likely to hide his gold under the hearth. That's a good idea, I'll try the hearth first."

He kneeled down, and began to examine the bricks, critically, with a view of ascertaining whether any bore the marks of having been removed recently, for he judged correctly that a miser would wish, from time to time, to unearth his treasure for the pleasure of looking at it. But there was no indication of disturbance. The hearth bore a uniform appearance, and did not seem to have been tampered with.

"That isn't the right spot," reflected the visitor. "Perhaps there's a plank in the floor that raises, or, still more likely, the gold is buried in the cellar. I've a great mind to go down there."

He lit a candle, and went cautiously down the rickety staircase. But he

had hardly reached the bottom of the stairs, when he caught the sound of a wagon entering the yard.

"That must be my uncle," he said. "I'd better go up, and not let him catch me down here."

He ascended the stairs, and re-entered the room just as the farmer opened the door and entered.

On seeing a tall, bearded stranger, whom he did not recognize, standing before him in his own kitchen, with a lighted candle in his hand, Paul Nichols uttered a shrill cry of alarm, and ejaculated:

"Thieves! Murder! Robbers!" in a quavering voice.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

The stranger was in rather an awkward predicament. However, he betrayed neither embarrassment nor alarm. Blowing out the candle, he advanced to the table and set it down. This movement brought him nearer Paul Nichols, who, with the timidity natural to an old man, anticipated an immediate attack.

"Don't kill me! Spare my life!" he exclaimed, hastily stepping back.

"I see you don't know me, Uncle Paul?" said the intruder, familiarly.

"Who are you that call me Uncle Paul?" asked the old man, somewhat reassured.

"Benjamin Haley, your sister's son. Do you know me now?"

"You Ben Haley!" exclaimed the old man, betraying surprise. "Why, you are old enough to be his father."

"Remember, Uncle Paul, I am eighteen years older than when you saw me last. Time brings changes, you know. When I saw you last, you were a man in the prime of life, now you are a feeble old man."

"Are you really Ben Haley?" asked the old man, doubtfully.

"To be sure I am. I suppose I look to you more like a bearded savage. Well, I'm not responsible for my looks. Not finding you at home, I took the liberty of coming in on the score of relationship."

"What, were you doing with that candle?" asked Paul, suspiciously.

"I went down cellar with it."

"Down cellar!" repeated his uncle, with a look of alarm which didn't escape his nephew. "What for?"

"In search of something to eat. All I could find in the closet was a dry

loaf, which doesn't look very appetizing."

"There's nothing down cellar. Don't go there again," said the old man, still uneasy.

His nephew looked at him shrewdly.

"Ha, Uncle Paul! I've guessed your secret so quick," he said to himself.

"Some of your money is hidden away in the cellar, I'm thinking."

"Where do you keep your provisions, then?" he said aloud.

"The loaf is all I have."

"Come, Uncle Paul, you don't mean that. That's a scurvy welcome to give a nephew you haven't seen for eighteen years. I'm going to stay to dinner with you, and you must give me something better than that. Haven't you got any meat in the house?"

"No."

Just then Ben Haley, looking from the window, saw some chickens in the yard. His eye lighted up at the discovery.

"Ah, there is a nice fat chicken," he said. "We'll have a chicken dinner. Shall it be roast or boiled?"

"No, no," said the old farmer, hastily. "I can't spare them. They'll bring a good price in the market by and by."

"Can't help it, Uncle Paul. Charity begins at home. Excuse me a minute, I'll be back directly."

He strode to the door and out into the yard. Then, after a little maneuvering, he caught a chicken, and going to the block, seized the ax, and soon decapitated it.

"What have you done?" said Paul, ruefully, for the old man had followed his nephew, and was looking on in a very uncomfortable frame of mind.

"Taken the first step toward a good dinner," said the other, coolly. "I am not sure but we shall want two."

"No, no!" said Paul, hastily. "I haven't got much appetite."

"Then perhaps we can make it do. I'll just get it ready, and cook it myself. I've knocked about in all sorts of places, and it won't be the first time I've served as cook. I've traveled some since I saw you last."

"Have you?" said the old man, who seemed more interested in the untimely death of the pullet than in his nephew's adventures.

"Yes, I've been everywhere. I spent a year in Australia at the gold diggings."

"Did you find any?" asked his uncle, for the first time betraying interest.

"Some, but I didn't bring away any."

Ben Haley meanwhile was rapidly stripping the chicken of its feathers. When he finished, he said, "Now tell me where you keep your vegetables, Uncle Paul?"

"They're in the corn barn. You can't get in. It's locked."

"Where's the key?"

"Lost."

"I'll get in, never fear," said the intruder, and he led the way to the corn barn, his uncle unwillingly following and protesting that it would be quite impossible to enter.

Reaching the building, he stepped back and was about to kick open the door, when old Paul hurriedly interposed, saying, "No, no, I've found the key."

His nephew took it from his hand, and unlocking the door, brought out a liberal supply of potatoes, beets and squashes.

"We'll have a good dinner, after all," he said. "You don't half know how to live, Uncle Paul. You need me here. You've got plenty around you, but you don't know how to use it."

The free and easy manner in which his nephew conducted himself was peculiarly annoying and exasperating to the old man, but as often as he was impelled to speak, the sight of his nephew's resolute face and vigorous frame, which he found it difficult to connect with his recollections of young Ben, terrified him into silence, and he contented himself with following his nephew around uneasily with looks of suspicion.

When the dinner was prepared both sat down to partake of it, but Ben quietly, and, as a matter of course, assumed the place of host and carved the fowl. Notwithstanding the shock which his economical notions had received, the farmer ate with appetite the best meal of which he had partaken for a long time. Ben had not vaunted too highly his skill as a cook. Wherever he had acquired it, he evidently understood the preparation of such a dinner as now lay before them.

"Now, Uncle Paul, if we only had a mug of cider to wash down the dinner. Haven't you got some somewhere?"

"Not a drop."

"Don't you think I might find some stored away in the cellar, for instance?" asked Ben, fixing his glance upon his uncle's face.

"No, no; didn't I tell you I hadn't got any?" returned Paul Nichols, with petulance and alarm.

"I mean to see what else you have in the cellar," said Ben, to himself, "before I leave this place. There's a reason for that pale face of yours." But he only said aloud, "Well, if you haven't got any we must do without it. There's a little more of the chicken left. As you don't want it I'll appropriate it. Nothing like clearing up things. Come, this is

rather better than dry bread, isn't it?"

"It's very expensive," said the miser, ruefully.

"Well, you can afford it, Uncle Paul--there's a comfort in that. I suppose you are pretty rich, eh?"

"Rich!" repeated Paul, in dismay. "What put such a thing into your head?"

"Not your style of living, you may be sure of that."

"I am poor, Benjamin. You mustn't think otherwise. I live as well as I can afford."

"Then what have you been doing with your savings all these years?"

"My savings! It has taken all I had to live. There isn't any money to be made in farming. It's hard work and poor pay."

"You used to support your family comfortably when you had one."

"Don't--don't speak of them. I can't bear it," said Paul, his countenance changing. "When I had them I was happy."

"And now you're not. Well, I don't wonder at it. It must be dismal enough living alone. You need somebody with you. I am your nephew and nearest relation. I feel that it is my duty to stay with you."

The expression of dismay which overspread the old man's face at this declaration was ludicrous.

"You stay with me?" he repeated, in a tone of alarm.

"Yes, for a time at least. We'll be company for each other, won't we, Uncle Paul?"

"No, no; there's no room."

"No room? You don't mean to say that you need the whole house?"

"I mean I cannot afford to have you here. Besides I'm used to being alone. I prefer it."

"That's complimentary, at any rate. You prefer to be alone rather than to have me with you?"

"Don't be offended, Benjamin. I've been alone so many years. Besides you'd feel dull here. You wouldn't like it."

"I'll try it and see. What room are you going to give me?"

"You'd better go away."

"Well, uncle, we'll talk about that to-morrow. You're very considerate in fearing it will be dull for me, but I've roamed about the world so much that I shall be glad of a little dullness. So it's all settled. And now, Uncle Paul, if you don't object I'll take out my pipe and have a smoke. I always smoke after dinner."

He lit his pipe, and throwing himself back in a chair, began to puff away leisurely, his uncle surveying him with fear and embarrassment. Why should his graceless nephew turn up, after so many years, in the form of this big, broad-shouldered, heavy-bearded stranger, only to annoy him, and thrust his unwelcome company upon him?

CHAPTER X.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

Paul Nichols looked forward with dismay to the prospect of having his nephew remain with him as a guest. Like all misers, he had a distrust of every one, and the present appearance of his nephew only confirmed the impressions he still retained of his earlier bad conduct. He had all the will to turn him out of his house, but Ben was vastly his superior in size and strength, and he did not dare to attempt it.

"He wants to rob, perhaps to murder me," thought Paul, surveying his big nephew with a troubled gaze.

His apprehensions were such that he even meditated offering to pay the intruder's board for a week at the tavern, if he would leave him in peace by himself. But the reluctance to part with his money finally prevented such a proposal being made.

In the afternoon the old man stayed around home. He did not dare to leave it lest Ben should take a fancy to search the house, and come upon some of his secret hoards, for people were right in reporting that he hid his money.

At last evening came. With visible discomposure the old man showed Ben to a room.

"You can sleep there," he said, pointing to a cot bed in the corner of the room.

"All right, uncle. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Paul Nichols.

He went out and closed the door behind him. He not only closed it, but locked it, having secretly hidden the key in his pocket. He chuckled softly to himself as he went downstairs. His nephew was securely disposed of for the night, being fastened in his chamber. But if he expected Ben Haley quietly to submit to this incarceration he was entirely mistaken in that individual. The latter heard the key turn in the lock, and comprehended at once his uncle's stratagem. Instead of being angry, he was amused.

"So my simple-minded uncle thinks he has drawn my teeth, does he? I'll give him a scare."

He began to jump up and down on the chamber floor in his heavy boots, which, as the floor was uncarpeted, made a terrible noise. The old man

in the room below, just congratulating himself on his cunning move, grew pale as he listened. He supposed his nephew to be in a furious passion, and apprehensions of personal violence disturbed him. Still he reflected that he would be unable to get out, and in the morning he could go for the constable. But he was interrupted by a different noise. Ben had drawn off his boots, and was firing them one after the other at the door.

The noise became so intolerable, that Paul was compelled to ascend the stairs, trembling with fear.

"What's the matter?" he inquired at the door, in a quavering voice.

"Open the door," returned Ben.

His uncle reluctantly inserted the key in the lock and opening it presented a pale, scared face in the doorway. His nephew, with his coat stripped off, was sitting on the side of the bed.

"What's the matter?" asked Paul.

"Nothing, only you locked the door by mistake," said Ben, coolly.

"What made you make such a noise?" demanded Paul.

"To call you up. There was no bell in the room, so that was the only way I had of doing it. What made you lock me in?"

"I didn't think," stammered the old man.

"Just what I supposed. To guard against your making that mistake again, let me have the key."

"I'd rather keep it, if it's the same to you," said Paul, in alarm.

"But it isn't the same to me. You see, Uncle Paul, you are growing old and forgetful, and might lock me in again. That would not be pleasant, you know, especially if the house should catch fire in the night."

"What!" exclaimed Paul, terror-stricken, half suspecting his nephew contemplated turning incendiary.

"I don't think it will, mind, but it's best to be prepared, so give me the key."

The old man feebly protested, but ended in giving up the key to his nephew.

"There, that's all right. Now I'll turn in. Good-night."

"Good-night," responded Paul Nichols, and left the chamber, feeling more alarmed than ever. He was beginning to be more afraid and more distrustful of his nephew than ever. What if the latter should light on some of his various hiding places for money? Why, in that very chamber he had a hundred dollars in gold hidden behind the plastering. He groaned in spirit as he thought of it, and determined to tell his nephew the next morning that he must find another home, as he couldn't and wouldn't consent to his remaining longer.

But when the morning came he found the task a difficult one to enter upon. Finally, after breakfast, which consisted of eggs and toast, Ben Haley having ransacked the premises for eggs, which the old man intended for the market, Paul said, "Benjamin, you must not be offended, but I have lived alone for years, and I cannot invite you to stay longer."

"Where shall I go, uncle?" demanded Ben, taking out his pipe coolly, and lighting it.

"There's a tavern in the village."

"Is there? That won't do me any good."

"You'll be better off there than here. They set a very good table, and----"

"You don't," said Ben, finishing the sentence. "I know that, but then, uncle, I have two reasons for preferring to stay here. The first is, that I may enjoy the society of my only living relation; the second is, that I have not money enough to pay my board at the hotel."

He leaned back, and began to puff leisurely at his pipe, as if this settled the matter.

"If you have no money, why do you come to me?" demanded Paul, angrily. "Do you expect me to support you?"

"You wouldn't turn out your sister's son, would you, Uncle Paul?"

"You must earn your own living. I can't support you in idleness."

"You needn't; I'll work for you. Let me see, I'll do the cooking."

"I don't want you here," said the old man, desperately. "Why do you come to disturb me, after so many years?"

"I'll go away on one condition," said Ben Haley.

"What's that?"

"Give me, or lend me--I don't care which--a hundred dollars."

"Do you think I'm made of money?" asked Paul, fear and anger struggling for the mastery.

"I think you can spare me a hundred dollars."

"Go away! You are a bad man. You were a wild, bad boy, and you are no better now."

"Now, Uncle Paul, I think you're rather too hard upon me. Just consider that I am your nephew. What will people say if you turn me out of doors?"

"I don't care what they say. I can't have you here."

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you by going, Uncle Paul, but I've got a headache this morning, and don't feel like stirring. Let me stay with you a day or two, and then I may go."

Vain were all the old man's expostulations. His nephew sat obstinately smoking, and refused to move.

"Come out to the barn with me while I milk," said Paul, at length, not daring to leave his nephew by himself.

"Thank you, but I'm well off as I am. I've got a headache, and I'd rather stay here."

Milking couldn't longer be deferred. But for the stranger's presence it would have been attended to two hours earlier. Groaning in spirit, and with many forebodings, Paul went out to the barn, and in due time returned with his foaming pails. There sat his nephew in the old place, apparently not having stirred. Possibly he didn't mean mischief after all, Paul reflected. At any rate, he must leave him again, while he released the cows from their stalls, and drove them to pasture. He tried to obtain his nephew's companionship, but in vain.

"I'm not interested in cows, uncle," he said. "I'll be here when you come back."

With a sigh his uncle left the house, only half reassured. That he had reason for his distrust was proved by Ben Haley's movements. He lighted a candle, and going down cellar, first securing a pickax, struck into the earthen flooring, and began to work energetically.

"I am sure some of the old man's money is here," he said to himself. "I must work fast, or he'll catch me at it."

Half an hour later Paul Nichols re-entered the house. He looked for his nephew, but his seat was vacant. He thought he heard a dull thud in the cellar beneath. He hurried to the staircase, and tottered down. Ben had come upon a tin quart-measure partly filled with gold coins, and was stooping over, transferring them to his pocket.

With a hoarse cry like that of an animal deprived of its young, his uncle sprang upon him, and fastened his clawlike nails in the face of his burly nephew.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT COMES TO THE RESCUE.

The attack was so sudden, and the old man's desperation so reinforced his feeble strength, that Ben Haley was thrown forward, and the measure of gold coins fell from his hand. But he quickly recovered himself.

"Let me alone," he said, sternly, forcibly removing his uncle's hands from his face, but not before the clawlike nails had drawn blood. "Let me alone, if you know what is best for yourself."

"You're a thief!" screamed Paul. "You shall go to jail for this."

"Shall I?" asked Ben, his face darkening and his tone full of menace.

"Who is going to send me there?"

"I am," answered Paul. "I'll have you arrested."

"Look here, Uncle Paul," said Ben, confining the old man's arms to his side, "it's time we had a little talk together. You'd better not do as you say."

"You're a thief! The jail is the place for thieves."

"It isn't the place for me, and I'm not going there. Now let us come to an understanding. You are rich and I am poor."

"Rich!" repeated Paul.

"Yes; at any rate, you have got this farm, and more money hidden away than you will ever use. I am poor. You can spare me this money here as well as not."

"It is all I have."

"I know better than that. You have plenty more, but I will be satisfied with this. Remember, I am your sister's son."

"I don't care if you are," said the old man, doggedly.

"And you owe me some help. You'll never miss it. Now make up your mind to give me this money, and I'll go away and leave you in peace."

"Never!" exclaimed Paul, struggling hard to free himself.

"You won't!"

His uncle repeated the emphatic refusal.

"Then I shall have to put it out of your power to carry out your threat."

He took his uncle up in his strong arms, and moved toward the stairs.

"Are you going to murder me?" asked Paul, in mortal fear.

"You will find out what I am going to do," said Ben, grimly.

He carried his uncle upstairs, and, possessing himself of a clothesline in one corner of the kitchen, proceeded to tie him hand and foot, despite his feeble opposition.

"There," said he, when his uncle lay before him utterly helpless, "I think that disposes of you for a while. Now for the gold."

Leaving him on the floor, he again descended the cellar stairs, and began to gather up the gold coins, which had been scattered about the floor at the time of Paul's unexpected attack.

The old man groaned in spirit as he found himself about to be robbed, and utterly helpless to resist the outrage. But help was near at hand, though he knew it not. Robert Rushton had thought more than once of his unknown passenger of the day before, and the particular inquiries he

made concerning Paul Nichols and his money. Ben Haley had impressed him far from favorably, and the more he called to mind his appearance, the more he feared that he meditated some dishonest designs upon Paul. So the next morning, in order to satisfy his mind that all was right, he rowed across to the same place where he had landed Ben, and fastening his boat, went up to the farmhouse. He reached it just as Ben, having secured the old man, had gone back into the cellar to gather up the gold.

Robert looked into the window, and, to his surprise, saw the old farmer lying bound hand and foot. He quickly leaped in, and asked:

"What is the matter? Who has done this?"

"Hush!" said the old man, "he'll hear you."

"Who do you mean?"

"My nephew."

"Where is he?"

"Down cellar. He's tied me here, and is stealing all my gold."

"What shall I do? Can I help you?"

"Cut the ropes first."

Robert drew a jackknife from his pocket, and did as he was bidden.

"Now," said Paul, rising with a sigh of relief from his constrained position, "while I bolt the cellar door, you go upstairs, and in the closet of the room over this you will find a gun. It is loaded. Bring it down."

Robert hurried upstairs, and quickly returned with the weapon.

"Do you know how to fire a gun?" asked Paul.

"Yes," said Robert.

"Then keep it. For I am nervous, and my hand trembles. If he breaks through the door, fire."

Ben Haley would have been up before this, but it occurred to him to explore other parts of the cellar, that he might carry away as much booty as possible. He had rendered himself amenable to the law already, and he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, so he argued. He was so busily occupied that he did not hear the noise of Robert's entrance into the room above, or he would at once have gone upstairs. In consequence of the delay his uncle and Robert had time to concert measures for opposing him.

Finally, not succeeding in finding more gold, he pocketed what he had found, and went up the cellar stairs. He attempted to open the door, when, to his great surprise, he found that it resisted his efforts.

"What makes the door stick so?" he muttered, not suspecting the true state of the case. But he was quickly enlightened.

"You can't come up!" exclaimed the old man, in triumph. "I've bolted the door."

"How did he get free? He must have untied the knots," thought Ben. "Does the old fool think he is going to keep me down here?"

"Unlock the door," he shouted, in a loud, stern voice, "or it will be the worse for you."

"Have you got the gold with you?"

"Yes."

"Then go down and leave it where you found it, and I will let you come up."

"You're a fool," was the reply. "Do you think I am a child? Open the door, or I will burst it open with my foot."

"You'd better not," said Paul, whose courage had returned with the presence of Robert and the possession of the gun.

"Why not? What are you going to do about it?" asked Ben, derisively.

"I've got help. You have more than one to contend with."

"I wonder if he has any one with him?" thought Ben. "I believe the old fool is only trying to deceive me. At any rate, help or no help, it is time I were out of this hole."

"If you don't open the door before I count three," he said, aloud, "I'll burst it open."

"What shall I do," asked Robert, in a low voice, "if he comes out?"

"If he tries to get away with the gold, fire!" said the old man.

Robert determined only to inflict a wound. The idea of taking a human life, even under such circumstances, was one that made him shudder. He felt that gold was not to be set against life.

"One--two--three!" counted Ben, deliberately.

The door remaining locked, he drew back and kicked the door powerfully. Had he been on even ground, it would have yielded to the blow, but kicking from the stair beneath, placed him at a disadvantage. Nevertheless the door shook and trembled beneath the force of the attack made upon it.

"Well, will you unlock it now?" he demanded, pausing.

"No," said the old man, "not unless you carry back the gold."

"I won't do that. I have had too much trouble to get it. But if you don't unlock the door at once I may be tempted to forget that you are my uncle."

"I should like to forget that you are my nephew," said the old man.

"The old fool has mustered up some courage," thought Ben. "I'll soon have him whining for mercy."

He made a fresh attack upon the door. This time he did not desist until he had broken through the panel. Then with the whole force he could command he threw himself against the upper part of the door, and it came crashing into the kitchen. Ben Haley leaped through the opening and confronted his uncle, who receded in alarm. The sight of the burly form of his nephew, and his stern and menacing countenance, once more made him quail.

Ben Haley looked around him, and his eyes lighted upon Robert Rushton standing beside the door with the gun in his hand.

He burst into a derisive laugh, and turning to his uncle, said: "So this is the help you were talking about. He's only a baby. I could twist him around my finger. Just lay down that gun, boy! It isn't meant for children like you."

CHAPTER XII.

ESCAPE.

Though he had a weapon in his hand, many boys in Robert's situation would have been unnerved. He was a mere boy, though strong of his age. Opposed to him was a tall, strong man, of desperate character, fully resolved to carry out his dishonest purpose, and not likely to shrink from violence, to which he was probably only too well accustomed. From the old man he was not likely to obtain assistance, for already Paul's courage had begun to dwindle, and he regarded his nephew with a scared look.

"Lay down that gun, boy!" repeated Ben Haley. "I know you. You're the boy that rowed me across the river. You can row pretty well, but you're not quite a match for me even at that."

"This gun makes me even with you," said Robert, returning his look unflinchingly.

"Does it? Then all I can say is, that when you lose it you'll be in a bad pickle. Lay it down instantly."

"Then lay down the gold you have in your pockets," said our hero, still pointing his gun at Haley.

"Good boy! Brave boy!" said the old man, approvingly.

"Look here, boy," said Haley, in quick, stern tones, "I've had enough of this nonsense. If you don't put down that gun in double quick time, you'll repent it. One word--yes or no!"

"No," said Robert, resolutely.

No sooner had he uttered the monosyllable than Haley sprang toward him

with the design of wresting the gun from him. But Robert had his finger upon the trigger, and fired. The bullet entered the shoulder of the ruffian, but in the excitement of the moment he only knew that he was hit, but this incensed him. In spite of the wound he seized the musket and forcibly wrested it from our hero. He raised it in both hands and would probably in his blind fury have killed him on the spot, but for the sudden opening of the outer door, and entrance of a neighboring farmer, who felt sufficiently intimate to enter without knocking. This changed Haley's intention. Feeling that the odds were against him, he sprang through the window, gun in hand, and ran with rapid strides towards the river.

"What's the matter?" demanded the new arrival, surveying the scene before him in astonishment.

"He's gone off with my gold," exclaimed Paul Nichols, recovering from his stupefaction. "Run after him, catch him!"

"Who is it?"

"Ben Haley."

"What, your nephew! I thought he was dead long ago."

"I wish he had been," said Paul, wringing his hands. "He's taken all my money--I shall die in the poorhouse."

"I can't understand how it all happened," said the neighbor, looking to Robert for an explanation. "Who fired the gun?"

"I did," said our hero.

"Did you hit him?"

"I think so. I saw blood on his shirt. I must have hit him in the shoulder."

"Don't stop to talk," said Paul, impatiently. "Go after him and get back the gold."

"We can't do much," said the neighbor, evidently not very anxious to come into conflict with such a bold ruffian. "He has the gun with him."

"What made you let him have it?" asked Paul.

"I couldn't help it," said Robert. "But he can't fire it. It is unloaded, and I don't think he has any ammunition with him."

"To be sure," said Paul, eagerly. "You see there's no danger. Go after him, both of you, He can't hurt ye."

Somewhat reassured the neighbor followed Robert, who at once started in pursuit of the escaped burglar. He was still in sight, though he had improved the time consumed in the foregoing colloquy, and was already near the river bank. On he sped, bent on making good his escape with the money he had dishonestly acquired. One doubt was in his mind. Should he find a boat? If not, the river would prove an insuperable obstacle, and he would be compelled to turn and change the direction of his flight. Looking over his shoulder he saw Robert and the farmer on his track, and

he clutched his gun the more firmly.

"They'd better not touch me," he said to himself. "If I can't fire the gun I can brain either or both with it."

Thoughts of crossing the stream by swimming occurred to him. A sailor by profession, he was an expert swimmer, and the river was not wide enough to daunt him. But his pockets were filled with the gold he had stolen, and gold is well known to be the heaviest of all the metals. But nevertheless he could not leave it behind since it was for this he had incurred his present peril. In this uncertainty he reached the bank of the river, when to his surprise and joy his eye rested upon Robert's boat.

"The boy's boat!" he exclaimed, in exultation, "by all that's lucky! I will take the liberty of borrowing it without leave."

He sprang in, and seizing one of the oars, pushed out into the stream, first drawing up the anchor. When Robert and his companion reached the shore he was already floating at a safe distance.

"He's got my boat!" exclaimed our hero, in disappointment.

"So he has!" ejaculated the other.

"You're a little too late!" shouted Ben Haley, with a sneer. "Just carry back my compliments to the old fool yonder and tell him I left in too great a hurry to give him my note for the gold he kindly lent me. I'll attend to it when I get ready."

He had hitherto sculled the boat. Now he took the other oar and commenced rowing. But here the wound, of which he had at first been scarcely conscious, began to be felt, and the first vigorous stroke brought a sharp twinge, besides increasing the flow of blood. His natural ferocity was stimulated by his unpleasant discovery, and he shook his fist menacingly at Robert, from whom he had received the wound.

"There's a reckoning coming betwixt you and me, young one!" he cried, "and it'll be a heavy one. Ben Haley don't forget that sort of debt. The time'll come when he'll pay it back with interest. It mayn't come for years, but it'll come at last, you may be sure of that."

Finding that he could not row on account of his wound, he rose to his feet, and sculled the boat across as well as he could with one hand.

"I wish I had another boat," said Robert. "We could soon overtake him."

"Better let him go," said the neighbor. "He was always a bad one, that Ben Haley. I couldn't begin to tell you all the bad things he did when he was a boy. He was a regular dare-devil. You must look out for him, or he'll do you a mischief some time, to pay for that wound."

"He brought it on himself," said Robert "I gave him warning."

He went back to the farmhouse to tell Paul of his nephew's escape. He was brave and bold, but the malignant glance with which Ben Haley uttered his menace, gave him a vague sense of discomfort.

CHAPTER XIII.

REVENGE.

In spite of his wounded arm Ben Haley succeeded in propelling the boat to the opposite shore. The blood was steadily, though slowly, flowing from his wound, and had already stained his shirt red for a considerable space. In the excitement of first receiving it he had not felt the pain; now, however, the wound began to pain him, and, as might be expected, his feeling of animosity toward our hero was not diminished.

"That cursed boy!" he muttered, between his teeth. "I wish I had had time to give him one blow--he wouldn't have wanted another. I hope the wound isn't serious--if it is, I may have paid dear for the gold."

Still, the thought of the gold in his pockets afforded some satisfaction. He had been penniless; now he was the possessor of--as near as he could estimate, for he had not had time to count--five hundred dollars in gold. That was more than he had ever possessed before at one time, and would enable him to live at ease for a while.

On reaching the shore he was about to leave the boat to its fate, when he espied a boy standing at a little distance, with a hatchet in his hand. This gave him an idea.

"Come here, boy," he said.

The boy came forward, and examined the stranger with curiosity.

"Is that your hatchet?" he asked.

"No, sir. It belongs to my father."

"Would you mind selling it to me if I will give you money enough to buy a new one?"

"This is an old hatchet."

"It will suit me just as well, and I haven't time to buy another. Would your father sell it?"

"Yes, sir; I guess so."

"Very well. What will a new one cost you?"

The boy named the price.

"Here is the money, and twenty-five cents more to pay you for your trouble in going to the store."

The boy pocketed the money with satisfaction. He was a farmer's son, and seldom had any money in his possession. He already had twenty-five cents saved up toward the purchase of a junior ball, and the stranger's gratuity would just make up the sum necessary to secure it. He was in a hurry to make the purchase, and, accordingly, no sooner had he received

the money than he started at once for the village store. His departure was satisfactory to Ben Haley, who now had nothing to prevent his carrying out his plans.

"I wanted to be revenged on the boy, and now I know how," he said. "I'll make some trouble for him with this hatchet."

He drew the boat up and fastened it. Then he deliberately proceeded to cut away at the bottom with his newly-acquired hatchet. He had a strong arm, and his blows were made more effective by triumphant malice. The boat he supposed to belong to Robert, and he was determined to spoil it.

He hacked away with such energy that soon there was a large hole in the bottom of the boat. Not content with inflicting this damage, he cut it in various other places, until it presented an appearance very different from the neat, stanch boat of which Will Paine had been so proud. At length Ben stopped, and contemplated the ruin he had wrought with malicious satisfaction.

"That's the first instalment in my revenge," he said. "I should like to see my young ferryman's face when he sees his boat again. It'll cost him more than he'll ever get from my miserly uncle to repair it. It serves him right for meddling with matters that don't concern him. And now I must be getting away, for my affectionate uncle will soon be raising a hue and cry after me if I'm not very much mistaken."

He would like to have gone at once to obtain medical assistance for his wound, but to go to the village doctor would be dangerous. He must wait till he had got out of the town limits, and the farther away the better. He knew when the train would start, and made his way across the fields to the station, arriving just in time to catch it. First, however, he bound a handkerchief round his shoulder to arrest the flow of blood.

When he reached the station, and was purchasing his ticket, the station-master noticed the blood upon his shirt.

"Are you hurt, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, a little," said Ben Haley.

"How did it happen?" inquired the other, with Yankee inquisitiveness.

"I was out hunting," said Ben, carelessly, "with a friend who wasn't much used to firearms. In swinging his gun round, it accidentally went off, and I got shot through the shoulder."

"That's bad," said the station-master, in a tone of sympathy. "You'd better go round to the doctor's, and have it attended to."

"I would," said Ben, "but I am called away by business of the greatest importance. I can get along for a few hours, and then I'll have a doctor look at it. How soon will the train be here?"

"It's coming now. Don't you hear it?"

"That's the train I must take. You see I couldn't wait long enough for the doctor," added Ben, anxious to account satisfactorily for his inattention to the medical assistance of which he stood in need.

When he was fairly on board the cars, and the train was under way, he felt considerably relieved. He was speeding fast away from the man he had robbed, and who was interested in his capture, and in a few days he might be at sea, able to snap his fingers at his miserly uncle and the boy whom he determined some day to meet and settle scores with.

From one enemy of Robert the transition is brief and natural to another. At this very moment Halbert Davis was sauntering idly and discontentedly through the streets of the village. He was the son of a rich man, or of one whom most persons, his own family included, supposed to be rich; but this consciousness, though it made him proud, by no means made him happy. He had that morning at the breakfast table asked his father to give him a boat like Will Paine's, but Mr. Davis had answered by a decided refusal.

"You don't need any boat," he said, sharply.

"It wouldn't cost very much," pleaded Halbert.

"How much do you suppose?"

"Will Paine told me his father paid fifty dollars for his."

"Why don't you borrow it sometimes?"

"I can't borrow it. Will started a day or two since for boarding school."

"Better still. I will hire it for you while he is away."

"I thought of it myself," said Halbert, "but just before he went away Will lent it to the factory boy," sneering as he uttered the last two words.

"Do you mean Robert Rushton?"

"Yes."

"That's only a boy's arrangement. I will see Mr. Paine, and propose to pay him for the use of the boat, and I presume he will be willing to accede to my terms."

"When will you see him?" asked Halbert, hopefully.

"I will try to see him in the course of the day."

It turned out, however, that there was no need of calling on Mr. Paine, for five minutes later, having some business with Mr. Davis, he rang the bell, and was ushered into the breakfast-room.

"Excuse my calling early," he said, "but I wished to see you about----" and here he stated his business, in which my readers will feel no interest. When that was over, Mr. Davis introduced the subject of the boat, and made the offer referred to.

"I am sorry to refuse," said Mr. Paine, "but my son, before going away, passed his promise to Robert Rushton that he should have it during his absence."

"Do you hold yourself bound by such a promise?" inquired Mrs. Davis, with a disagreeable smile.

"Certainly," said the lawyer, gravely. "Robert is a valued friend of my son's, and I respect boyish friendship. I remember very well my own boyhood, and I had some strong friendships at that time."

"I don't see what your son can find to like in Robert Rushton," said Mrs. Davis, with something of Halbert's manner. "I think him a very disagreeable and impertinent boy."

Mr. Paine did not admire Mrs. Davis, and was not likely to be influenced by her prejudices. Without inquiry, therefore, into the cause of her unfavorable opinion, he said, "I have formed quite a different opinion of Robert. I am persuaded that you do him injustice."

"He attacked Halbert ferociously the other day," said Mrs. Davis, determined to impart the information whether asked or not. "He has an ungovernable temper."

Mr. Paine glanced shrewdly at Halbert, of whose arrogant and quarrelsome disposition he had heard from his own son, and replied, "I make it a point not to interfere in boys' quarrels. William speaks very highly of Robert, and it affords him great satisfaction, I know, to leave the boat in his charge."

Mrs. Davis saw that there was no use in pursuing the subject, and it dropped.

After the lawyer had gone Halbert made his petition anew, but without satisfactory results. The fact was, Mr. Davis had heard unfavorable reports from New York the day previous respecting a stock in which he had an interest, and it was not a favorable moment to prefer a request involving the outlay of money.

It was this refusal which made Halbert discontented and unhappy. The factory boy, as he sneeringly called him, could have a boat, while he, a gentleman's son, was forced to go without one. Of course, he would not stoop to ask the loan of the boat, however much he wanted it, from a boy he disliked so much as Robert. He wondered whether Robert were out this morning. So, unconsciously, his steps led him to the shore of the river, where he knew the boat was generally kept. He cast his eye toward it, when what was his surprise to find the object of his desire half full of water, with a large hole in the bottom and defaced in other respects.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO UNSATISFACTORY INTERVIEWS.

Halbert's first emotion was surprise, his second was gratification. His rival could no longer enjoy the boat which he had envied him. Not only that, but he would get into trouble with Mr. Paine on account of the damage which it had received. Being under his care, it was his duty to keep it in good condition.

"I wonder how it happened?" thought Halbert. "Won't the young beggar be in a precious scrape when it's found out? Most likely he won't let Mr. Paine know."

In this thought he judged Robert by himself. Straightway the plan suggested itself of going to the lawyer himself and informing him of Robert's delinquency. It would be a very agreeable way of taking revenge on him. The plan so pleased him that he at once directed his steps toward Mr. Paine's office. On the way he overtook Hester Paine, the young lady on whose account he was chiefly incensed against Robert. Being as desirous as ever of standing in the young lady's good graces, he hurriedly advanced to her side, and lifting his hat with an air of ceremonious politeness, he said:

"Good-morning, Hester."

Hester Paine was not particularly well pleased with the meeting. She had been made acquainted by her brother with the quarrel between Halbert and Robert, and the mean revenge which the former had taken in procuring the dismissal of the latter from the factory. Having a partiality for Robert, this was not likely to recommend his enemy in her eyes.

"Good-morning, Mr. Davis," she said, with cool politeness.

"You are very ceremonious this morning, Miss Hester," said Halbert, who liked well enough to be called "Mr." by others, but not by Hester.

"Am I?" asked Hester, indifferently. "How so?"

"You called me Mr. Davis."

"That's your name, isn't it?"

"I am not called so by my intimate friends."

"No, I suppose not," said Hester, thus disclaiming the title.

Halbert bit his lips. He was not in love, not because he was too young, but because he was too selfish to be in love with anybody except himself. But he admired Hester, and the more she slighted him the more he was determined to force her to like him. He did, however, feel a little piqued at her behavior, and that influenced his next words.

"Perhaps you'd rather have the factory boy walking beside you," he said, with not very good judgment, if he wanted to recommend himself to her.

"There are a good many factory boys in town," she said. "I can't tell unless you tell me whom you mean."

"I mean Robert Rushton."

"Perhaps I might," said Hester.

"He's a low fellow," said Halbert, bitterly.

"No one thinks so but you," retorted Hester, indignantly.

"My father was obliged to dismiss him from the factory."

"I know all about that, and who was the means of having him sent away."

"I suppose you mean me."

"Yes, Halbert Davis, I mean you, and I consider it a very mean thing to do," said Hester, her cheeks flushed with the indignation she felt.

"He attacked me like the low ruffian that he is," pleaded Halbert, in extenuation. "If he hadn't insulted me, he wouldn't have got into trouble."

"You struck him first, you know you did. My brother told me all about it. You were angry because he walked home with me. I would rather go home alone any time than have your escort."

"You're very polite, Miss Hester," said Halbert, angrily. "I can tell you some news about your favorite."

"If it's anything bad, I won't believe it."

"You'll have to believe it."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Hester, who was not altogether unlike girls in general, and so felt curious to learn what it was that Halbert had to reveal.

"Your brother was foolish enough to leave his boat in Rushton's care."

"That is no news. Will was very glad to do Robert a favor."

"He'll be sorry enough now."

"Why will he?"

"Because the boat is completely ruined."

"I don't believe it," said Hester, hastily.

"It's true, though. I was down at the river just now, and saw it with my own eyes. There is a great hole in the bottom, and it is hacked with a hatchet, so that it wouldn't bring half price."

"Do you know who did it?" asked Hester, with the momentary thought that Halbert himself might have been tempted by his hatred into the commission of the outrage.

"No, I don't. It was only accidentally I saw it."

"Was Robert at the boat?"

"No."

"Have you asked him about it?"

"No, I have not seen him."

"Then I am sure some enemy has done it. I am sure it is no fault of his."

"If your brother had let me have the boat, it wouldn't have happened. I offered him a fair price for its use."

"He won't be sorry he refused, whatever has happened. But I must bid you good-morning, Mr. Davis," and the young lady, who was now at her own gate, opened it, and entered.

"She might have been polite enough to invite me in," said Halbert, with chagrin. "I don't see how she can be so taken up with that low fellow."

He waited till Hester had entered the house, and then bent his steps to Mr. Paine's office, which was a small one-story building in one corner of the yard.

The lawyer was sitting at a table covered with papers, from which he looked up as Halbert entered the office.

"Sit down, Halbert," he said. "Any message from your father?"

"No, sir."

"No legal business of your own?" he inquired, with a smile.

"No, sir, no legal business."

"Well, if you have any business, you may state it at once, as I am quite busy."

"It is about the boat which your son lent to Robert Rushton."

"I shall not interfere with that arrangement," said the lawyer, misunderstanding his object. "I told your father that this morning," and he resumed his writing.

"I did not come to say anything about that. The boat wouldn't be of any use to me now."

"Why not?" asked the lawyer, detecting something significant in the boy's tone.

"Because," said Halbert, in a tone which he could not divest of the satisfaction he felt at his rival's misfortune, "the boat's completely ruined."

Mr. Paine laid down his pen in genuine surprise.

"Explain yourself," he said.

So Halbert told the story once more, taking good care to make the damage quite as great as it was.

"That is very strange," said the lawyer, thoughtfully. "I can't conceive how such damage could have happened to the boat."

"Robert Rushton don't know how to manage a boat."

"You are mistaken. He understands it very well. I am sure the injury you speak of could not have happened when he was in charge. You say there was not only a hole in the bottom, but it was otherwise defaced

and injured?"

"Yes, sir, it looked as if it had been hacked by a hatchet."

"Then it is quite clear that Robert could have had nothing to do with it. It must have been done by some malicious person or persons."

Knowing something of Halbert, Mr. Paine looked hard at him, his suspicions taking the same direction as his daughter's. But, as we know, Halbert was entirely innocent, and bore the gaze without confusion.

"I don't see why Robert hasn't been and let me know of this," said Mr. Paine, musing.

"He was probably afraid to tell you," said Halbert, with a slight sneer.

"I know him better than that. You can testify," added the lawyer, significantly, "that he is not deficient in bravery."

"I thought I would come and tell you," said Halbert, coloring a little. "I thought you would like to know."

"You are very kind to take so much trouble," said Mr. Paine, but there was neither gratitude nor cordiality in his tone.

Halbert thought it was time to be going, and accordingly got up and took his leave. As he opened the office door to go out, he found himself face to face with Robert Rushton, who passed him with a slight nod, and with an air of trouble entered the presence of his friend's father.

CHAPTER XV.

HALBERT'S MALICE.

Robert was forced, by Ben Baley's, inking possession of his boat to give up for the present his design of recrossing the river. He felt bound to go back and inform Paul of Ben's escape.

"He has carried off my gold," exclaimed Paul, in anguish. "Why didn't you catch him?"

"He had too much start of us," said Robert's companion. "But even if we had come up with him, I am afraid he would have proved more than a match for us. He is a desperate man. How much money did he take away with him?"

"More than five hundred dollars," wailed the old man. "I am completely ruined!"

"Not quite so bad as that, Mr. Nichols. You have your farm left."

But the old man was not to be comforted. He had become so wedded to his gold that to lose it was like losing his heart's blood. But was there no hope of recovery?

"Why don't you go after him?" he exclaimed, suddenly. "Raise the neighbors. It isn't too late yet."

"He's across the river before this," said Robert.

"Get a boat and go after him."

"I am willing," said our hero, promptly. "Where can we find a boat, Mr. Dunham?"

"There's one about a quarter of a mile down the stream--Stetson's boat."

"Let's go, then."

"Very well, Robert. I've no idea we can do anything, but we will try."

"Go, go. Don't waste a moment," implored the old man, in feverish impatience.

Robert and Mr. Dunham started, and were soon rowing across the river in Stetson's boat.

"Whereabout would he be likely to land?" asked the farmer.

"There's my boat now," said Robert, pointing it out. "He has left it where I usually keep it."

Quickly they rowed alongside. Then to his great sorrow Robert perceived the malicious injury which his enemy had wrought.

"Oh, Mr. Dunham, look at that!" he said, struck with grief. "The boat is spoiled!"

"Not so bad as that. It can be mended."

"What will Will Paine say? What will his father say?"

"Then it isn't your boat?"

"No. that is the worst of it. It was lent me by Will Paine, and I promised to take such good care of it."

"It isn't your fault, Robert?"

"No, I couldn't help it, but still it wouldn't have happened if it had not been in my charge."

"You can get it repaired, so that it will look almost as well as new."

If Robert had had plenty of money, this suggestion would have comforted him, but it will be remembered that he was almost penniless, dependent on the fish he caught for the means of supporting his mother and himself. Now this resource was cut off. The boat couldn't be used until it was repaired. He felt morally bound to get it repaired, though he was guiltless of the damage. But how could he even do this? One thing was clear--Mr. Paine must at once be informed of the injury suffered by the boat. Robert shrank from informing him, but he knew it to be his duty, and he was too brave to put it off.

But first he must try to find some clew to Ben Haley. He had now a personal interest in bringing to justice the man who had made him so much trouble. He had scarcely got on shore than the boy who had sold Ben Haley the hatchet, strolled up.

"Who was that man who came across in your boat?" he asked.

"Did you see him?" asked Robert, eagerly.

"To be sure I did," said Tom Green, with satisfaction. "I sold him my old hatchet for money enough to buy a new one, and he give me a quarter besides for my trouble."

"I wish you hadn't done it, Tom," said Robert, gravely. "See what he's done with it."

Tom Green opened his eyes wide with astonishment.

"What did he do that for?" he asked.

"To be revenged on me. I'll tell you what for another time. Now I want to find him. Can you tell me where he went?"

"No; I left him here, while I went to the store for a new hatchet."

The old hatchet was found under a clump of bushes. Robert took possession of it, feeling that he had a right to it, as part compensation for the mischief it had done.

"We'd better go to the railroad depot, Mr. Dunham," he said. "He'd be most likely to go there."

"You're right. We'll go."

They walked rapidly to the station, but too late, of course, for the train. The station-master was standing on the platform, superintending the removal of a trunk.

"Mr. Cross," said Robert, "I want to find out if a particular man left by the last train. I'll describe him,"

"Yes," said the station-master, "that's the man I was wondering about. He had a wound in the shoulder."

"He got that from me," said Robert.

"Sho! you don't say so," returned the station-master, in surprise. "He said he was out hunting with a friend, and his friend's gun went off accidentally."

"I don't believe he feels very friendly to me," said Robert, smiling. "He's stolen five or six hundred dollars in gold from old Paul Nichols."

"It'll about kill the old man, won't it?"

"He feels pretty bad about it. For what place did he buy a ticket?"

"For Cranston; but that ain't no guide. When he gets there, he'll buy a ticket for further on."

Had there been a telegraph station, Robert would have telegraphed on to have Ben Haley stopped, but there was none nearer than the next town. He determined to give information to a justice of the peace, and leave the matter in his hands. But Justice in a country town is slow, and it may as well be stated here, before anything was done Ben Haley was out of danger. But Robert was destined to fall in with him at a future day.

This business attended to, Robert bent his steps to Mr. Paine's office. This brings us to his meeting with Halbert Davis at the door. He was slightly surprised at the encounter, but was far from guessing the object of Halbert's call.

Mr. Paine looked up as he entered, and had no difficulty in guessing his errand.

"What can I do for you, Robert?" he asked, kindly.

"I bring bad news, Mr. Paine," said our hero, boldly plunging into the subject which had brought him to the office.

"It's about the boat, isn't it?" said the lawyer.

"What, do you know about it?" asked Robert, in surprise.

"Yes; a disinterested friend brought the news."

"Halbert Davis?"

"The same. He takes a strong interest in your affairs," added the lawyer, dryly. "Now tell me how it happened."

Robert gave a full explanation, the lawyer occasionally asking a question.

"It seems, then," he said, "that you incurred this man's enmity by your defense of Mr. Nichols' money."

"Yes, sir."

"It was incurred in a good cause. I can't blame you, nor will my son. I will get Mr. Plane, the carpenter, to look at the boat and see what he can do to repair it."

"Some time I will pay you the cost of the repairs, Mr. Paine. I would now if I had any money; but you know how I am situated."

"I shall not call upon you to do that," said the lawyer, kindly. "It was not your fault."

"But the damage would not have happened if Will had not lent the boat to me."

"That is true; but in undertaking the defense of Mr. Nichols you showed a pluck and courage which most boys would not have exhibited. I am interested, like all good citizens, in the prevention of theft, and in this instance I am willing to assume the cost."

"You are very kind, Mr. Paine. I was afraid you would blame me."

"No, my boy; I am not so unreasonable. It will save me some trouble if you will yourself see Mr. Plane and obtain from him an estimate of the probable expense of putting the boat in order."

Robert left the office, feeling quite relieved by the manner in which his communication had been received. A little way up the road he overtook Halbert Davis. In fact, Halbert was waiting for him, expressly to get an opportunity of enjoying his discomfiture at the ruin of the boat.

"Hallo, Rushton!" he said.

"Good-morning, Halbert!"

"Are you going out in your boat this afternoon?" asked Halbert, maliciously.

"You know why I can't."

"I wonder what Will Paine will say when he sees the good care you take of it."

"I don't believe he will blame me when he knows the circumstances."

"You ain't fit to have the charge of a boat. I suppose you ran it on a rock."

"Then you suppose wrong."

"You won't be able to go out fishing any more. How will you make a living?"

"Without your help," said Robert, coldly. "You will probably see me out again in a few days, if you take the trouble to look."

"How can you go?"

"Mr. Paine has asked me to see Mr. Plane about repairing the boat."

"Is he going to pay the expenses?"

"Yes."

"Then he's a fool."

"You'd better not tell him so, or he might give you a lesson in politeness."

"You're a low fellow," said Halbert, angrily.

"You are welcome to your opinion," returned Robert, indifferently.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE RAILROAD TRACK.

Robert saw the carpenter, according to Mr. Paine's instructions, but found him so busy that he would not engage to give his attention to the boat under a week.

The delay was regretted by our hero, since it cut him off from the employment by which he hoped to provide for his mother. Again Mrs. Rushton was in low spirits.

"I am sorry you couldn't agree with Halbert Davis, Robert," she said, with a sigh. "Then you could have stayed in the factory, and got your wages regularly every week."

"I know that, mother, but I am not willing to have Halbert 'boss me round,' even for a place in the factory."

"Then, Robert, you quarreled with the man you took across the river."

"I think I did right, mother," said Robert. "Don't get out of spirits. I don't expect to succeed always. But I think I shall come out right in the end."

"I am sure I hope so."

Mrs. Rushton was one of those who look on the dark side. She was distrustful of the future, and apt to anticipate bad fortune. Robert was very different. He inherited from his father an unusual amount of courage and self-reliance, and if one avenue was closed to him, he at once set out to find another. It is of this class that successful men are made, and we have hopes that Robert will develop into a prosperous and successful man.

"I am sure I don't see what you can do," said Mrs. Rushton, "and we can't live on what I make by braiding straw."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Robert, "I'll go on Sligo Hill and pick blueberries; I was passing a day or two ago, and saw the bushes quite covered. Just give me a couple of tin pails, and I'll see what I can do."

The pails were provided, and Robert started on his expedition. The hill was not very high, nor was its soil very good. The lower part was used only to pasture a few cows. But this part was thickly covered with blueberry bushes, which this season were fuller than usual of large-sized berries. Robert soon settled to work, and picked steadily and rapidly. At the end of three hours he had filled both pails, containing, as near as he could estimate, eight quarts.

"That's a pretty good afternoon's work," he said to himself. "Now I suppose I must turn peddler, and dispose of them,"

He decided to ask ten cents a quart. Later in the season the price would be reduced, but at that time the berries ought to command that price.

The first house at which he called was Mr. Paine's. He was about to pass, when he saw Hester at the window. Pride suggested, "She may despise me for being a berry peddler," but Robert had no false shame. "At any rate, I won't be coward enough to try to hide it from her."

Accordingly he walked up boldly to the door, and rang the bell.

Hester had seen him from the window, and she answered the bell herself.

"I am glad to see you, Robert," she said, frankly. "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you," said our hero, "but I called on business."

"You will find my father in his office," she said, looking a little disappointed.

Robert smiled.

"My business is not of a legal character," he said. "I've turned peddler, and would like to sell you some blueberries."

"Oh, what nice berries! Where did you pick them?"

"On Sligo."

"I am sure mother will buy some. Will you wait a minute while I go and ask her?"

"I will wait as long as you like."

Hester soon returned with authority to buy four quarts. I suspect that she was the means of influencing so large a purchase.

"They are ten cents a quart," said Robert, "but I don't think I ought to charge your father anything."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall owe him, or rather Will, a good deal of money."

"I know what you mean--it's about the boat."

"Did your father tell you?"

"Yes, but I knew it before. Halbert Davis told me."

"He takes a great interest in my affairs."

"He's a mean boy. You mustn't mind what he says against you."

Robert laughed.

"I don't care what he thinks or says of me, unless he persuades others to think ill of me."

"I shall never think ill of you, Robert," said Hester, warmly.

"Thank you, Hester," said Robert, looking up into her glowing face with more gratification than he could express. "I hope I shall deserve your good opinion."

"I am sure you will, Robert, But won't you come in?"

"No, thank you. I must sell the rest of my berries."

Robert left the house with forty cents in his pocket, the first fruits of his afternoon's work. Besides, he had four quarts left, for which he expected to find a ready sale. He had not gone far when he met Halbert. The latter was dressed with his usual care, with carefully polished shoes, neatly fitting gloves, and swinging a light cane, the successor of that which had been broken in his conflict with Robert. Our hero, on the other hand, I am obliged to confess, was by no means fashionably attired. His shoes were dusty, and his bare hands were stained with berry juice. He wore a coarse straw hat with a broad brim to shield him from the hot sun. Those of my readers who judge by dress alone would certainly have preferred Halbert Davis, who looked as if he had just stepped out of a band-box. But those who compared the two faces, the one bright, frank and resolute, the other supercilious and insincere, could hardly fail to prefer Robert in spite of his coarse attire and unfashionable air.

Halbert scanned his rival with scornful eyes. He would have taken no notice of him, but concluded to speak in the hope of saying something disagreeable.

"You have found a new business, I see," he said, with a sneer.

"Yes," said Robert, quietly. "When one business gives out, I try another."

"You've made a good choice," said Halbert. "It's what you are adapted for."

"Thank you for the compliment, but I don't expect to stick to it all my life."

"How do you sell your berries?"

"Ten cents a quart."

"You'd better call on your friend, Miss Hester Paine, and see if she won't buy some."

"Thank you for the advice, but it comes too late. She bought four quarts of me."

"She did!" returned Halbert, surprised. "I didn't think you'd go there."

"Why not?"

"She won't think much of a boy that has to pick berries for a living."

"I don't think that will change her opinion of me. Why should it?"

"It's a low business."

"I don't see it."

"Excuse my delaying you. I am afraid I may have interfered with your business. I say," he called out, as Robert was going on, "if you will call at our house, perhaps my mother may patronize you."

"Very well," said Robert, "if I don't sell elsewhere, I'll call there."

It makes no difference to me who buys my berries,"

"He's the proudest beggar I ever met," thought Halbert, looking after him. "Hester Paine must be hard up for an escort if she walks with a boy who peddles berries for a living. If I were her father, I would put a stop to it."

The same evening there was a concert in the Town Hall. A free ticket was given to Robert in return for some slight service. Mr. Paine and his daughter were present, and Halbert Davis also. To the disgust of the latter, Robert actually had the presumption to walk home with Hester. Hester laughed and chatted gayly, and appeared to be quite unconscious that she was lowering herself by accepting the escort of a boy "who picked berries for a living."

The next day Robert again repaired to Sligo. He had realized eighty cents from his sales the previous day, and he felt that picking berries was much better than remaining idle. Halbert's sneers did not for a moment discompose him. He had pride, but it was an honorable pride, and not of a kind that would prevent his engaging in any respectable employment necessary for the support of his mother and himself.

Returning home with well-filled pails, he walked a part of the way on the railroad, as this shortened the distance. He had not walked far when he discovered on the track a huge rock, large enough to throw the train off the track. How it got there was a mystery. Just in front there was a steep descent on either side, the road crossing a valley, so that an accident would probably cause the entire train to be thrown down the embankment. Robert saw the danger at a glance, and it flashed upon him at the same moment that the train was nearly due. He sprang to the rock, and exerted his utmost strength to dislodge it. He could move it slightly, but it was too heavy to remove. He was still exerting his strength to the utmost when the whistle of the locomotive was heard. Robert was filled with horror, as he realized the peril of the approaching train, and his powerlessness to avert it.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE YOUNG CAPITALIST.

The cars swept on at the rate of twenty miles an hour, the engineer wholly unconscious of the peril in front. Robert saw the fated train with its freight of human lives, and his heart grew sick within him as he thought of the terrible tragedy which was about to be enacted. Was there any possibility of his averting it? He threw himself against the rock and pushed with all the strength he could command. But, nerved as he was by desperation, he found the task greater than he could compass.

And still the train came thundering on. He must withdraw to a place of safety, or he would himself be involved in the destruction which threatened the train.

There was one thing more he could do, and he did it.

He took his station on the rock which was just in the path of the

advancing train, and waved his handkerchief frantically. It was a position to test the courage of the bravest.

Robert was fully aware that he was exposing himself to a horrible death. Should he not be seen by the engineer it would be doubtful whether he could get out of the way in time to escape death--and that of the most frightful nature. But unless he did something a hundred lives perhaps might be lost. So he resolutely took his stand, waving, as we have said, his handkerchief and shouting, though the last was not likely to be of any avail.

At first he was not seen. When the engineer at last caught sight of him it was with a feeling of anger at what he regarded as the foolhardiness of the boy. He slackened his speed, thinking he would leave his place, but Robert still maintained his position, his nerves strung to their highest tension, not alone at his own danger, but at the peril which he began to fear he could not avert.

Reluctantly the engineer gave the signal to stop the train. He was only just in time. When it came to a stop there was an interval of only thirty-five feet between it and Robert Rushton, who, now that he had accomplished his object, withdrew to one side, a little paler than usual, but resolute and manly in his bearing.

"What is the meaning of this foolery?" the engineer demanded, angrily.

Robert pointed in silence to the huge rock which lay on the track.

"How came that rock there?" asked the engineer, in a startled tone, as he took in the extent of the peril from which they had been saved.

"I don't know," said Robert. "I tried to move it, but I couldn't."

"You are a brave boy," said the engineer. "You have in all probability saved the train from destruction. But you ran a narrow risk yourself."

"I know it," was the reply; "but it was the only thing I could do to catch your attention."

"I will speak to you about it again. The first to be done is to move the rock."

He left the engine and advanced toward the rock. By this time many of the passengers had got out, and were inquiring why the train was stopped at this point. The sight of the rock made a sensation. Though the peril was over, the thought that the train might have been precipitated down the embankment, and the majority of the passengers killed or seriously injured, impressed them not a little. They pressed forward, and several lending a hand, the rock was ousted from its position, and rolled crashing over the bank.

Among the passengers was a stout, good-looking man, a New York merchant. He had a large family at home waiting his return from a Western journey. He shuddered as he thought how near he had been to never meeting them again on earth.

"It was providential, your seeing the rock," he said to the engineer. "We owe our lives to you."

"You do me more than justice," replied the engineer. "It was not I who saved the train, but that boy."

All eyes were turned upon Robert, who, unused to being the center of so many glances, blushed and seemed disposed to withdraw.

"How is that?" inquired the merchant.

"He saw the obstruction, and tried to remove it, but, not being able to do so, took his station on the rock, and, at the risk of his own life, drew my attention, and saved the train."

"It was a noble act, my boy; what is your name?"

"Robert Rushton."

"It is a name that we shall all have cause to remember. Gentlemen," continued the merchant, turning to the group around him, "you see before you the preserver of your lives. Shall his act go unrewarded?"

"No, no!" was the general exclamation.

"I don't want any reward," said Robert, modestly. "Any boy would have done as much."

"I don't know about that, my young friend. There are not many boys, or men, I think, that would have had the courage to act as you did. You may not ask or want any reward, but we should be forever disgraced if we failed to acknowledge our great indebtedness to you. I contribute one hundred dollars as my share of the testimonial to our young friend."

"I follow with fifty!" said his next neighbor, "and shall ask for the privilege of taking him by the hand."

Robert had won honors at school, but he had never before been in a position so trying to his modesty. The passengers, following the example of the last speaker, crowded around him, and took him by the hand, expressing their individual acknowledgments for the service he had rendered them. Our hero, whom we now designate thus appropriately, bore the ordeal with a self-possession which won the favor of all.

While this was going on, the collection was rapidly being made by the merchant who had proposed it. The amounts contributed varied widely, but no one refused to give. In ten minutes the fund had reached over six hundred dollars.

"Master Robert Rushton," said the merchant, "I have great pleasure in handing you this money, freely contributed by the passengers on this train, as a slight acknowledgment of the great service which you have rendered them at the risk of your own life. It does not often fall to the lot of a boy to perform a deed so heroic. We are all your debtors, and if the time ever comes that you need a friend, I for one shall be glad to show my sense of indebtedness."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

The passengers hurried into the cars, leaving our hero standing by the track, with one hand full of bank notes and in the other the card of the New York merchant. It was only about fifteen minutes since Robert had

first signaled the train, yet how in this brief time had his fortunes changed! From the cars now rapidly receding he looked to the roll of bills, and he could hardly realize that all this money was his own. He sat down and counted it over.

"Six hundred and thirty-five dollars!" he exclaimed. "I must have made a mistake."

But a second count turned out precisely the same.

"How happy mother will be!" he thought, joyfully. "I must go and tell her the good news."

He was so occupied with the thoughts of his wonderful good fortune that he nearly forgot to take the berries which he had picked.

"I shan't need to sell them now," he said. "We'll use a part of them ourselves, and what we can't use I will give away."

He carefully stored away the money in his coat pocket, and for the sake of security buttoned it tight. It was a new thing for him to be the custodian of so much treasure. As Halbert Davis usually spent the latter part of the afternoon in promenading the streets, sporting his kids and swinging his jaunty cane, it was not surprising that Robert encountered him again.

"So, you've been berrying again?" he said, stopping short.

"Yes," said Robert, briefly.

"You haven't got the boat repaired, I suppose."

"Not yet."

"It's lucky for you this is berrying season."

"Why?"

"Because you'd probably have to go to the poorhouse," said Halbert, insolently.

"I don't know about that," said Robert, coolly. "I rather think I could buy you out, Halbert Davis, watch, gloves, cane and all."

"What do you mean?" demanded Halbert, haughtily. "You seem to forget that you are a beggar, or next to it."

Robert set down his pails, and, opening his coat, drew out a handful of bills.

"Does that look like going to the almshouse?" he said.

"They're not yours," returned Halbert, considerably astonished, for, though he did not know the denomination of the bills, it was evident that there was a considerable amount of money.

"It belongs to me, every dollar of it," returned Robert.

"I don't believe it. Where did you get it? Picking berries, I suppose,"

he added, with a sneer.

"It makes no difference to you where I got it," said our hero, returning the money to his pocket. "I shan't go to the almshouse till this I is all gone."

"He must have stolen it," muttered Halbert, looking after Robert with disappointment and chagrin. It was certainly very vexatious that, in spite of all his attempts to humble and ruin our hero, he seemed more prosperous than ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VISIT TO THE LAWYER.

Mrs. Rushton was braiding straw when Robert entered with his berries.

"Couldn't you sell your berries, Robert?" she asked.

"I haven't tried yet, mother."

"The berrying season won't last much longer," said his mother, despondently.

"Don't borrow trouble, mother. I am sure we shall get along well."

"You feel more confidence than I do."

"I just met Halbert Davis in the street."

"Have you made up with him?"

"It is for him to make up with me."

"I am afraid you are too high-spirited, Robert. Did Halbert speak to you?"

"Oh, yes," said Robert, laughing. "He takes a great interest in my affairs. He predicts that we shall come to the poorhouse yet."

"He may be right."

"Now, mother, don't be so desponding. We've got enough money to pay our expenses for more than a year, even if we both stop work."

"What can you mean, Robert?" said his mother, looking up in surprise. "You must be crazy."

"Does that look like going to the poorhouse?" asked Robert, drawing out his money.

Mrs. Rushton uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Whose money is that, Robert?"

"Mine!"

"You haven't done anything wrong?"

"No, mother; I thought you knew me too well for that. I see you are anxious to hear how I obtained it, so I'll tell you all about it."

He sat down, and in brief words told his mother the story of the train and its peril, how he had rescued it, and, lastly, of the generous gift which he had so unexpectedly received. The mother's heart was touched, and she forgot all her forebodings.

"My son, I am proud of you," she said, her eyes moist. "You have done a noble deed, and you deserve the reward. But what a risk you ran!"

"I know it, mother, but we won't think of that, now that it is over. How much, money do you think I have here?"

"Two or three hundred dollars."

"Six hundred and thirty-five! So you see, mother, we needn't go to the poorhouse just yet. Now, how much better off should I have been if I had kept my place in the factory? It would have taken me more than two years to earn as much money as this. But that isn't all. I have been the means of saving a great many lives, for the train was sure to be thrown down the embankment. I shall remember that all my life."

"We have reason to be grateful to Heaven that you have been the means of doing so much good, Robert, while, at the same time, you have benefited yourself."

"That is true, mother."

"I shall be afraid to have so much money in the house. If it were known, we might be robbed."

"I will leave it with Mr. Paine until I get a chance to put it in a savings bank. He has a safe in his office. At the same time I will carry him some berries as a present. It won't be much, but I should like to do it on account of his kindness about the boat. I will offer now to bear the expense of its repair."

After washing his hands and adjusting his clothes a little, for Robert, though no fop like Halbert, was not regardless of appearances, especially as he thought Hester might see him, he set out for the lawyer's office.

"Excuse my bringing in my berries," said Robert, as he entered the office, "but I want to ask your acceptance of them."

Many persons, under the supposition that Robert was too poor to afford a gift, would have declined it, or offered to pay for it, thinking they were acting kindly and considerately. But Mr. Paine knew that Robert would be mortified by such an offer, and he answered:

"Thank you, Robert; I will accept your gift with thanks on one condition."

"What is it, Mr. Paine?" inquired our hero, a little puzzled.

"That you will take tea with us to-morrow evening, and help us do justice to them."

"Thank you," said Robert, not a little pleased at the invitation, "but I shouldn't like to leave my mother at home alone."

"Oh, we must have your mother, too. Hester will call this evening, and invite her."

"Then," said Robert, "I can answer for myself, and I think for her, that we should both be very happy to come."

The lawyer's social position made such an invitation particularly gratifying to Robert. Besides, he was led to value it more on account of the persistent efforts of Halbert to injure him in the general estimation. Then, too, it was pleasant to think that he was to sit down to the same table with Hester, as her father's guest, and to receive a call from her at his own house. Nothing that Mr. Paine could have done would have afforded him an equal amount of gratification,

"There is one other matter I wanted to speak to you about, Mr. Paine," he said. "Will you take care of some money for me until I get a chance to deposit it in the savings bank?"

"Certainly, Robert," was the reply, but the lawyer's manner showed some surprise. He knew the circumstances of the Rushtons, and he had not supposed they had any money on hand. "How much is it?"

"Six hundred and thirty-five dollars," answered Robert, producing it. "Will you count it, and see if it is all right?"

"Is this your money?" asked the lawyer, laying down his pen and gazing at Robert in astonishment.

"Yes, sir," said Robert, enjoying his surprise. "I will tell you how I got it"

So the story was told, with a modest reserve as to his own courage, but still showing, without his intending it, how nobly he had behaved.

"Give me your hand, Robert," said Mr. Paine, cordially. "You have shown yourself a hero. We shall be proud of your company to tea to-morrow evening."

Robert flushed with gratification at the high compliment conveyed in these words.

What did he care then for Halbert Davis and his petty malice! He had the approval of his own conscience, the good opinion of those whom he most respected and a provision against want sufficient to avert all present anxiety.

"There is one thing more, Mr. Paine," he added. "It's about the boat Will was kind enough to lend me."

"Have you seen the carpenter about repairing it?"

"Yes, sir, and he will attend to it as soon as he can spare the time."

But that was not what I wanted to say. I think I ought to bear the expense of repairing it. I would have spoken about it at first, but then I had no money, and didn't know when I should have any. Will you be kind enough to take as much of my money as will be needed to pay Mr. Plane's bill when it comes in?"

"Certainly not, Robert. It was not your fault that the boat was injured."

"It wouldn't have happened if I had not borrowed it. It isn't right that the expense should fall on you."

"Don't trouble yourself about that, Robert. I am able and willing to pay it. It is very honorable in you to make the offer, and I like you the better for having made it. Won't you need any of this money for present expenses?"

"Perhaps I had better take the thirty-five dollars. Mother may be in want of something."

Robert received back the sum named, and returned home, much pleased with his interview.

About seven o'clock, sitting at the window of the little cottage, he saw Hester Paine opening the front gate. He sprang to his feet and opened the door.

"Good-evening, Robert," she said. "Is your mother at home?"

"Yes, Hester. Won't you come in?"

"Thank you, Robert. Father has been telling me what a hero you were, and it made me feel proud that you were a friend of mine."

Robert's face lighted with pleasure.

"You compliment me more than I deserve," he answered, modestly; "but it gives me great pleasure to know that you think well of me."

"I am sure that there is no boy in Millville that would have dared to do such a thing. Good-evening, Mrs. Rushton. Are you not proud of your son?"

"He is a good son to me," said Mrs. Rushton, with a glance of affection.

"It is such a splendid thing he did. He will be quite a hero. Indeed, he is one already. I've got a New York paper giving an account of the whole thing. I brought it over, thinking you might like to read it."

She displayed a copy of a great city daily, in which full justice was done to Robert's bravery. Our hero listened with modest pleasure while it was being read.

"I don't deserve all that," he said.

"You must let us judge of that," said Hester. "But I have come this evening, Mrs. Rushton, to ask you to take tea with us to-morrow evening, you and Robert. You will come, won't you?"

Mrs. Rushton was pleased with this mark of attention, and after a slight demur, accepted.

I do not intend to give an account of the next evening, and how Robert, in particular, enjoyed it. That can be imagined, as well as Halbert's chagrin when he heard of the attention his rival was receiving in a quarter where he himself so earnestly desired to stand well. I must pass on to a communication received by Mrs. Rushton, a communication of a very unexpected character, which had an important effect upon the fortunes of our hero.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

It was not often that Mrs. Rushton received a letter. Neither she nor her husband had possessed many relatives, and such as either had were occupied with their own families, and little communication passed between them and Captain Rushton's family. Robert, therefore, seldom called at the post office. One day, however, as he stepped in by a neighbor's request to inquire for letters for the latter, the postmaster said, "There's a letter for your mother, Robert."

"Is there?" said our hero, surprised, "When did it come?"

"Yesterday. I was going to ask some one to carry it round to her, as you don't often call here."

He handed the letter to Robert, who surveyed it with curiosity. It was postmarked "Boston," and addressed in a bold business hand to "Mrs. Captain Rushton, Millville."

"Who can be writing to mother from Boston?" thought Robert.

The size of the letter also excited his curiosity. There were two stamps upon it, and it appeared bulky. Robert hurried home, and rushed into the kitchen where his mother was at work.

"Here's a letter for you, mother," he said.

"A letter for me!" repeated Mrs. Rushton.

"From Boston."

"I don't know who would be likely to write me from there. Open it for me, Robert."

He tore open the envelope. It contained two inclosures--one a letter in the same handwriting as the address; the other a large sheet of foolscap rumped up, and appearing once to have been rolled up, was written in pencil. Mrs. Rushton had no sooner looked at the latter than she exclaimed, in agitation: "Robert, it is your father's handwriting. Read it to me, I am too agitated to make it out."

Robert was equally excited. Was his father still alive, or was this

letter a communication from the dead?

"First let me read the other," he said. "It will explain about this."

His mother sank back into a chair too weak with agitation to stand, while her son rapidly read the following letter:

"BOSTON, August 15, 1853.

MRS. RUSHTON, DEAR MADAM: The fate of our ship Norman, which left this port now more than two years since, under the command of your husband, has until now been veiled in uncertainty. We had given up all hopes of obtaining any light upon the circumstances of its loss, when by a singular chance information was brought us yesterday. The ship Argo, while in the South Pacific, picked up a bottle floating upon the surface of the water. On opening it, it was found to contain two communications, one addressed to us, the other to you, the latter to be forwarded to you by us. Ours contains the particulars of the loss of the Norman, and doubtless your own letter also contains the same particulars. There is a bare possibility that your husband is still alive, but as so long a period has passed since the letters were written it would not be well to place too much confidence in such a hope. But even if Captain Rushton is dead, it will be a sad satisfaction to you to receive from him this last communication, and learn the particulars of his loss. We lose no time in forwarding to you the letter referred to, and remain, with much sympathy, yours respectfully,

WINSLOW & CO."

Mrs. Rushton listened to this letter with eager and painful interest, her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed upon Robert.

"Now read your father's letter," she said, in a low tone.

Robert unfolded the sheet, and his eyes filled with tears as he gazed upon the well-known handwriting of the father whose loss he had so long lamented. This letter, too, we transcribe:

"November 7, 1851.

MY DEAR WIFE AND SON: Whether these lines will ever meet your eyes I know not. Whether I will be permitted again to look upon your dear faces, I also am ignorant. The good ship Norman, in which I sailed from Boston not quite three months ago, is burned to the water's edge, and I find myself, with five of the sailors, afloat on the vast sea at the mercy of the elements, and with a limited supply of food. The chances are against our ever seeing land.

Hundreds of miles away from any known shores, our only hope of safety is in attracting the attention of some vessel. In the broad pathways of the ocean such a chance is doubtful. Fortunately I have a few sheets of paper and a pencil with me, and I write these lines, knowing well how improbable it is that you will ever read them. Yet it is a satisfaction to do what I can to let you know the position in which I stand.

But for the revengeful and malignant disposition of one man I should still be walking the deck of the Norman as its captain. But to my story: My first mate was a man named Haley--Benjamin Haley--whose name you will perhaps remember. He was born in our neighborhood, or, at all events, once lived there, being the nephew of old Paul Nichols. He was a wild young man, and bore a bad reputation. Finally he disappeared, and, as it seems, embraced the profession of a sailor. I was not prepossessed in his favor, and was not very well pleased to find him my second in command. However, he was regularly engaged, and it was of no use for me to say anything against him. I think, however, that he suspected the state of my feelings, as, while studiously polite, I did not make an effort to be cordial. At any rate, he must have taken a dislike to me early in the voyage, though whether at that time he meditated evil, I cannot say.

After a time I found that he was disposed to encroach upon my prerogatives as captain of the vessel, and issue commands which he knew to be in defiance of my wishes. You can imagine that I would not pass over such conduct unnoticed. I summoned him to an interview, and informed him in decided terms that I must be master in my own ship. He said little, but I saw from his expression that there could thereafter be no amicable relations between us.

I pass over the days that succeeded--days in which Haley went to the furthest verge of insolence that he felt would be safe. At length, carried away by impatience, I reprimanded him publicly. He grew pale with passion, turned on his heel, and strode away. That night I was roused from my sleep by the cry of 'Fire!' I sprang to my feet and took immediate measures to extinguish the flames. But the incendiary had taken care to do his work so well that it was already impossible.

I did not at first miss Haley, until, inquiring

for him, I learned that he was missing, and one of the ship's boats. It was evident that he had deliberately fired the ship in order to revenge himself upon me. His hatred must have been extreme, or he would not have been willing to incur so great a risk. Though he escaped from the ship, his position in an open boat must be extremely perilous.

When all hope of saving the ship was abandoned, we manned the remaining boats hastily, putting in each such a stock of provisions as we could carry without overloading the boats. Twenty-four hours have now passed, and we are still tossing about on the ocean. A storm would be our destruction. At this solemn time, my dear wife, my thoughts turn to you and my dear son, whom I am likely never to see again. There is one thing most of all which I wish you to know, but can hardly hope that these few lines will reach you. Just before I left home, on my present voyage, I deposited five thousand dollars with Mr. Davis, the superintendent of the factory, in trust for you, in case I should not return. You will be surprised to learn that I have so much money. It has been the accumulation of years, and was intended as a provision for you and Robert. I have no reason to doubt the integrity of Mr. Davis, yet I wish I had acquainted you with the fact of this deposit, and placed his written acknowledgment in your hands. My reason for concealment was, that I might surprise you at the end of this voyage.

When this letter comes to hand (if it ever should come to hand), in case the superintendent has not accounted to you for the money placed in his hands, let Robert go to him and claim the money in my name. But I can hardly believe this to be necessary. Should I never return, I am persuaded that Mr. Davis will be true to the trust I have reposed in him, and come forward like an honest man to your relief.

And now, my dear wife and son, farewell! My hope is weak that I shall ever again see you, yet it is possible. May Heaven bless you, and permit us to meet again in another world, if not in this!

I shall inclose this letter, and one to my owners, in a bottle, which I have by me, and commit it to the sea, trusting that the merciful waves may waft it to the shore."

Here Captain Rushton signed his name.

The feelings with which Robert read and his mother listened to this letter, were varied. Love and pity for the husband and father, now doubtless long dead, were blended with surprise at the revelation of the deposit made in the hands of the superintendent of the mill.

"Mother," said Robert, "did you know anything of this money father speaks of?"

"No," said Mrs. Rushton, "he never told me. It is strange that Mr. Davis has never informed us of it. Two years have passed, and we have long given him up as lost."

"Mother," said Robert, "it is my opinion that he never intends to let us know."

"I cannot believe he would be so dishonorable."

"But why should he keep back the knowledge? He knows that we are poor and need the money."

"But he has the reputation of an honorable man."

"Many have had that reputation who do not deserve it," said Robert. "The temptation must have proved too strong for him."

"What shall we do?"

"I know what I am going to do," said Robert, resolutely. "I am going to his house, and shall claim restitution of the money which father intrusted to him. He has had it two years, and, with the interest, it will amount to nearer six than five thousand dollars. It will be a fortune, mother."

"Don't be hasty or impetuous, Robert," said his mother. "Speak to him respectfully."

"I shall be civil if he is," said Robert.

He took his cap, and putting it on, left the cottage and walked with a quick pace to the house of the superintendent.

CHAPTER XX.

A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE.

Mr. Davis was seated in his office, but it was his own personal affairs rather than the business of the factory that engaged his attention. He was just in receipt of a letter from his broker in New York, stating that there were but slender chances of a rise in the price of some securities in which he had invested heavily. He was advised to sell out at once, in order to guard against a probable further depreciation. This was far from satisfactory, since an immediate sale would involve a loss of nearly a thousand dollars. Mr. Davis felt despondent, and, in consequence, irritable. It was at this moment that one of the factory hands came in and told him that Robert Rushton wished to see him.

The superintendent would have refused an interview but for one consideration. He thought that our hero was about to beg to be taken back into his employ. This request he intended to refuse, and enjoyed in advance the humiliation of young Rushton.

"Good-morning, sir," said Robert, removing his hat on entering.

"I suppose you want to be taken back," said the superintendent, abruptly.

"No, sir," said Robert. "I have come on quite a different errand."

Mr. Davis was disappointed. He was cheated of his expected triumph. Moreover, looking into our young hero's face, he saw that he was entirely self-possessed, and had by no means the air of one about to ask a favor.

"Then state your business at once," he said, roughly. "My time is too valuable to be taken up by trifles."

"My business is important to both of us," said Robert. "We have just received a letter from my father."

The superintendent started and turned pale. This was the most unwelcome intelligence he could have received. He supposed, of course, that Captain Rushton was alive, and likely to reclaim the sum, which he was in no position to surrender,

"Your father!" he stammered. "Where is he? I thought he was dead."

"I am afraid he is," said Robert, soberly.

"Then how can you just have received a letter from him?" demanded Mr. Davis, recovering from his momentary dismay.

"The letter was inclosed in a bottle, which was picked up in the South Pacific, and brought to the owners of the vessel. My father's ship was burned to the water's edge, and at the time of writing the letter he was afloat on the ocean with five of his sailors in a small boat."

"How long ago was this? I mean when was the letter dated."

"Nearly two years ago--in the November after he sailed."

"Then, of course, he must have perished," said the superintendent, with a feeling of satisfaction. "However, I suppose your mother is glad to have heard from him. Is that all you have to tell me?"

"No, sir," said Robert, looking boldly in the face of his former employer. "My father added in his letter, that just before sailing he deposited with you the sum of five thousand dollars, to be given to my mother in case he never returned."

So the worst had come! The dead had revealed the secret which the superintendent hoped would never be known. He was threatened with ruin. He had no means of paying the deposit unless by sacrificing all his property, and it was doubtful whether even then he would be able wholly to make it up. If Robert possessed his acknowledgment he would have no

defense to make. This he must ascertain before committing himself.

"Supposing this story to be true," he said, in a half-sneering tone, "you are, of course, prepared to show me my receipt for the money?"

"That my father carried away with him. He did not send it with the letter."

All the superintendent's confidence returned. He no longer felt afraid, since all evidence of the deposit was doubtless at the bottom of the sea with the ill-fated captain. He resolved to deny the trust altogether.

"Rushton," he said, "I have listened patiently to what you had to say, and in return I answer that in the whole course of my life I have never known of a more barefaced attempt at fraud. In this case you have selected the wrong customer."

"What!" exclaimed Robert, hardly crediting the testimony of his ears; "do you mean to deny that my father deposited five thousand dollars with you just before sailing on his last voyage?"

"I certainly do, and in the most unqualified terms. Had such been the case, do you think I would have kept the knowledge of it from your mother so long after your father's supposed death?"

"There might be reasons for that," said Robert, significantly.

"None of your impertinent insinuations, you young rascal," said Mr. Davis, hotly. "The best advice I can give you is, to say nothing to any one about this extraordinary claim. It will only injure you, and I shall be compelled to resort to legal measures to punish you for circulating stories calculated to injure my reputation."

If the superintendent expected to intimidate Robert by this menace he was entirely mistaken in the character of our young hero. He bore the angry words and threatening glances of his enemy without quailing, as resolute and determined as ever.

"Mr. Davis," he said, "if there is no truth in this story, do you think my father, with death before his eyes, would have written it to my mother?"

"I have no evidence, except your word, that any such letter has been received."

"I can show it to you, if you desire it, in my father's handwriting."

"We will suppose, then, for a moment, that such a letter has been received, and was written by your father. I can understand how, being about to die, and feeling that his family were without provision, he should have written such a letter with the intention of giving you a claim upon me, whom he no doubt selected supposing me to be a rich man. It was not justifiable, but something can be excused to a man finding himself in such a position."

Robert was filled with indignation as he listened to this aspersion upon his father's memory. He would not have cared half so much for any insult to himself.

"Mr. Davis," he said, boldly, "it is enough for you to cheat my mother out of the money which my father left her, but when you accuse my father of fraud you go too far. You know better than any one that everything which he wrote is true."

The superintendent flushed under the boy's honest scorn, and, unable to defend himself truthfully, he worked himself into a rage.

"What! do you dare insult me in my own office?" he exclaimed, half rising from his desk, and glaring at our hero. "Out of my sight at once, or I may be tempted to strike you!"

"Before I leave you, Mr. Davis," said Robert, undauntedly, "I wish you to tell me finally whether you deny the deposit referred to in my father's letter?"

"And I tell you, once for all," exclaimed the superintendent, angrily, "if you don't get out of my office I will kick you out."

"I will leave you now," said our hero, not intimidated; "but you have not heard the last of me. I will not rest until I see justice done to my mother."

So saying, he walked deliberately from the office, leaving Mr. Davis in a state of mind no means comfortable. True, the receipt had doubtless gone to the bottom of the sea with the ill-fated captain, and, as no one was cognizant of the transaction, probably no claim could be enforced against his denial. But if the letter should be shown, as Robert would doubtless be inclined to do, he was aware that, however the law might decide, popular opinion would be against him, and his reputation would be ruined. This was an unpleasant prospect, as the superintendent valued his character. Besides, the five thousand dollars were gone and not likely to be recovered. Had they still been in his possession, that would have been some compensation.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DENIAL.

Robert left the superintendent's office in deep thought. He understood very well that it would be impossible to enforce his claim without more satisfactory testimony than his father's letter. If any one had been cognizant of the transaction between Mr. Davis and his father it would have helped matters, but no one, so far as he knew, was even aware that his father had possessed so large a sum as five thousand dollars. Had Captain Rushton inclosed the receipt, that would have been sufficient, but it had probably gone to the bottom with him. But, after all, was it certain that his father was dead? It was not certain, but our hero was forced to admit that the chances of his father's being alive were extremely slender.

Finding himself utterly at a loss, he resolved to call upon his firm friend, Squire Paine, the lawyer. Going to his office, he was fortunate enough to find him in, and unengaged.

"Good-morning, Robert," said the lawyer, pleasantly.

"Good-morning, sir. You find me a frequent visitor."

"Always welcome," was the pleasant reply. "You know I am your banker, and it is only natural for you to call upon me."

"Yes, sir," said Robert, smiling; "but it is on different business that I have come to consult you this morning."

"Go on. I will give you the best advice in my power."

The lawyer listened with surprise to the story Robert had to tell.

"This is certainly a strange tale," he said, after a pause.

"But a true one," said Robert, hastily.

"I do not question that. It affords another illustration of the old saying that truth is stranger than fiction. That a letter committed to the deep so many thousand miles away should have finally reached its destination is very remarkable, I may say Providential."

"Do you think there is any chance of my father being yet alive?"

"There is a bare chance, but I cannot encourage you to place much reliance upon it."

"If he had been picked up by any vessel I suppose he would have written."

"You would doubtless have seen him at home before this time in that case. Still there might be circumstances," added the lawyer, slowly, "that would prevent his communicating with friends at home. For instance, his boat might have drifted to some uninhabited island out of the course of ordinary navigation. I don't say it is at all probable, but there is such a probability."

"Is there any chance of making Mr. Davis return the money my father deposited with him?"

"There again there are difficulties. He may demand the return of his receipt, or he may continue to deny the trust altogether."

"Won't the letter prove anything?"

"It may produce a general conviction that such a deposit was made, since, admitting the letter to be genuine, no one, considering especially the character of your father, can readily believe that in the immediate presence of death he would make any such statement unless thoroughly reliable. But moral conviction and legal proof are quite different things. Unless that receipt is produced I don't see that anything can be done."

"Perhaps my father might have put that in a bottle also at a later date."

"He might have done so when he became satisfied that there was no chance of a rescue. But even supposing him to have done it, the chances are

ten to one that it will never find its way to your mother. The reception of the first letter was almost a miracle."

"I have no doubt you are right, Mr. Paine," said Robert; "but it seems very hard that my poor father's hard earnings should go to such an unprincipled man, and my mother be left destitute."

"That is true, Robert, but I am obliged to say that your only hope is in awakening Mr. Davis to a sense of justice."

"There isn't much chance of that," said Robert, shaking his head.

"If you will leave the matter in my hands, I will call upon him to-night, and see what I can do."

"I shall feel very glad if you will do so, Squire Paine. I don't want to leave anything undone."

"Then I will do so. I don't imagine it will do any good, but we can but try."

Robert left the office, making up his mind to await the report of the lawyer's visit before moving further.

That evening, the lawyer called at the house of the superintendent. Mrs. Davis and Halbert were in the room. After a little unimportant conversation, he said:

"Mr. Davis, may I ask the favor of a few minutes' conversation with you in private?"

"Certainly," said the superintendent, quite in the dark as to the business which had called his guest to the house. He led the way into another room, and both took seats.

"I may as well say to begin with," commenced the lawyer, "that I call in behalf of the family of the late Captain Rushton."

The superintendent started nervously.

"That boy has lost no time," he muttered to himself.

"I suppose you understand what I have to say?"

"I presume I can guess," said the superintendent, coldly. "The boy came into my office this morning, and made a most extraordinary claim, which I treated with contempt. Finding him persistent I ordered him out of my office. I need not say that no sane man would for a moment put confidence in such an incredible story or claim."

"I can't quite agree with you there," said the lawyer, quietly. "There is nothing incredible about the story. It is remarkable, I grant, but such things have happened before, and will again."

"I suppose you refer to the picking up of the bottle at sea."

"Yes; I fail to see what there is incredible about it. If the handwriting can be identified as that of the late Captain Rushton, and Robert says both his mother and himself recognized it, the story becomes

credible and will meet with general belief."

"I thought you were too sensible and practical a man," said the superintendent, sneering, "to be taken in by so palpable a humbug. Why, it reads like a romance."

"In spite of all that, it may be true enough," returned the lawyer, composedly.

"You may believe it, if you please. It seems to me quite unworthy of belief."

"Waiving that point, Robert, doubtless, acquainted you with the statement made in the letter that Captain Rushton, just before sailing on his last voyage, deposited with you five thousand dollars. What have you to say to that?"

"What have I to say?" returned the superintendent. "That Captain Rushton never possessed five thousand dollars in his life. I don't believe he possessed one quarter of the sum."

"What authority have you for saying that? Did he make you his confidant?" asked the lawyer, keenly.

"Yes," said the superintendent, promptly. "When last at home, he called at my house one day, and in the course of conversation remarked that sailors seldom saved any money. 'For instance,' said he, 'I have followed the sea for many years, and have many times resolved to accumulate a provision for my wife and child, but as yet I have scarcely done more than to begin.' He then told me that he had little more than a thousand dollars, but meant to increase that, if possible, during his coming voyage."

To this statement Squire Paine listened attentively, fully believing it to be an impromptu fabrication, as it really was.

"Did he say anything about what he had done with this thousand dollars or more?" he asked.

"A part he left for his wife to draw from time to time for expenses; the rest, I suppose, he took with him."

Mr. Paine sat silent for a moment. Things looked unpromising, he couldn't but acknowledge, for his young client. In the absence of legal proof, and with an adroit and unscrupulous antagonist, whose interests were so strongly enlisted in defeating justice, it was difficult to see what was to be done.

"I understand then, Mr. Davis," he said, finally, "that you deny the justice of this claim?"

"Certainly I do," said the superintendent. "It is a palpable fraud. This boy is a precocious young swindler, and will come to a bad end."

"I have a different opinion of him."

"You are deceived in him, then. I have no doubt he got up the letter himself."

"I don't agree with you. I have seen the letter; it is in Captain Rushton's handwriting. Moreover, I have seen the letter of the owners, which accompanied it."

The superintendent was in a tight place, and he knew it. But there was nothing to do but to persist in his denial.

"Then I can only say that Captain Rushton was a party to the fraud," he said.

"You must be aware, Mr. Davis, that when the public learns the facts in the case, the general belief will be the other way."

"I can't help that," said the other, doggedly. "Whatever the public chooses to think, I won't admit the justice of this outrageous claim."

"Then I have only to bid you good-evening," said the lawyer, coldly, affecting not to see the hand which the superintendent extended. The latter felt the slight, and foresaw that from others he must expect similar coldness, but there was no help for it. To restore the money would be ruin. He had entered into the path of dishonesty, and he was forced to keep on in it.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROBERT'S NEW PROJECT.

Mr. Paine called at Mrs. Rushton's cottage, and communicated the particulars of his interview with the superintendent.

"It is evident," he said, "that Mr. Davis is swayed by his interests, and feeling legally secure, prefers to defraud you rather than to surrender the five thousand dollars."

"I wouldn't have believed it of Mr. Davis," said Mrs. Rushton; "he is considered such a respectable man."

"I have heard rumors that he is dabbling in speculations, and I suspect he may find it inconvenient to pay away so large a sum of money."

"He had no right to speculate with my mother's money," said Robert, indignantly.

"You are right there. He should have invested it securely."

"Mr. Paine," said Robert, after a pause, "I have an idea that father is still living, and that some day I shall find him."

The lawyer shook his head.

"There is not one chance in ten that he is living," he said. "It is only a fancy of yours."

"It may be, but I can't get it out of my head."

"I hope you will prove correct, but I need not tell you of the many arguments against such a theory."

"I know them all, but still I believe he is living. Mr. Paine," continued Robert, earnestly, "I feel so strongly on the subject that, with my mother's permission, I, mean to go out into the world in search of him."

"I must say, Robert," said Mr. Paine, "I did not expect such a visionary scheme from a boy of your good sense. You must see yourself how wild it is."

"I know it," said our hero; "but I want to take a year, at any rate, to see the world. If, at the end of that time, I discover no trace of my father, I will come home content."

"But what will become of your mother during that time?"

"I will leave four hundred dollars in your hands for her. The rest I will draw for my own uses."

"But you don't expect to travel round the world on two hundred dollars, surely?" said the lawyer.

"I shall work my way as far as I can," said Robert. "I can't afford to travel as a gentleman."

"Suppose you find yourself without money in a foreign land?"

"I am not afraid. I am willing to work, and I can make my way."

"Surely, Mrs. Rushton, you do not approve Robert's scheme?" said Mr. Paine.

But to his surprise he found that Mrs. Rushton was inclined to regard it favorably. She seemed to share Robert's belief that her husband was still living, and that Robert could find him. She was not a woman in the habit of reasoning, and had no conception of the difficulties in his way. The money left behind in the hands of Mr. Paine, supplemented by her own earnings, would be enough to maintain her for two years, and this thought made her easy, for she had a great dread of poverty and destitution.

When the lawyer found how Mrs. Rushton felt on the subject, he ceased his objections to the plan; for, though he had no confidence in our young hero's success in the object he had in view, he thought that a year's tour might benefit him by extending his knowledge of the world and increasing his self-reliance.

"How soon do you wish to start, Robert?" he asked.

"It will take me a week to get your clothes ready," said Mrs. Rushton.

"Then by a week from Monday I will start," said Robert.

"Have you formed any definite plans about the manner of going?"

"I will go to New York first, and call on the gentleman who got up the subscription for me. I will tell him my story, and ask his advice."

"The most sensible thing you could do. As to the money, I will have that ready for you. Of course, you will call on me before you go."

The superintendent had made up his mind that Robert would spread the report of the deposit, and nervously awaited the result. But to his relief he observed no change in the demeanor of his fellow-townsmen. He could only conclude that, for reasons of his own, the boy he had wronged had concluded to defer the exposure. Next he heard with a feeling of satisfaction that Robert had decided to go abroad in quest of his father. He had no doubt that Captain Rushton was dead, and regarded the plan as utterly quixotic and foolish, but still he felt glad that it had been undertaken.

"If the boy never comes back, I shan't mourn much," he said to himself. "His mother is a weak woman, who will never give me any trouble, but this young rascal has a strong and resolute will, and I shall feel more comfortable to have him out of the way."

When Robert got ready to leave he made a farewell call on the lawyer, and drew two hundred dollars of his money.

"I don't know but one hundred will do," he said. "Perhaps I ought to leave five hundred for my mother."

"You carry little enough, Robert. Don't have any anxiety about your mother. I will not see her suffer."

Robert grasped his hand in earnest gratitude.

"How can I thank you?" he said.

"You need not thank me. I had a warm regard for your father, and shall be glad to help your mother if there is any occasion. Not only this, but if in your wanderings you find yourself in a tight place, and in want of help, write to me, and I will help you."

"You are a true friend," said Robert, gratefully. "I wish my father had intrusted his money to you instead of to the superintendent."

"I wish he had as matters have turned out, I should have taken care that your interests did not suffer."

"Oh," exclaimed Robert, fervently, "if I could only find my father, and bring him home to confront this false friend, and convict him of his base fraud, I believe I would willingly give ten years of my life."

"That question can only be solved by time. I, too, should earnestly rejoice if such an event could be brought about. And now, Robert, good-by, and Heaven bless you. Don't forget that you can count always on my friendship and assistance."

On the way home Robert fell in with Halbert Davis. Halbert, of course, knew nothing of the claim made upon his father, but he had heard that Robert proposed to leave home. He was both sorry and glad on account of this--sorry because he had hoped to see our hero fall into poverty and destitution, and enjoy the spectacle of his humiliation. Now he was afraid Robert would succeed and deprive him of the enjoyment he had counted upon. On the other hand, Robert's departure would leave the

field free so far as concerned Hester Paine, and he hoped to win the favor of that young lady in the absence of any competitor. Of this there was not the slightest chance, but Halbert was blinded by his own vanity to the obvious dislike which Hester entertained for him.

Now when he saw Robert approaching he couldn't forego the pleasure of a final taunt.

"So you're going to leave town, Rushton?" he commenced.

"Yes, Davis," answered Robert, in the same tone. "Shall you miss me much?"

"I guess I shall live through it," said Halbert. "I suppose you are going because you can't make a living here!"

"Not exactly. However, I hope to do better elsewhere."

"If you're going to try for a place, you'd better not mention that you got turned out of the factory. You needn't apply to my father for a recommendation."

"I shan't need any recommendation from your father," said Robert. "He is about the last man that I would apply to."

"That's where you are right," said Halbert. "What sort of a place are you going to try for?"

He knew nothing of Robert's intention to seek his father, but supposed he meant to obtain a situation in Hew York.

"You seem particularly interested in my movements, Davis."

"Call me Mr. Davis, if you please," said Halbert, haughtily.

"When you call me Mr. Rushton, I will return the compliment."

"You are impertinent."

"Not more so than you are."

"You don't seem to realize the difference in our positions."

"No, I don't, except that I prefer my own."

Disgusted with Robert's evident determination to withhold the respect which he considered his due, Halbert tried him on another tack.

"Have you bidden farewell to Hester Paine?" he asked, with a sneer.

"Yes," said Robert.

"I suppose she was very much affected!" continued Halbert.

"She said she was very sorry to part with me."

"I admire her taste."

"You would admire it more if she had a higher appreciation of you."

"I shall be good friends with her, when you are no longer here to slander me to her."

"I am not quite so mean as that," said Robert. "If she chooses to like you, I shan't try to prevent it."

"I ought to be very much obliged to you, I am sure."

"You needn't trouble yourself to be grateful," returned Robert, coolly. "But I must bid you good-by, as I have considerable to do."

"Don't let me detain you," said Halbert, with an elaborate share of politeness.

"I wonder why Halbert hates me so much!" he thought. "I don't like him, but I don't wish him any harm."

He looked with satisfaction upon a little cornelian ring which he wore upon one of his fingers. It was of very trifling value, but it was a parting gift from Hester, and as such he valued it far above its cost.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DISHONEST BAGGAGE-SMASHER.

On the next Monday morning Robert started for the city. At the moment of parting he began to realize that he had undertaken a difficult task. His life hitherto had been quiet and free from excitement. Now he was about to go out into the great world, and fight his own way. With only two hundred dollars in his pocket he was going in search of a father, who, when last heard from was floating in an open boat on the South Pacific. The probabilities were all against that father's being still alive. If he were, he had no clew to his present whereabouts.

All this Robert thought over as he was riding in the cars to the city. He acknowledged that the chances were all against his success, but in spite of all, he had a feeling, for which he could not account, that his father was still living, and that he should find him some day. At any rate, there was something attractive in the idea of going out to unknown lands to meet unknown adventures, and so his momentary depression was succeeded by a return of his old confidence.

Arrived in the city, he took his carpetbag in his hand, and crossing the street, walked at random, not being familiar with the streets, as he had not been in New York but twice before, and that some time since.

"I don't know where to go," thought Robert. "I wish I knew where to find some cheap hotel."

Just then a boy, in well-ventilated garments and a rimless straw hat, with a blacking box over his shoulder, approached.

"Shine your boots, mister?" he asked.

Robert glanced at his shoes, which were rather deficient in polish, and finding that the expense would be only five cents, told him to go ahead.

"I'll give you the bulliest shine you ever had," said the ragamuffin.

"That's right! Go ahead!" said Robert.

When the boy got through, he cast a speculative glance at the carpetbag.

"Smash yer baggage?" he asked.

"What's that?"

"Carry yer bag."

"Do you know of any good, cheap hotel where I can put up?" asked Robert.

"Eu-ro-pean hotel?" said the urchin, accenting the second syllable.

"What kind of a hotel is that?"

"You take a room, and get your grub where you like."

"Yes, that will suit me."

"I'll show you one and take yer bag along for two shillings."

"All right," said our hero. "Go ahead."

The boy shouldered the carpetbag and started in advance, Robert following. He found a considerable difference between the crowded streets of New York and the quiet roads of Millville. His spirits rose, and he felt that life was just beginning for him. Brave and bold by temperament, he did not shrink from trying his luck on a broader arena than was afforded by the little village whence he came. Such confidence is felt by many who eventually fail, but Robert was one who combined ability and willingness to work with confidence, and the chances were in favor of his succeeding.

Unused to the city streets, Robert was a little more cautious about crossing than the young Arab who carried his bag. So, at one broad thoroughfare, the latter got safely across, while Robert was still on the other side waiting for a good opportunity to cross in turn. The bootblack, seeing that communication was for the present cut off by a long line of vehicles, was assailed by a sudden temptation. For his services as porter he would receive but twenty-five cents, while here was an opportunity to appropriate the entire bag, which must be far more valuable. He was not naturally a bad boy, but his street education had given him rather loose ideas on the subject of property. Obeying his impulse, then, he started rapidly, bag in hand, up a side street.

"Hold on, there! Where are you going?" called out Robert.

He received no answer, but saw the baggage-smasher quickening his pace and dodging round the corner. He attempted to dash across the street, but was compelled to turn back, after being nearly run over.

"I wish I could get hold of the young rascal!" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Who do you mane, Johnny?" asked a boy at his side.

"A boy has run off with my carpetbag," said Robert.

"I know him. It's Jim Malone."

"Do you know where I can find him?" asked Robert, eagerly. "If you'll help me get back my bag, I'll give you a dollar."

"I'll do it then. Come along of me. Here's a chance to cross."

Following his new guide, Robert dashed across the street at some risk, and found himself safe on the other side.

"Now where do you think he's gone?" demanded Robert.

"It's likely he'll go home."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"No.--Mulberry street."

"Has he got any father and mother?"

"He's got a mother, but the ould woman's drunk most all the time."

"Then she won't care about his stealing?"

"No, she'll think he's smart."

"Then we'll go there. Is it far?"

"Not more than twenty minutes."

The boy was right. Jim steered for home, not being able to open the bag in the street without suspicion. His intention was to appropriate a part of the clothing to his own use, and dispose of the rest to a pawnbroker or second-hand dealer, who, as long as he got a good bargain, would not be too particular about inquiring into the customer's right to the property. He did not, however, wholly escape suspicion. He was stopped by a policeman, who demanded, "Whose bag is that, Johnny?"

"It belongs to a gentleman that wants it carried to the St. Nicholas," answered Jim, promptly.

"Where is the gentleman?"

"He's took a car to Wall street on business."

"How came he to trust you with the bag? Wasn't he afraid you'd steal it?"

"Oh, he knows me. I've smashed baggage for him more'n once."

This might be true. At any rate, it was plausible, and the policeman, having no ground of detention, suffered him to go on.

Congratulating himself on getting off so well, Jim sped on his way, and arrived in quick time at the miserable room in Mulberry street, which he

called home.

His mother lay on a wretched bed in the corner, half stupefied with drink. She lifted up her head as her son entered.

"What have you there, Jimmy?" she asked.

"It's a bag, mother."

"Whose is it?"

"It's mine now."

"And where did ye get it?"

"A boy gave it to me to carry to a chape hotel, so I brought it home. This is a chape hotel, isn't it?"

"You're a smart boy, an' I always said it, Jimmy. Let me open it," and the old woman, with considerable alacrity, rose to her feet and came to Jim's side.

"I'll open it myself, mother, that is, I if I had a key. Haven't you got one?"

"I have that same. I picked up a bunch of keys in the strate last week."

She fumbled in her pocket, and drew out half a dozen keys of different sizes, attached to a steel ring.

"Bully for you, old woman!" said Jim. "Give 'em here."

"Let me open the bag," said Mrs. Malone, persuasively.

"No, you don't," said her dutiful son. "'Tain't none of yours. It's mine."

"The keys is mine," said his mother, "and I'll kape 'em."

"Give 'em here," said Jim, finding a compromise necessary, "and I'll give you fifty cents out of what I get"

"That's the way to talk, darlint," said his mother, approvingly. "You wouldn't have the heart to chate your ould mother out of her share?"

"It's better I did," said Jim; "you'll only get drunk on the money."

"Shure a little drink will do me no harm," said Mrs. Malone.

Meanwhile the young Arab had tried key after key until he found one that fitted--the bag flew open, and Robert's humble stock of clothing lay exposed to view. There was a woolen suit, four shirts, half a dozen collars, some stockings and handkerchiefs. Besides these there was the little Bible which Robert had had given him by his father just before he went on his last voyage. It was the only book our hero had room for, but in the adventurous career upon which he had entered, exposed to perils of the sea and land, he felt that he would need this as his constant guide,

"Them shirts'll fit me," said Jim. "I guess I'll kape 'em, and the close besides."

"Then where'll you git the money for me?" asked his mother,

"I'll sell the handkerchiefs and stockings. I don't nade them," said Jim, whose ideas of full dress fell considerably short of the ordinary standard. "I won't nade the collars either."

"You don't nade all the shirts," said his mother.

"I'll kape two," said Jim. "It'll make me look respectable. Maybe I'll kape two collars, so I can sit up for a gentleman of fashion."

"You'll be too proud to walk with your ould mother," said Mrs. Malone.

"Maybe I will," said Jim, surveying his mother critically. "You aint much of a beauty, ould woman."

"I was a purty gal, once," said Mrs. Malone, "but hard work and bad luck has wore on me."

"The whisky's had something to do with it," said Jim. "Hard work didn't make your face so red."

"Is it my own boy talks to me like that?" said the old woman, wiping her eyes on her dress.

But her sorrow was quickly succeeded by a different emotion, as the door opened suddenly, and Robert Rushton entered the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GOOD BEGINNING.

Jim started to his feet at the sight of the equally unwelcome and unexpected visitor. His mother, ignorant that she saw before her the owner of the bag, supposed it might be a customer wanting some washing done.

"Good-morning, sir," said she, "And have yez business with me?"

"No," said Robert, "I have business with your son, if that's he."

"Shure he's my son, and a smart bye he is too."

"He's a little too smart sometimes," returned our hero. "I gave him my carpetbag to carry this morning, and he ran away with it."

Mrs. Malone's face fell at this unexpected intelligence.

"Shur an' it was a mistake of his," she said. "He's too honest entirely to stale the value of a pin, let alone a carpetbag."

Meanwhile Jim was rapidly reviewing the situation. He was not naturally bad, but he had fallen a victim to sudden temptation. He was ashamed, and determined to make amends by a frank confession.

"My mother is wrong," he said; "I meant to kape it, and I'm sorry. Here's the bag, wid nothing taken out of it."

"That's right, to own up," said Robert, favorably impressed with his frank confession. "Give me the bag and it'll be all right. I suppose you were poor, and that tempted you. I am poor, too, and couldn't afford to lose it. But I'd rather starve than steal, and I hope you will not be dishonest again."

"I won't!" said Jim, stoutly. "I'll go with you now to a chape hotel, and won't charge you nothin'."

"I've got a boy downstairs who will take it. Don't forget what you said just now."

"No, I won't," said Jim. "Shure if I'd known what a bully young gentleman you was, I wouldn't have took it on no account."

So Robert descended the stairs, having by his forbearance probably effected a moral reformation in Jim, and confirmed in him the good principles, which, in spite of his mother's bad example, had already taken root in his heart. If the community, while keeping vigilant watch over the young outcasts that throng our streets, plying their petty avocations, would not always condemn, but encourage them sometimes to a better life, the results would soon appear in the diminution of the offenses for which they are most frequently arrested.

His new guide shouldered Robert's carpetbag, and conducted him to a hotel of good standing, managed on the European system. Dismissing the boy with the promised reward, Robert went up to his room on the fifth floor, and after attending to his toilet, sallied out into the street and made his way to the warehouse of the merchant who had been instrumental in raising the fund for him.

"Mr. Morgan is engaged," said a clerk to whom he spoke.

"I will wait for him, if you please," said Robert.

"Is it any business that I can attend to?" asked the clerk.

"No, I wish to see Mr. Morgan himself."

Mr. Morgan was engaged with two gentlemen, and our hero was obliged to wait nearly half an hour. At the end of that time, the merchant consented to see him. He did not at first recognize him, but said, inquiringly, "Well, my young friend, from whom do you come?"

"I come from no one, sir."

"Have you business with me?"

"You do not remember me, Mr. Morgan. Do you remember when the cars came so near running off the track a short time since at Millville?"

"Certainly I do," said Mr. Morgan, heartily; "and I now remember you as

the brave boy who saved all our lives."

"You gave me your card and told me I might call on you."

"To be sure, I did, and I am very glad to see you. You must go home and dine with me to-day."

"Thank you, sir, for your kind invitation."

"This is my address," said the merchant, writing it in pencil, and handing it to Robert. "We dine at half-past six. You had better be at the door at six. We will then talk over your plans, for I suppose you have some, and I will do what I can to promote them. At present I am busy, and am afraid I must ask you to excuse me."

"Thank you, sir," said Robert, gratefully.

He left the office, not a little elated at his favorable reception. Mr. Morgan, judging from his place of business, must be a man of great wealth, and could no doubt be of essential service to him. What was quite as important, he seemed disposed to help him.

"That's a good beginning," thought Robert. "I wish mother knew how well I have succeeded so far. I'll just write and let her know that I have arrived safe. To-morrow perhaps I shall have better news to tell."

He went back to his hotel, and feeling hungry, made a substantial meal. He found the restaurants moderate in price, and within his means.

Six o'clock found him ringing the bell of a handsome brownstone house on Fifth avenue. Though not disposed to be shy, he felt a little embarrassed as the door opened and a servant in livery stood before him.

"Is Mr. Morgan at home?" inquired Robert.

"Yes, sir," said the servant, glancing speculatively at the neat but coarse garments of our hero.

"He invited me to dine with him," said Robert.

"Won't you walk in, sir?" said the servant, with another glance of wild surprise at the dress of the dinner guest. "If you'll walk in here," opening the door of a sumptuously furnished parlor, "I will announce you. What name shall I say?"

"Robert Rushton."

Robert entered the parlor, and sat down on a sofa. He looked around him with a little, pardonable curiosity, for he had never before been in an elegant city mansion.

"I wonder whether I shall ever be rich enough to live like this!" he thought.

The room, though elegant, was dark, and to our hero, who was used to bright, sunny rooms, it seemed a little gloomy. He mentally decided that he would prefer a plain country house; not so plain, indeed, as the little cottage where his mother lived, but as nice, perhaps, as the superintendent's house, which was the finest in the village, and the

most magnificent he had until this time known. Its glories were wholly eclipsed by the house he was in, but Robert thought he would prefer it. While he was looking about him, Mr. Morgan entered, and his warm and cordial manner made his boy guest feel quite at his ease.

"I must make you acquainted with my wife and children," he said. "They have heard of you, and are anxious to see you."

Mrs. Morgan gave Robert a reception as warm as her husband had done.

"So this is the young hero of whom I have heard!" she said.

"I am afraid you give me too much credit," said Robert, modestly.

This modest disclaimer produced a still more favorable impression upon both Mr. and Mrs. Morgan.

I do not propose to speak in detail of the dinner that followed. The merchant and his wife succeeded in making Robert feel entirely at home, and he displayed an ease and self-possession wholly free from boldness that won their good opinion.

When the dinner was over, Mr. Morgan commenced:

"Now, Robert, dinner being over, let us come to business. Tell me your plans, and I will consider how I can promote them."

In reply, Robert communicated the particulars, already known to the reader, of his father's letter, his own conviction of his still living, and his desire to go in search of him.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed," said the merchant, "in the object of your expedition. It may, however, be pleasant for you to see something of the world, and luckily it is in my power to help you. I have a vessel which sails for Calcutta early next week. You shall go as a passenger."

"Couldn't I go as cabin-boy?" asked Robert. "I am afraid the price of a ticket will be beyond my means."

"I think not," said the merchant, smiling, "since you will go free. As you do not propose to follow the sea, it will not be worth while to go as cabin-boy. Besides, it interferes with your liberty to leave the vessel whenever you deemed it desirable in order to carry on your search for your father."

"You are very kind, Mr. Morgan," said Robert, gratefully.

"So I ought to be and mean to be," said the merchant. "You know I am in your debt."

We pass over the few and simple preparations which Robert made for his long voyage. In these he was aided by Mrs. Morgan, who sent on board, without his knowledge, a trunk containing a complete outfit, considerably better than the contents of the humble carpetbag he had brought from home.

He didn't go on board till the morning on which the ship was to sail. He went down into the cabin, and did not come up until the ship had

actually started. Coming on deck, he saw a figure which seemed familiar to him. From his dress, and the commands he appeared to be issuing, Robert judged that it was the mate. He tried to think where he could have met him, when the mate turned full around, and, alike to his surprise and dismay, he recognized Ben Haley, whom he had wounded in his successful attempt to rob his uncle.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DECLARATION OF WAR.

If Robert was surprised, Ben Haley had even more reason for astonishment. He had supposed his young enemy, as he chose to consider him, quietly living at home in the small village of Millville. He was far from expecting to meet him on shipboard bound to India. There was one difference, however, between the surprise felt by the two. Robert was disagreeably surprised, but a flash of satisfaction lit up the face of the mate, as he realized that the boy who had wounded him was on the same ship, and consequently, as he supposed, in his power.

"How came you here?" he exclaimed, hastily advancing toward Robert.

Resenting the tone of authority in which these words were spoken, Robert answered, composedly:

"I walked on board."

"You'd better not be impudent, young one," said Ben, roughly.

"When you tell me what right you have to question me in that style," said Robert, coolly, "I will apologize."

"I am the mate of this vessel, as you will soon find out."

"So I supposed," said Robert.

"And you, I suppose, are the cabin-boy. Change your clothes at once, and report for duty."

Robert felt sincerely thankful at that moment that he was not the cabin-boy, for he foresaw that in that case he would be subjected to brutal treatment from the mate--treatment which his subordinate position would make him powerless to resent. Now, as a passenger, he felt independent, and though it was disagreeable to have the mate for an enemy, he did not feel afraid.

"You've made a mistake, Mr. Haley," said our hero. "I am not the cabin-boy."

"What are you, then?"

"I am a passenger."

"You are telling a lie. We don't take passengers," said Ben Haley, determined not to believe that the boy was out of his power.

"If you will consult the captain, you may learn your mistake," said Robert.

Ben Haley couldn't help crediting this statement, since it would have done Robert no good to misrepresent the facts of the case. He resolved, however, to ask the captain about it, and inquire how it happened that he had been received as a passenger, contrary to the usual custom.

"You will hear from me again," he said, in a tone of menace.

Robert turned away indifferently, so far as appearance went, but he couldn't help feeling a degree of apprehension as he thought of the long voyage he was to take in company with his enemy, who doubtless would have it in his power to annoy him, even if he abstained from positive injury.

"He is a bad man, and will injure me if he can," he reflected; "but I think I can take care of myself. If I can't I will appeal to the captain."

Meanwhile the mate went up to the captain.

"Captain Evans," said he, "is that boy a passenger?"

"Yes, Mr. Haley."

"It is something unusual to take passengers, is it not?"

"Yes; but this lad is a friend of the owner; and Mr. Morgan has given me directions to treat him with particular consideration."

Ben Haley was puzzled. How did it happen that Mr. Morgan, one of the merchant princes of New York, had become interested in an obscure country boy?

"I don't understand it," he said, perplexed.

"I suppose the boy is a relation of Mr. Morgan."

"Nothing of the kind. He is of poor family, from a small country town."

"Then you know him?"

"I know something of him and his family. He is one of the most impudent young rascals I ever met."

"Indeed!" returned the captain, surprised. "From what I have seen of him, I have come to quite a different conclusion. He has been very gentlemanly and polite to me."

"He can appear so, but you will find out, sooner or later. He has not the slightest regard for truth, and will tell the most unblushing falsehoods with the coolest and most matter-of-fact air."

"I shouldn't have supposed it," said Captain Evans, looking over at our hero, at the other extremity of the deck. "Appearances are deceitful, certainly."

"They are in this case."

This terminated the colloquy for the time. The mate had done what he could to prejudice the captain against the boy he hated. Not, however, with entire success.

Captain Evans had a mind of his own, and did not choose to adopt any man's judgment or prejudices blindly. He resolved to watch Robert a little more closely than he had done, in order to see whether his own observation confirmed the opinion expressed by the mate. Of the latter he did not know much, since this was the first voyage on which they had sailed together; but Captain Evans was obliged to confess that he did not wholly like his first officer. He appeared to be a capable seaman, and, doubtless, understood his duties, but there was a bold and reckless expression which impressed him unfavorably.

Ben Haley, on his part, had learned something, but not much. He had ascertained that Robert was a protege of the owner, and was recommended to the special care of the captain; but what could be his object in undertaking the present voyage, he did not understand. He was a little afraid that Robert would divulge the not very creditable part he had played at Millville; and that he might not be believed in that case, he had represented him to the captain as an habitual liar. After some consideration, he decided to change his tactics, and induce our hero to believe he was his friend, or, at least, not hostile to him. To this he was impelled by two motives. First, to secure his silence respecting the robbery; and, next, to so far get into his confidence as to draw out of him the object of his present expedition. Thus, he would lull his suspicions to sleep, and might thereafter gratify his malice the more securely.

He accordingly approached our hero, and tapped him on the shoulder.

Robert drew away slightly. Haley saw the movement, and hated the boy the more for it.

"Well, my lad," he said, "I find your story is correct."

"Those who know me don't generally doubt my word," said Robert, coldly.

"Well, I don't know you, or, at least, not intimately," said Haley, "and you must confess that I haven't the best reasons to like you."

"Did you suffer much inconvenience from your wound?" asked Robert.

"Not much. It proved to be slight. You were a bold boy to wing me. I could have crushed you easily."

"I suppose you could, but you know how I was situated. I couldn't run away, and desert your uncle."

"I don't know about that. You don't understand that little affair. I suppose you think I had no right to the gold I took."

"I certainly do think so."

"Then you are mistaken. My uncle got his money from my grandfather. A part should have gone to my mother, and, consequently, to me, but he didn't choose to act honestly. My object in calling upon him was to

induce him to do me justice at last. But you know the old man has become a miser, and makes money his idol. The long and short of it was, that, as he wouldn't listen to reason, I determined to take the law into my own hands, and carry off what I thought ought to come to me."

Robert listened to this explanation without putting much faith in it. It was not at all according to the story given by Mr. Nichols, and he knew, moreover, that the man before him had passed a wild and dissolute youth.

"I suppose what I did was not strictly legal," continued Ben Haley, lightly; "but we sailors are not much versed in the quips of the law. To my thinking, law defeats justice about as often as it aids it."

"I don't know very much about law," said Robert, perceiving that some reply was expected.

"That's just my case," said Ben, "and the less I have to do with it the better it will suit me. I suppose my uncle made a great fuss about the money I carried off."

"Yes," said Robert. "It was quite a blow to him, and he has been nervous ever since for fear you would come back again."

Ben Haley shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"He needn't be afraid. I don't want to trouble him, but I was bound he shouldn't keep from me what was rightly my due. I haven't got all I ought to have, but I am not a lover of money, and I shall let it go."

"I hope you won't go near him again, for he got a severe shock the last time."

"When you get back, if you get a chance to see him privately, you may tell him there is no danger of that."

"I shall be glad to do so," said Robert.

"I thought I would explain the matter to you," continued the mate, in an off-hand manner, "for I didn't want you to remain under a false impression. So you are going to see a little of the world?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose that is your only object?"

"No. I have another object in view."

The mate waited to learn what this object was, but Robert stopped, and did not seem inclined to go on.

"Well," said Haley, after a slight pause, "as we are to be together on a long voyage, we may as well be friends. Here's my hand."

To his surprise, Robert made no motion to take it.

"Mr. Haley," said he, "I don't like to refuse your hand, but when I tell you that I am the son of Captain Rushton, of the ship, *_Norman_*, you will understand why I cannot accept your hand."

Ben Haley started back in dismay. How could Robert have learned anything of his treachery to his father? Had the dead come back from the bottom of the sea to expose him? Was Captain Rushton still alive? He did not venture to ask, but he felt his hatred for Robert growing more intense.

"Boy," he said, in a tone of concentrated passion, "you have done a bold thing in rejecting my hand. I might have been your friend. Think of me henceforth as your relentless enemy."

He walked away, his face dark with the evil passions which Robert's slight had aroused in his breast.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUT ON THE OCEAN.

We must now go back nearly two years. Five men were floating about in a boat in the Southern ocean. They looked gaunt and famished. For a week they had lived on short allowance, and now for two days they had been entirely without food. There was in their faces that look, well-nigh hopeless, which their wretched situation naturally produced. For one day, also, they had been without water, and the torments of thirst were worse than the cravings of hunger. These men were Captain Rushton and four sailors of the ship _Norman_, whose burning has already been described.

One of the sailors, Bunsby, was better educated and more intelligent than the rest, and the captain spoke to him as a friend and an equal, for all the distinctions of rank were broken down by the immediate prospect of a terrible death.

"How is all this going to end, Bunsby?" said the captain, in a low voice, turning from a vain search for some sail; in sight, and addressing his subordinate.

"I am afraid there is only one way," answered Bunsby. "There is not much prospect of our meeting a ship."

"And, if we do, it is doubtful if we can attract their attention."

"I should like the chance to try."

"I never knew before how much worse thirst is than hunger."

"Do you know, captain, if this lasts much longer, I shall be tempted to swallow some of this sea water."

"It will only make matters worse."

"I know it, but, at least, it will moisten my throat."

The other sailors sat stupid and silent, apparently incapable of motion,

"I wish I had a plug of tobacco," said one, at last.

"If there were any use in wishing, I'd wish myself on shore," said the second.

"We'll never see land again," said the third, gloomily. "We're bound for Davy Jones' locker."

"I'd like to see my old mother before I go down," said the first.

"I've got a mother, too," said the third. "If I could only have a drop of the warm tea such as she used to make! She's sitting down to dinner now, most likely, little thinking that her Jack is dying of hunger out here."

There was a pause, and the captain spoke again.

"I wish I knew whether that bottle will ever reach shore. When was it we launched it?"

"Four days since."

"I've got something here I wish I could get to my wife." He drew from his pocketbook a small, folded paper.

"What is that, captain?" asked Bunsby.

"It is my wife's fortune."

"How is that, captain?"

"That paper is good for five thousand dollars."

"Five thousand dollars wouldn't do us much good here. It wouldn't buy a pound of bread, or a pint of water."

"No; but it would--I hope it will--save my wife and son from suffering. Just before I sailed on this voyage I took five thousand dollars--nearly all my savings--to a man in our village to keep till I returned, or, if I did not return, to keep in trust for my wife and child. This is the paper he gave me in acknowledgment."

"Is he a man you can trust, captain?"

"I think so. It is the superintendent of the factory in our village--a man rich, or, at any rate, well-to-do. He has a good reputation for integrity."

"Your wife knew you had left the money in his hands?"

"No; I meant it as a surprise to her."

"It is a pity you did not leave that paper in her hands."

"What do you mean, Bunsby?" asked the captain, nervously. "You don't think this man will betray his trust?"

"I can't say, captain, for I don't know the man; but I don't like to trust any man too far."

Captain Rushton was silent for a moment. There was a look of trouble on his face.

"You make me feel anxious, Bunsby. It is hard enough to feel that I shall probably never again see my wife and child--on earth, I mean--but to think that they may possibly suffer want makes it more bitter."

"The man may be honest, captain: Don't trouble yourself too much."

"I see that I made a mistake. I should have left this paper with my wife. Davis can keep this money, and no one will be the wiser. It is a terrible temptation."

"Particularly if the man is pressed for money."

"I don't think that. He is considered a rich man. He ought to be one, and my money would be only a trifle to him."

"Let us hope it is so, captain," said Bunsby, who felt that further discussion would do no good, and only embitter the last moments of his commander. But anxiety did not so readily leave the captain. Added to the pangs of hunger and the cravings of thirst was the haunting fear that by his imprudence his wife and child would suffer.

"Do you think it would do any good, Bunsby," he said, after a pause, "to put this receipt in a bottle, as I did the letter?"

"No, captain, it is too great a risk. There is not more than one chance in a hundred of its reaching its destination. Besides, suppose you should be picked up, and go home without the receipt; he might refuse to pay you."

"He would do so at the peril of his life, then," said the captain, fiercely. "Do you think, if I were alive, I would let any man rob me of the savings of my life?"

"Other men have done so."

"It would not be safe to try it on me, Bunsby."

"Well, captain?"

"It is possible that I may perish, but you may be saved."

"Not much chance of it."

"Yet it is possible. Now, if that happens, I have a favor to ask of you."

"Name it, captain."

"I want you, if I die first, to take this paper, and guard it carefully; and, if you live to get back, to take it to Millville, and see that justice is done to my wife and child."

"I promise that, captain; but I think we shall die together."

Twenty-four hours passed. The little boat still rocked hither and thither on the ocean billows. The five faces looked more haggard, and

there was a wild, eager look upon them, as they scanned the horizon, hoping to see a ship. Their lips and throats were dry and parched.

"I can't stand it no longer," said one--it was the sailor I have called Jack--"I shall drink some of the sea water."

"Don't do it, Jack," said Bunsby. "You'll suffer more than ever."

"I can't," said Jack, desperately; and, scooping up some water in the hollow of his hand, he drank it eagerly. Again and again he drank with feverish eagerness.

"How is it?" said the second sailor,

"I feel better," said Jack; "my throat so dry."

"Then I'll take some, too."

The other two sailors, unheeding the remonstrances of Bunsby and the captain, followed the example of Jack. They felt relief for the moment, but soon their torments became unendurable. With parched throats, gasping for breath, they lay back in agony. Suffering themselves, Captain Rushton and Bunsby regarded with pity the greater sufferings of their wretched companions.

"This is horrible," said the captain.

"Yes," said Bunsby, sadly. "It can't last much longer now."

His words were truer than he thought. Unable to endure his suffering, the sailor named Jack suddenly staggered to his feet.

"I can't stand it any longer," he said, wildly; "good-by, boys," and before his companions well knew what he intended to do, he had leaped over the side of the boat, and sunk in the ocean waves.

There was a thrilling silence, as the waters closed over his body.

Then the second sailor also rose to his feet.

"I'm going after Jack," he said, and he, too, plunged into the waves.

The captain rose as if to hinder him, but Bunsby placed his hand upon his arm.

"It's just as well, captain. We must all come to that, and the sooner, the more suffering is saved."

"That's so," said the other sailor, tormented like the other two by thirst, aggravated by his draughts of seawater. "Good-by, Bunsby! Good-by, captain! I'm going!"

He, too, plunged into the sea, and Bunsby and the captain were left alone.

"You won't desert me, Bunsby?" said the captain.

"No, captain. I haven't swallowed seawater like those poor fellows. I can stand it better."

"There is no hope of life," said the captain, quietly; "but I don't like to go unbidden into my Maker's presence."

"Nor I. I'll stand by you, captain"

"This is a fearful thing, Bunsby. If it would only rain."

"That would be some relief."

As if in answer to his wish, the drops began to fall--slowly at first, then more copiously, till at last their clothing was saturated, and the boat partly filled with water. Eagerly they squeezed out the welcome dregs from their clothing, and felt a blessed relief. They filled two bottles they had remaining with the precious fluid.

"If those poor fellows had only waited," said the captain.

"They are out of suffering now," said Bunsby.

The relief was only temporary, and they felt it to be so. They were without food, and the two bottles of water would not last them long. Still, there was a slight return of hope, which survives under the most discouraging circumstances.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FRANK PRICE.

The ship Argonaut, bound for Calcutta, was speeding along with a fair wind, when the man at the lookout called:

"Boat in sight!"

"Where away?"

The sailor pointed, out a small boat a mile distant, nearly in the ship's track, rising and falling with the billows.

"Is there any one in it?"

"I see two men lying in the bottom. They are motionless. They may be dead."

The boat was soon overtaken. It was the boat from the ill-fated Norman, Captain Rushton and Bunsby were lying stretched out in the bottom, both motionless and apparently without life. Bunsby was really dead. But there was still some life left in the captain, which, under the care of the surgeon of the ship, was carefully husbanded until he was out of immediate danger. But his system, from the long privation of food, had received such a shock, that his mind, sympathizing with it, he fell into a kind of stupor, mental and physical, and though strength and vigor came slowly back, Captain Rushton was in mind a child. Oblivion of the past seemed to have come over him. He did not remember who he was, or that he had a wife and child.

"Poor man!" said the surgeon; "I greatly fear his mind has completely given way."

"It is a pity some of his friends were not here," said the captain of the ship that had rescued him. "The sight of a familiar face might restore him."

"It is possible, but I am not sure of even that."

"Is there any clew to his identity?"

"I have found none."

It will at once occur to the reader that the receipt would have supplied the necessary information, since it was dated Millville, and contained the captain's name. But this was concealed in an inner pocket in Captain Rushton's vest, and escaped the attention of the surgeon. So, nameless and unknown, he was carried to Calcutta, which he reached without any perceptible improvement in his mental condition.

Arrived at Calcutta, the question arose: "What shall we do with him?" It was a perplexing question, since if carried back to New York, it might be difficult to identify him there, or send him back to his friends. Besides, the care of a man in his condition would be a greater responsibility than most shipmasters would care to undertake. It was at this crisis that a large-hearted and princely American merchant, resident in Calcutta, who had learned the particulars of the captain's condition, came forward, saying: "Leave him here. I will find him a home in some suitable boarding-house, and defray such expenses as may be required. God has blessed me with abundant means. It is only right that I should employ a portion in His service. I hope, under good treatment, he may recover wholly, and be able to tell me who he is, and where is his home. When that is ascertained, if his health is sufficiently good, I will send him home at my own expense."

The offer was thankfully accepted, and the generous merchant was as good as his word. A home was found for Captain Rushton in the boarding-house of Mrs. Start, a widow, who, thrown upon her own exertions for support, had, by the help of the merchant already referred to, opened a boarding-house, which was now quite remunerative.

"He will require considerable care, Mrs. Start," said Mr. Perkins, the merchant, "but I am ready and willing to compensate you for all the trouble to which you are put. Will you take him?"

"Certainly I will," said the warm-hearted widow, "if only because you ask it. But for you, I should not be earning a comfortable living, with a little money laid up in the bank, besides."

"Thank you, Mrs. Start," said the merchant. "I know the poor man could be in no better hands. But you mustn't let any considerations of gratitude interfere with your charging a fair price for your trouble. I am able and willing to pay whatever is suitable."

"I don't believe we shall quarrel on that point," said the widow, smiling. "I will do all I can for your friend. What is his name?"

"That I don't know."

"We shall have to call him something."

"Call him Smith, then. That will answer till we find out his real name, as we may some day, when his mind comes back, as I hope it may."

From that time, therefore, Captain Rushton was known as Mr. Smith. He recovered in a considerable degree his bodily health, but mentally he remained in the same condition. Sometimes he fixed his eyes upon Mrs. Start, and seemed struggling to remember something of the past; but after a few moments his face would assume a baffled look, and he would give up the attempt as fruitless.

One day when Mrs. Start addressed him as Mr. Smith, he asked:

"Why do you call me by that name?"

"Is not that your name?" she asked.

"No."

"What, then, is it?"

He put his hand to his brow, and seemed to be thinking. At length he turned to the widow, and said, abruptly:

"Do you not know my name?"

"No."

"Nor do I," he answered, and left the room hastily.

She continued, therefore, to address him as Mr. Smith, and he gradually became accustomed to it, and answered to it.

Leaving Captain Rushton at Calcutta, with the assurance that, though separated from home and family, he will receive all the care that his condition requires, we will return to our hero, shut up on shipboard with his worst enemy. I say this advisedly, for though Halbert Davis disliked him, it was only the feeling of a boy, and was free from the intensity of Ben Haley's hatred.

No doubt, it was imprudent for him to reject the mate's hand, but Robert felt that he could not grasp in friendship the hand which had deprived him of a father. He was bold enough to brave the consequences of this act, which he foresaw clearly.

Ben Haley, however, was in no hurry to take the vengeance which he was fully resolved sooner or later to wreak upon our young hero. He was content to bide his time. Had Robert been less watchful, indeed, he might have supposed that the mate's feelings toward him had changed. When they met, as in the narrow limits of the ship they must do every day, the forms of courtesy passed between them. Robert always saluted the mate, and Haley responded by a nod, or a cool good-morning, but did not indulge in any conversation.

Sometimes, however, turning suddenly, Robert would catch a malignant glance from the mate, but Haley's expression immediately changed, when thus surprised, and he assumed an air of indifference.

With Captain Evans, on the other hand, Robert was on excellent terms. The captain liked the bold, manly boy, and talked much with him of the different countries he had visited, and seemed glad to answer the questions which our hero asked.

"Robert," said the captain, one day, "how is it that you and Mr. Haley seem to have nothing to say to each other?"

"I don't think he likes me, Captain Evans," said Robert.

"Is there any reason for it, or is it merely a prejudice?"

"There is a reason for it, but I don't care to mention it. Not that it is anything I have reason to regret, or to be ashamed of," he added, hastily. "It is on Mr. Haley's account that I prefer to keep it secret."

"Is there no chance of your being on better terms?" asked the captain, good-naturedly, desirous of effecting a reconciliation.

Robert shook his head.

"I don't wish to be reconciled, captain," he said. "I will tell you this much, that Mr. Haley has done me and my family an injury which, perhaps, can never be repaired. I cannot forget it, and though I am willing to be civil to him, since we are thrown together, I do not want his friendship, even if he desired mine, as I am sure he does not."

Captain Evans was puzzled by this explanation, which threw very little light upon the subject, and made no further efforts to bring the two together.

Time passed, and whatever might be Ben Haley's feelings, he abstained from any attempt to injure him. Robert's suspicions were lulled to sleep, and he ceased to be as vigilant and watchful as he had been.

His frank, familiar manner made him a favorite on shipboard. He had a friendly word for all the sailors, which was appreciated, for it was known that he was the protege of the owner. He was supposed by some to be a relation, or, at any rate, a near connection, and so was treated with unusual respect. All the sailors had a kind word for him, and many were the praises which he received in the fore-castle.

Among those most devoted to him was a boy of fourteen, Frank Price, who had sailed in the capacity of cabin-boy. The poor boy was very seasick at first, and Captain Evans had been indulgent, and excused him from duty until he got better. He was not sturdy enough for the life upon which he had entered, and would gladly have found himself again in the comfortable home which a mistaken impulse had led him to exchange for the sea.

With this boy, Robert, who was of about the same age, struck up a friendship, which was returned twofold by Frank, whose heart, naturally warm, was easily won by kindness.

THE NEW CAPTAIN.

The voyage was more than half completed, and nothing of importance had occurred to mark it. But at this time, Captain Evans fell sick. His sickness proved to be a fever, and was very severe. The surgeon was in constant attendance, but the malady baffled all his skill. At the end of seven days, it terminated fatally, to the great grief of all on board, with whom the good-natured captain was very popular. There was one exception, however, to the general grief. It is an ill wind that blows good to no one, and Ben Haley did not lament much for an event which promoted him to the command of the vessel. Of course, he did not show this feeling publicly, but in secret his heart bounded with exultation at the thought that he was, for the time, master of the ship and all on board. He was not slow in asserting his new position. Five minutes after the captain breathed his last, one of the sailors approached him, and asked for orders, addressing him as "Mr. Haley."

"Captain Haley!" roared the new commander. "If you don't know my position on board this ship, it's time you found it out!"

"Ay, ay, sir," stammered the sailor, taken aback at his unexpected violence.

Robert mourned sincerely at the death of Captain Evans, by whom he had always been treated with the utmost kindness. Even had he not been influenced by such a feeling, he would have regarded with apprehension the elevation to the command of one whom he well knew to be actuated by a feeling of enmity to himself. He resolved to be as prudent as possible, and avoid, as far as he could, any altercation with Haley. But the latter was determined, now that he had reached the command, to pick a quarrel with our hero, and began to cast about for a fitting occasion.

Now that Captain Evans was dead, Robert spent as much time as the latter's duties would permit with Frank Price. The boys held long and confidential conversations together, imparting to each other their respective hopes and wishes. Haley observed their intimacy and mutual attachment, and, unable to assert his authority over Robert, who was a passenger, determined to strike at him through his friend. His determination was strengthened by a conversation which he overheard between the boys when they supposed him beyond earshot.

"I wish Captain Evans were alive," said Frank. "I liked him, and I don't like Captain Haley."

"Captain Evans was an excellent man," said Robert.

"He knew how to treat a fellow," said Frank. "As long as he saw us doing our best, he was easy with us. Captain Haley is a tyrant."

"Be careful what you say, Frank," said Robert. "It isn't safe to say much about the officers."

"I wouldn't say anything, except to you. You are my friend."

"I am your true friend, Frank, and I don't want you to get into any trouble."

"I am sure you don't like the captain any better than I do."

"I don't like the captain, for more reasons than I can tell you; but I shall keep quiet, as long as I am on board this ship."

"Are you going back with us?"

"I don't know. It will depend upon circumstances. I don't think I shall, though I might have done so had Captain Evans remained in command."

"I wish I could leave it, and stay with you."

"I wish you could, Frank. Perhaps you can."

"I will try."

Haley overheard the last part of this conversation. He took particular notice of Robert's remark that he would keep quiet as long as he remained on board the ship, and inferred that on arrival at the destined port our hero would expose all he knew about him. This made him uneasy, for it would injure, if not destroy, his prospect of remaining in command of the *_Argonaut_*. He resented also the dislike which Robert had cautiously expressed, and the similar feeling cherished by the cabin-boy. He had half a mind to break in upon their conversation on the spot; but, after a moment's thought, walked away, his neighborhood unsuspected by the two boys.

"They shall both rue their impudence," he muttered. "They shall find out that they cannot insult me with impunity."

The next day, when both boys were on deck, Captain Haley harshly ordered Frank to attend to a certain duty which he had already performed.

"I have done so, sir," said Frank, in a respectful tone.

"None of your impudence, you young rascal!" roared the captain, lashing himself into a rage.

Frank looked up into his face in astonishment, unable to account for so violent an outbreak.

"What do you mean by looking me in the face in that impudent manner?" demanded Captain Haley, furiously.

"I didn't mean to be impudent, Captain Haley," said Frank. "What have I done?"

"What have you done? You, a cabin-boy, have dared to insult your captain, and, by heavens, you shall rue it! Strip off your jacket."

Frank turned pale. He knew what this order meant. Public floggings were sometimes administered on shipboard, but, under the command of Captain Evans, nothing of the kind had taken place.

Robert, who had heard the whole, listened, with unmeasured indignation, to this wanton abuse on the part of Captain Haley. His eyes flashed, and his youthful form dilated with righteous indignation.

Robert was not the only one who witnessed with indignation the captain's

brutality. Such of the sailors as happened to be on deck shared his feelings. Haley, looking about him, caught the look with which Robert regarded him, and triumphed inwardly that he had found a way to chafe him.

"What have you got to say about it?" he demanded, addressing our hero, with a sneer.

"Since you have asked my opinion," said Robert, boldly, "I will express it. Frank Price has not been guilty of any impudence, and deserves no punishment."

This was a bold speech to be made by a boy to a captain on his own deck, and the sailors who heard it inwardly applauded the pluck of the boy who uttered it.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" exclaimed Haley, his eyes lighting up fiercely, as he strode to the spot where Robert stood, and frowned upon him, menacingly.

"You asked my opinion, and I gave it," said Robert, not flinching.

"I have a great mind to have you flogged, too!" said Haley.

"I am not one of your crew, Captain Haley," said Robert, coolly; "and you have no right to lay a hand on me."

"What is to prevent me, I should like to know?"

"I am here as a passenger, and a friend of the owner of this vessel. If I receive any ill-treatment, it shall be reported to him."

If the sailors had dared, they would have applauded the stripling who, undaunted by the menacing attitude of the captain, faced him boldly and fearlessly. Haley would gladly have knocked him down, but there was something in the resolute mien of his young passenger that made him pause. He knew that he would keep his word, and that, with such representations as he might make, he would stand no further chance of being employed by Mr. Morgan.

"I have an account to settle with you, boy," he said; "and the settlement will not long be delayed. When a passenger tries to incite mutiny, he forfeits his privileges as a passenger."

"Who has done this, Captain Haley?"

"You have done it."

"I deny it," said Robert.

"Your denial is worth nothing. I have a right to throw you into irons, and may yet do it. At present I have other business in hand."

He left Robert, and walked back to Frank Price, who, not having Robert's courage, had been a terrified listener to the colloquy between him and the captain.

"Now, boy," he said, harshly, "I will give you a lesson that you shall remember to the latest day of your life. Bring me the cat."

The barbarous cat, as it was called, once in use on our ships, was brought, and Captain Haley signaled to one of the sailors to approach.

"Bates," he said, in a tone of authority, "give that boy a dozen lashes."

Bates was a stout sailor, rough in appearance, but with a warm and kindly heart. He had a boy of his own at home, about the age of Frank Price, and his heart had warmed to the boy whose position he felt to be far from an enviable one.

The task now imposed upon him was a most distasteful and unwelcome one. He was a good sailor, and aimed on all occasions to show proper obedience to the commands of his officers, but now he could not.

"Captain Haley," he said, not stirring from his position, "I hope you will excuse me."

"Is this mutiny?" roared the captain.

"No, Captain Haley. I always mean to do my duty on board ship."

"I have told you to flog this boy!"

"I can't do it, Captain Haley. I have a boy of my own about the size of that lad there, and, if I struck him, I'd think it was my own boy that stood in his place."

This unexpected opposition excited the fierce resentment of the captain. He felt that a crisis had come, and he was determined to be obeyed.

"Unless you do as I bid you, I will keep you in irons for the rest of the voyage!"

"You are the captain of this ship, and can throw me in irons, if you like," said Bates, with an air of dignity despite his tarred hands and sailor jacket. "I have refused to do no duty that belongs to me. When I signed my name to the ship's papers, I did not agree to flog boys."

"Put him in irons!" roared the captain, incensed. "We will see who is captain of this ship!"

The mandate was obeyed, and Bates was lodged in the forecabin, securely ironed.

The captain himself seized the cat, and was about to apply it to the luckless cabin-boy, when a terrible blast, springing up in an instant, as it were, struck the ship, almost throwing it upon its side. There was no time for punishment now. The safety of the ship required instant action, and Frank Price was permitted to replace his jacket without having received a blow.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CAPTAIN'S REVENGE.

The storm which commenced so suddenly was one of great violence. It required all the captain's seamanship, and the efforts of all the crew, to withstand it. However reluctant to do it, Captain Haley was forced to release Bates from his irons, and order him to duty. The latter worked energetically, and showed that he did not intend to shirk any part of his duties as seaman. But the result of the storm was that the vessel was driven out of her course, and her rigging suffered considerable injury. The wind blew all night. Toward morning it abated, and, as the morning light broke, the lookout described a small island distant about a league.

The captain looked at it through his glass, and then examined the chart.

"I can't make out what island that is," he said.

"It is not large enough," suggested the mate, "to find a place on the map."

"Perhaps it is as you say," said Captain Haley, thoughtfully. "I have a mind to go on shore and explore it. There may be some fresh fruits that will vary our diet."

This plan was carried out. A boat was got ready, and the captain got in, with four sailors to row.

Just as he was about to descend into the boat, he turned to Robert, who was looking curiously toward land, and said:

"Rushton, would you like to go with us?"

It was precisely what Robert wanted. He had a boy's love of adventure, and the thought of exploring an island, perhaps hitherto unknown, struck his fancy, and he eagerly accepted the invitation.

"Jump in, then," said Haley, striving to appear indifferent; but there was a gleam of exultation in his eye, which he took care to conceal from the unsuspecting boy.

Swiftly the boat sped through the waters, pulled by the strong arms of four stout sailors, and, reaching the island, was drawn into a little cove, which seemed made for it.

"Now for an exploring expedition," said the captain. "Boys," addressing the sailors, "remain near the boat. I will soon be back. Rushton," he said, turning to our hero, "go where you like, but be back in an hour."

"Yes, sir," answered Robert.

Had it been Captain Evans, instead of Captain Haley, he would have proposed to join him; but, knowing what he did of the latter, he preferred his own company.

The island was about five miles in circumference. Near the shore, it was bare of vegetation, but further inland there were numerous trees, some producing fruit. After some weeks of the monotonous life on shipboard, Robert enjoyed pressing the solid earth once more. Besides, this was the first foreign shore his foot had ever trodden. The thought that he was

thousands of miles away from home, and that, possibly, the land upon which he now walked had never before been trodden by a civilized foot, filled him with a sense of excitement and exhilaration.

"What would mother say if she should see me now?" he thought. "What a wonderful chance it would be if my father had been wafted in his boat to this island, and I should come upon him unexpectedly!"

It was very improbable, but Robert thought enough of it to look about him carefully. But everywhere the land seemed to be virgin, without other inhabitants than the birds of strange plumage and note, which sang in the branches of the trees.

"I don't believe any one ever lived here," thought Robert.

It struck him that he should like to live upon the island a week, if he could be sure of being taken off at the end of that time. The cool breezes from the ocean swept over the little island, and made it delightfully cool at morning and evening, though hot in the middle of the day.

Robert sauntered along till he came to a little valley. He descended the slope, and sat down in the shade of a broad-leaved tree. The grass beneath him made a soft couch, and he felt that he should enjoy lying there the rest of the day. But his time was limited. The captain had told him to be back in an hour, and he felt that it was time for him to be stirring.

"I shall not have time to go any further," he reflected. "I must be getting back to the boat."

As this occurred to him, he rose to his feet, and, looking up, he started a little at seeing the captain himself descending the slope.

"Well, Robert," said Captain Haley, "how do you like the island?"

"Very much, indeed," said our hero. "It seems pleasant to be on land after being on shipboard so many weeks."

"Quite true. This is a beautiful place you have found."

"I was resting under this tree, listening to the birds, but I felt afraid I should not be back to the boat in time, and was just starting to return."

"I think we can overstay our time a little," said Haley. "They won't go back without me, I reckon," he added, with a laugh.

Robert was nothing loth to stay, and resumed his place on the grass. The captain threw himself on the grass beside him.

"I suppose you have read 'Robinson Crusoe?'" he said.

"Oh, yes; more than once."

"I wonder how it would seem to live on such an island as this?"

"I should like it very well," said Robert; "that is, if I could go off at any time. I was just thinking of it when you come up."

"Were you?" asked the captain, showing his teeth in an unpleasant smile, which, however, Robert did not see. "You think you would like it?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad of that."

"Why?" asked Robert, turning round and looking his companion in the face.

"Because," said Haley, changing his tone, "I am going to give you a chance to try it."

Robert sprang to his feet in instant alarm, but too late. Haley had grasped him by the shoulder, and in his grasp the boy's strength was nothing.

"What are you going to do?" asked Robert, with fearful foreboding.

"Wait a minute and you will see!"

The captain had drawn a stout cord, brought for the purpose, from his pocket, and, dragging Robert to a tree, tied him securely to the trunk. The terrible fate destined for him was presented vividly to the imagination of our hero; and, brave as he was, it almost unmanned him. Finding his struggles useless, he resorted to expostulation.

"I am sure you cannot mean this, Captain Haley!" he said. "You won't leave me to perish miserably on this island?"

"Won't I?" returned the captain, with an evil light in his eyes. "Why won't I?"

"Surely, you will not be so inhuman?"

"Look here, boy," said the captain, "you needn't try to come any of your high-flown notions about humanity over me. I owe you a debt, and, by Heaven! I'm going to pay it! You didn't think much of humanity when you wounded me."

"I couldn't help it," said Robert. "I didn't want to hurt you. I only wanted to protect your uncle."

"That's all very well; but, when you interfered in a family quarrel, you meddled with what did not concern you. Besides, you have been inciting my crew to mutiny."

"I have not done so," said Robert.

"I overheard you the other night giving some of your precious advice to my cabin-boy. Besides, you had the impudence to interfere with me in a matter of discipline."

"Frank Price deserved no punishment."

"That is for me to decide. When you dared to be impudent to me on my own deck, I swore to be revenged, and the time has come sooner than I anticipated."

"Captain Haley," said Robert, "in all that I have done I have tried to do right. If I have done wrong, it was because I erred in judgment. If you will let me go, I will promise to say nothing of the attempt you make to keep me here."

"You are very kind," sneered the captain; "but I mean to take care of that myself. You may make all the complaints you like after I have left you here."

"There is One who will hear me," said Robert. "I shall not be wholly without friends."

"Who do you mean?"

"God!" said Robert, solemnly.

"Rubbish!" retorted Haley, contemptuously.

"I shall not despair while I have Him to appeal to."

"Just as you like," said the captain, shrugging his shoulders. "You are welcome to all the comfort you can find in your present situation."

By this time, Robert was bound to the trunk of the tree by a cord, which passed around his waist. In addition to this Haley tied his wrists together, fearing that otherwise he might be able to unfasten the knot. He now rose to his feet, and looked down upon the young captive, with an air of triumph.

"Have you any messages to send by me, Rushton?" he said, with a sneer.

"Are you quite determined to leave me here?" asked Robert, in anguish.

"Quite so."

"What will the sailors say when I do not return?"

"Don't trouble yourself about them. I will take care of that. If you have got anything to say, say it quick, for I must be going."

"Captain Haley," said Robert, his courage rising, and looking the captain firmly in the face, "I may die here, and so gratify your enmity; but the time will come when you will repent what you are doing."

"I'll risk that," said Haley, coolly. "Good-by."

He walked up the slope, and disappeared from view, leaving Robert bound to the tree, a helpless prisoner.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Captain Haley kept on his way to the shore. The four sailors were all

within hail, and on the captain's approach got the boat in readiness to return.

"Where is the boy?" asked Haley. "Hasn't he got back?"

"No, sir."

"That is strange. I told him to be back in an hour, and it is already past that time."

"Perhaps he hasn't a watch," suggested one of the sailors.

"I will wait ten minutes for him," said Haley, taking out his watch. "If he is not back in that time, I must go without him."

The sailors did not reply, but looked anxiously inland, hoping to catch sight of Robert returning. But, bound as he was, we can understand why they looked in vain.

"Shall I go and look for him?" asked one.

"No," said Haley, decidedly; "I cannot spare you."

The ten minutes were soon up.

"Into the boat with you," commanded the captain. "I shall wait no longer."

Slowly and reluctantly, the sailors took their places, for Robert was a favorite with them.

"Now, men, give way," said Haley. "If the boy is lost, it is his own fault."

They reached the vessel in due time. There was a murmur among the crew, when it was found that Robert had been left behind; but, knowing the captain's disposition, no one except Bates dared to expostulate.

"Captain Haley," said he, approaching and touching his hat, "will you give me leave to go on shore for the young gentleman that was left?"

"No," said the captain. "He had fair warning to be back in time, and chose to disregard it. My duty to the owners will not permit me to delay the ship on his account."

"He was a relation of the owner," suggested Bates.

"No, he was not; and, if he said so, he lied. Go about your duty, and take care I have no more fault to find with you, or you go back in irons!"

Bates ventured upon no further expostulation. He saw through the captain's subterfuge, and felt persuaded that it had been his deliberate intention from the first to abandon Robert to his fate. He began to think busily, and finally resolved to go to the island and search for him. For this purpose, a boat would be needful, since the distance, nearly a league, was too far to swim. Now, to appropriate one of the ship's boats when the captain was on deck would be impossible, but Haley, within five minutes, went below. Bates now proceeded to carry out

his plan.

"What are you going to do?" demanded one of the sailors.

"I'm going after the boy."

"You'll be left along with him."

"I'll take the risk. He shan't say he didn't have one friend."

By the connivance of his fellow-sailors, Bates got safely off with the boat, and began to pull toward shore. He was already a mile distant from the vessel when Captain Haley came on deck.

"Who is that in the boat?" he demanded, abruptly.

"I don't know, sir."

He pointed the glass toward the boat, and, though he could not fairly distinguish the stout sailor who was pulling the boat through the water, he suspected that it was Bates.

"Where is Bates?" he asked.

No one had seen him.

"The fool has gone to destruction," said Captain Haley. "I shall not go after him. He is welcome to live on the island if he chooses."

His reason for not pursuing the fugitive may be readily understood. He feared that Robert would be found bound to the tree, and the story the boy would tell would go heavily against him. He hurried preparation for the vessel's departure, and in a short time it was speeding away from the island with two less on board.

I must now go back to Robert, whom we left bound to a tree.

After the captain left him, he struggled hard to unloose the cords which bound him. The love of life was strong within him, and the thought of dying under such circumstances was appalling. He struggled manfully, but, though he was strong for a boy, the cord was strong, also, and the captain knew how to tie a knot.

Robert ceased at last, tired with his efforts. A feeling of despair came over him, and the tears started, unbidden, to his eyes, as he thought how his mother would watch and wait for him in vain--how lonely she would feel, with husband and son both taken from her. Could it be that he was to die, when life had only just commenced, thousands of miles away from home, in utter solitude? Had he come so far for this? Then, again, he feared that his mother would suffer want and privation when the money which he had left behind was exhausted. In his pocket there were nearly two hundred dollars, not likely to be of any service to him. He wished that they were in her possession.

"If only he had left me free and unbound," thought Robert, "I might pick up a living on the island, and perhaps some day attract the attention of some vessel."

With this thought, and the hope it brought, he made renewed efforts to

release himself, striving to untie the cord which fastened his wrists with his teeth. He made some progress, and felt encouraged, but it was hard work, and he was compelled to stop, from time to time, to rest. It was in one of these intervals that he heard his name called. Feeling sure that there was no one on the island but himself, he thought he was deceived. But the sound came nearer, and he distinctly heard "Robert!"

"Here I am!" he shouted, in return, his heart filled with sudden thanksgiving.

"Captain Haley only meant to frighten me," he thought. "He has sent some men back for me."

In his gratitude, he thanked Heaven fervently for so changing the heart of his enemy, and once more life looked bright.

"Robert!" he heard again.

"Here!" he shouted, with all the strength of his lungs.

This time the sound reached Bates, who, running up his boat on shore, and securing it, was exploring the island in search of our hero. Looking around him, he at length, from the edge of the valley, descried Robert.

"Is that you, lad?" he asked.

"Yes, Bates; come and untie me!"

Bates saw his situation with surprise and indignation.

"That's some of the captain's work!" he at once decided. "He must be a cursed scoundrel to leave that poor lad there to die!"

He quickened his steps, and was soon at the side of our hero.

"Who tied you to the tree, lad?" he asked.

"Did Captain Haley send you for me?" asked Robert first, for he had made up his mind in that case not to expose him.

"No; I stole one of the ship's boats, and came for you without leave."

"The captain didn't know of your coming?"

"No; I asked his leave, and he wouldn't give it."

"It was Captain Haley that tied me here," said Robert, his scruples removed.

"What did he do that for, lad?"

"It's a long story, Bates. It's because he hates me, and wishes me harm. Untie these cords, and I'll tell you all about it."

"That I'll do in a jiffy, my lad. I'm an old sailor and I can untie knots as well as tie them."

In five minutes Robert was free. He stretched his limbs, with a feeling of great relief, and then turned to Bates, whose hand he grasped.

"I owe my life to you, Bates!" he said.

"Maybe not, lad. We're in a tight place yet."

"Has the ship gone?"

"Most likely. The captain won't send back for either of us in a hurry."

"And you have made yourself a prisoner here for my sake?" asked Robert, moved by the noble conduct of the rough sailor.

"I couldn't abide to leave you alone. There's more chance for two than for one."

"Heaven bless you, Bates! I won't soon forget what you have done for me. Do you think there is any chance for us?"

"Of course there is, lad. We've got a boat, and we can live here till some vessel comes within sight."

"Let us go down to the shore, and see if we can see anything of the ship."

The two bent their steps to the shore, and looked out to sea. They could still see the ship, but it was already becoming a speck in the distant waters.

"They have left us," said Robert, turning to his companion.

"Ay, lad, the false-hearted villain has done his worst!"

"I didn't think any man would be so inhuman."

"You're young, lad, and you don't know what a sight of villainy there is in the world. We've got to live here a while, likely. Have you seen anything in the line of grub hereabouts?"

"There is fruit on some of the trees."

"That's something. Maybe we shall find some roots, besides. We'll draw the boat farther upon shore, and go on an exploring expedition."

The boat was drawn completely up, and placed, bottom upward, at a safe distance from the sea. Then Robert and his companion started to explore the island which had so unexpectedly become their home.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ISLAND REALM.

But for the knowledge that he was a prisoner, Robert would have enjoyed his present situation. The island, though small, was covered with a luxuriant vegetation, and was swept by cooling breezes, which tempered the ardor of the sun's rays. And, of this island realm, he and his

companion were the undisputed sovereigns. There was no one to dispute their sway. All that it yielded was at their absolute disposal.

"I wonder what is the name of this island?" said Robert.

"Perhaps it has no name. Mayhap we are the first that ever visited it."

"I have a great mind to declare myself the king," said our young hero, smiling, "unless you want the office."

"You shall be captain, and I will be mate," said Bates, to whom the distinctions of sea life were more familiar than those of courts.

"How long do you think we shall have to stay here?" asked Robert, anxiously.

"There's no telling, lad. We'll have to stick up a pole on the seashore, and run up a flag when any vessel comes near,"

"We have no flag."

"Have you a handkerchief?"

"Only one," said Robert.

"That's one more than I have. We'll rig that up when it's wanted."

"Where shall we sleep?"

"That's what I have been thinking. We must build a house."

"A brownstone front?" said Robert. "The governor ought to live in a good house."

"So he shall," said Bates. "He shall have the first on the island."

"I wonder if it rains often?"

"Not much at this season. In the winter a good deal of rain falls, but I hope we won't be here then."

"Where shall we build our house?"

"It would be pleasanter inland, but we must be near the shore, so as to be in sight of ships,"

"That's true, Bates. That is the most important consideration."

They set to work at once, and built a hut, something like an Indian's wigwam, about a hundred yards from the shore. It was composed, for the most part, of branches of trees and inclosed an inner space of about fifteen feet in diameter. They gathered large quantities of leaves, which were spread upon the ground for beds.

"That's softer than our bunks aboard ship," said Bates.

"Yes," said Robert. "I wouldn't wish any better bed. It is easy to build and furnish a house of your own here."

"The next thing is dinner," said his companion.

"Shall we go to market?" asked Robert, with a smile.

"We'll find a market just outside."

"You mean the trees?"

"Yes; we'll find our dinner already cooked on them."

The fruit of which they partook freely was quite sweet and palatable. Still, one kind of food cloy after a time, and so our new settlers found it. Besides, it was not very substantial, and failed to keep up their wonted strength. This set them to looking up some other article which might impart variety to their fare. At last they succeeded in finding an esculent root, which they partook of at first with some caution, fearing that it might be unwholesome. Finding, however, that eating it produced no unpleasant effects, they continued the use of it. Even this, however, failed to afford them as much variety as they wished.

"I feel as if I should like some fish for breakfast," said Robert one morning, on waking up.

"So should I, lad," returned Bates. "Why shouldn't we have some?"

"You mean that we shall go fishing?"

"Yes; we've got a boat, and I have some cord. We'll rig up fishing lines, and go out on a fishing cruise."

Robert adopted the idea with alacrity. It promised variety and excitement.

"I wonder we hadn't thought of it before. I used to be a fisherman, Bates."

"Did you?"

"Yes; I supplied the market at home for a short time, till Captain Haley smashed my boat."

"The mean lubber! I wish we had him here."

"I don't; I prefer his room to his company."

"I'd try how he'd like being tied to a tree."

"I don't think you'd untie him again in a hurry."

"You may bet high on that, lad."

They rigged their fishing lines--cutting poles from the trees--and armed them with hooks, of which, by good luck, Bates happened to have a supply with him. Then they launched the ship's boat, in which Bates had come to the island, and put out to sea.

Robert enjoyed the row in the early morning, and wondered they had not thought of taking out the boat before. At last they came to the

business which brought them out, and in about half an hour had succeeded in catching four fishes, weighing perhaps fifteen pounds altogether.

"That'll be enough for us, unless you are very hungry," said Robert. "Now, suppose we land and cook them."

"Ay, ay, lad!"

Of course, their cooking arrangements were very primitive. In the first place, they were compelled to make a fire by the method in use among the savages, of rubbing two sticks smartly together, and catching the flame in a little prepared tinder. The fish were baked over the fire thus kindled. Though the outside was smoked, the inside was sweet and palatable, and neither was disposed to be fastidious. The preparation of the meal took considerable time, but they had abundance of that, and occupation prevented their brooding over their solitary situation.

"I wish I had 'Robinson Crusoe' here," said Robert--"we might get some hints from his adventures. I didn't imagine, when I used to read them, that I should ever be in a similar position."

"I've heard about him," said Bates; "but I never was much of a reader, and I never read his yarn. You might maybe tell me something of it."

"I will tell you all I can remember, but that isn't very much," said Robert.

He rehearsed to the attentive sailor such portions as he could call to mind of the wonderful story which for centuries to come is destined to enchain the attention of adventurous boys.

"That's a pretty good yarn," said Bates, approvingly. "Did he ever get off the island?"

"Yes, he got off, and became quite rich before he died."

"Maybe it'll be so with us, lad."

"I hope so. I don't know what I should do if I were alone as he was. It's selfish in me, Bates, to be glad that you are shut up here with me, but I cannot help it."

"You needn't try, lad. It would be mighty dull being alone here, 'specially if you was tied to a tree."

"But suppose we should never get off!"

"We won't suppose that, lad. We are sure to get off some time."

This confident assurance always cheered up Robert, and for the time inspired him with equal confidence. But when day after day passed away and the promised ship did not come in sight, he used to ponder thoughtfully over his situation, and the possibility that he might have to spend years at least on this lonely island. What in the meantime would become of his mother? She might die, and if he ever returned it would be to realize the loss he had sustained. The island, pleasant as it was, began to lose its charm. If his sailor companion ever shared his feelings, he never manifested them, unwilling to let the boy see that he was becoming discouraged.

At length--about six weeks after their arrival upon the island--they were returning from an excursion to the other side of the island, when, on arriving in sight of the shore, an unexpected sight greeted their eyes.

A pole had been planted in the sand, and from it waved the familiar flag, dear to the heart of every American--the star-spangled banner.

They no sooner caught sight of it, than, in joyful excitement, they ran to the shore with all the speed they could muster.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SUCCESSFUL MISSION.

There was no one in sight, but it was evident that a party from an American ship had visited the island. Had they departed? That was a momentous question. Instinctively the eyes of both sought the sea. They saw an American ship riding at anchor a mile or more from shore.

"Give me your handkerchief, Robert," said Bates; "I'll signal them."

"It isn't very clean," said our hero.

"It'll do. See, they are looking at us."

"Your eyes must be good."

"I'm used to looking out to sea, lad."

He waved the handkerchief aloft, and felt sure that he had attracted the attention of those on board. But there was no motion to put off a boat.

"Do they see it?" asked Robert, eagerly.

"I think so."

"Do you think they will come for us? If not, we can put off in our boat."

"I think the party that planted that flagstaff hasn't got back. It is exploring the island, and will be back soon."

"Of course it is," said Robert, suddenly. "Don't you see their boat?"

"Ay, ay, lad; it's all right. All we've got to do is to stay here till they come."

They had not long to wait. A party of sailors, headed by an officer, came out of the woods, and headed for the shore. They stopped short in surprise at the sight of Robert and Bates.

"Who are you?" asked the leader, approaching.

Bates touched his hat, for he judged this was the captain of the vessel he had seen.

"I am a sailor from the ship _Argonaut_, bound from New York to Calcutta, and this young gentleman is Robert Rushton, passenger aboard the same ship."

"Where is your ship?"

"I don't know, captain."

"How came you here?"

"We were left here. The vessel went without us."

"How long have you been here?"

"Six weeks."

"There is something about this which I do not understand. Are you here of your own accord?"

"We are anxious to get away, captain," said Robert. "Will you take us?"

"To be sure I will. There's room enough on my ship for both of you. But I can't understand how you were left here."

"It's a long yarn, captain," said Bates. "If you haven't time to hear it now, I will tell you aboard ship."

"You look like a good seaman," said the captain, addressing Bates. "I'm short-handed just now. If you will engage with me, I will enroll you among my crew."

"That I'll do," said Bates, with satisfaction. "I wasn't made for a passenger."

"My ship is the _Superior_, bound from Boston to Calcutta; so your destination will be the same. My name is Smith. Do you know the name of this island?"

"I never heard of it before."

"I have taken possession of it in the name of the United States, supposing myself the first discoverer."

"That's all right. To my mind, the Star-Spangled Banner is the best that can wave over it."

"We might offer the captain our boat," suggested Robert.

The offer was made and accepted; and, while the captain and his party returned in one boat, Robert and Bates rowed to the ship in their own, and were soon on the deck of the _Superior_ to their unbounded satisfaction.

"This is something like," said Bates. "The island is well enough, but there's nothing like the deck of a good ship."

"I don't think I wholly agree with you," said Robert, smiling; "but just at present I do. I am glad enough to be here. We may meet Captain Haley at Calcutta," he added, after a pause.

"Likely he'll have got away before we get there."

"I hope not. I should like to meet him face to face, and charge him with his treachery. I don't think he'll be over glad to see me."

"That's so, lad. He don't expect ever to set eyes on you again."

Robert soon felt at home on the new vessel. Captain Smith he found to be a very different man from Captain Haley. When he heard the story told him by our hero, he said:

"I like your pluck, Robert. You've had contrary winds so far, but you've borne up against them. The wind's changed now, and you are likely to have a prosperous voyage. This Captain Haley is a disgrace to the service. He'll be overhauled some time."

"When I get back to New York I shall tell Mr. Morgan how he treated me."

"That will put a spoke in his wheel."

"There's one thing I want to speak to you about, Captain Smith. How much will my passage be?"

"Nothing at all."

"But I have some money with me. I am willing to pay."

"Keep your money, my lad. You will need it all before you get through. I was once a poor boy myself, obliged to struggle for my living. I haven't forgotten that time, and it makes me willing to lend a helping hand to others in the same position."

"You are very kind, Captain Smith," said Robert, gratefully.

"I ought to be. How long do you want to stay in Calcutta?"

"Only long enough to look about for my father."

"Then you can return to New York in my ship. It shall cost you nothing."

This offer was gratefully accepted--the more so that our hero had begun to realize that two hundred dollars was a small sum to carry on a journey of such length.

At last they reached Calcutta. Robert surveyed with much interest the great city of India, so different in its external appearance from New York, the only great city besides that he knew anything about.

"Well, Robert," said Captain Smith, on their arrival, "what are your plans? Will you make your home on board the ship, or board in the city, during our stay in port?"

"I think," said Robert, "I should prefer to live in the city, if you would recommend me to a good boarding place."

"That I can do. I am in the habit of boarding at a quiet house kept by a widow. Her terms are reasonable, and you can do no better than go there with me."

"Thank you, Captain Smith. I shall be glad to follow your advice."

So it happened that Captain Smith and Robert engaged board at the house of Mrs. Start, where, it will be remembered, that Captain Rushton was also a boarder, passing still under the name of Smith. Physically he had considerably improved, but mentally he was not yet recovered. His mind had received a shock, which, as it proved, a shock equally great was needed to bring it back to its proper balance.

"By the way," said Mrs. Start to Captain Smith, "we have another gentleman of your name here."

"Indeed?"

"You will see him at dinner. Poor gentleman, his mind is affected, and we only gave him this name because we didn't know his real name."

Robert little dreamed who it was of whom Mrs. Start was speaking, nor did he look forward with any particular curiosity to seeing the other Mr. Smith.

When dinner was announced, Robert and the captain were early in their seats, and were introduced to the other boarders as they came in. Finally Captain Rushton entered, and moved forward to a seat beside the landlady. Robert chanced to look up as he entered, and his heart made a mighty bound when in the new Mr. Smith he recognized his father.

"Father!" he exclaimed, eagerly, springing from his seat, and overturning his chair in his haste.

Captain Rushton looked at him for a moment in bewilderment. Then all at once the mists that had obscured his faculties were dispelled, and he cried, "Robert! my dear son, how came you here?"

"I came in search of you, father. Thank Heaven I have found you alive and well."

"I think I have been in a dream, Robert They call me Smith. That surely is not my name."

"Rushton, father! You have not forgotten?"

"Yes, that is it. Often it has been on the tip of my tongue, and then it slipped away from me. But, tell me, how came you here?"

"I am indebted to the kindness of this gentleman--Captain Smith, father--who rescued me from great peril."

This scene, of course, excited great astonishment among the boarders, and the worthy landlady who had been uniformly kind to Captain Rushton, was rejoiced at his sudden recovery. Feeling that mutual explanations in public would be unpleasant, she proposed to send dinner for both to Captain Rushton's room, and this offer was gladly accepted.

"And how did you leave your mother, Robert?" asked the captain.

"She was well, father, but mourning for your loss."

"I wish I could fly to her."

"You shall go back with me in Captain Smith's vessel. I am sure he will take us as passengers,"

"So we will. You are sure your mother is well provided for? But Mr. Davis has, no doubt, supplied her with money?"

"Not a cent, father."

"Not a cent! I deposited five thousand dollars with him for her benefit, just before sailing!"

"So you wrote in the letter which you sent in the bottle."

"Was that letter received?"

"Yes; it was that which led me to come in search of you."

"And did you go to Mr. Davis?"

"He denied the deposit, and demanded to see the receipt."

"The villain! He thought I was at the bottom of the sea, and the receipt with me. He shall find his mistake!"

"Then you have the receipt still, father?"

"To be sure I have," and Captain Rushton drew it from the pocket where it had laid concealed for two years and more.

Robert regarded it with satisfaction.

"He won't dare to deny it after this. I wish we were going back at once."

"Now, Robert, tell me all that has happened in my absence, and how you raised money enough to come out here."

So father and son exchanged narrations. Captain Rushton was astonished to find that the same man, Ben Haley, who had been the cause of his misfortunes, had also come so near compassing the destruction of his son.

"Thanks to a kind Providence," he said, "his wicked machinations have failed, and we are alive to defeat his evil schemes."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DEFEATED.

In due time the Superior cleared for New York, and among the

passengers were Robert and his father. Since the meeting with his son Captain Rushton's mental malady had completely disappeared, and his mental recovery affected his physical health favorably. His step became firm and elastic, his eye was bright, and Robert thought he had never looked better. Leaving the two to pursue their voyage home, we return to Captain Haley.

After leaving Robert to his fate, he kept on his way, rejoicing with a wicked satisfaction that he had got rid of an enemy who had it in his power to do him harm, for what Robert might suffer in his island prison, he cared little. He took it for granted that he would never get away, but would pass his life, be it longer or shorter, in dreary exile. Though the crew did not know all, they knew that the captain had heartlessly left Robert to his fate, and all were animated by a common feeling of dislike to their commander, who never under any circumstances would have been popular. But there was no one among them bold enough to come forward and charge Haley with his crime, even when they reached Calcutta. The captain moved among them, and his orders were obeyed, but not with alacrity. This satisfied him, for he cared nothing for the attachment of those under his command.

One day in Calcutta he had a surprise.

He met Captain Rushton one day when out walking. It seemed like one risen from the dead, for he supposed him lying at the bottom of the sea. Could his eyes deceive him, or was this really the man whom he had so grossly injured? Captain Rushton did not see Haley, for he was partly turned away from him, and was busily conversing with a gentleman of his acquaintance. Haley drew near, and heard Captain Rushton addressed as Mr. Smith. He at once decided that, in spite of the wonderful resemblance, it was not the man he supposed, and breathed more freely in consequence. But he could not help looking back to wonder at the surprising likeness.

"They are as near alike as if they were brothers," he said to himself.

He did not again catch sight of Captain Rushton while in Calcutta.

Before Robert arrived, Captain Haley had sailed for home. But he met with storms, and his vessel received injuries that delayed her, so that his ship only reached New York on the same day with the Superior, bearing as passengers Robert and his father. Our hero lost no time in calling upon his friend, Mr. Morgan, and actually reached the office an hour before Haley, the Superior having reached her pier a little in advance of the other vessel.

When Robert walked into the office, Mr. Morgan, who was at his desk, looked up, and recognized him at once.

"Welcome back, my young friend," he said, cordially, rising to meet him. "I am glad to see you, but I didn't expect you quite so soon. How did you happen to come in advance of the captain?"

"Then you have not heard what happened at sea?" said Robert.

"Yes," said the merchant. "I heard, much to my regret, of Captain Evans' death. He was a worthy man, and I am truly sorry to lose him. What do you think of his successor, Captain Haley? He has never before sailed for me."

"After I have told my story, you can judge of him for yourself. I did not return on your vessel, Mr. Morgan, but on the _Superior_, Captain Smith."

"How is that?" asked the merchant, surprised.

"Because Captain Haley left me on an island in the Southern Ocean, bound to a tree, and probably supposes that I am dead."

"Your story seems incredible, Robert. Give me a full account of all that led to this action on the part of the captain."

My readers shall not be wearied with a repetition of details with which they are already familiar. Robert related what had happened to him in a straightforward manner, and Mr. Morgan never thought of doubting his statements.

"This Haley must be a villain," he said. "You are, indeed, fortunate in having escaped from the snare he laid for you,"

"I have been fortunate in another way also," said Robert. "I have succeeded in the object of my voyage."

"You have not found your father?"

"I found him in Calcutta, and I have brought him home with me."

"You must have been born under a lucky star, Robert," said the merchant. "Were your father's adventures as remarkable as yours?"

"It was the same man who nearly succeeded in accomplishing the ruin of both--Captain Haley was my father's mate, and was he who, in revenge for some fancied slight, set fire to the vessel in mid-ocean, and then escaped."

Scarcely had this revelation been made, when a clerk entered, and approaching Mr. Morgan, said, "Captain Haley would like to see you."

Mr. Morgan glanced at Robert significantly.

"I wish to know what explanation Mr. Haley has to give of your disappearance. There is a closet. Go in, and close the door partially, so that you may hear what passes without yourself being seen."

Robert was hardly established in his place of concealment when Haley entered the office.

"Good-morning, Mr. Morgan," he said, deferentially, for he wished to keep in his employer's good graces.

"Good-morning, sir," said the merchant, formally. "Captain Haley, I believe?"

"Yes, sir I succeeded to the command of the _Argonaut_ upon the lamented death of my friend, Captain Evans. His death happened on our passage out. I proceeded at once to Calcutta, and after disposing of the cargo sailed for home."

"Your voyage has been a long one."

"Yes, we have had stress of weather, which has delayed us materially. I regret this, but did the best I could under the circumstances. I hope to have discharged my duties in a manner satisfactory to you."

"I cannot, of course, blame you for delay, since the weather was quite beyond your control," said the merchant, but his tone was marked by coldness, for which Haley found it difficult to account. He was anxious to remain in command of the *_Argonaut_*, but the want of cordiality evinced by his employer made him doubtful of his success. He was not timid, however, and resolved to broach the subject.

"I hope, Mr. Morgan," he said, "that you have sufficient confidence in me to intrust me with the command of the *_Argonaut_* on her next voyage?"

"He certainly is not lacking in audacity," thought Mr. Morgan. "We will speak of that matter hereafter," he said. "Did my young friend, Robert Rushton, return with you?"

Now was the critical moment. In spite of his audacity, Haley felt embarrassed.

"No, sir," he replied.

"Indeed! I expected that you would bring him back."

"May I ask if the boy is a relative of yours?"

"No, he is not."

"So much the better."

"Why do you say that? I am particularly interested in him."

"Then, sir, my task becomes more painful and embarrassing."

"You speak in enigmas, Captain Haley."

"I hesitate to speak plainly. I know you will be pained by what I have to tell you."

"Don't consider my feelings, Captain Haley, but say what you have to say."

"Then I regret to say that the boy, Robert Rushton, is unworthy of your friendship."

"This is a grievous charge. Of course, I expect you to substantiate it."

"I will do so. Shortly after the death of Captain Evans and my accession to the command I found that this boy was trying to undermine my influence with the men, from what motives I cannot guess. I remonstrated with him mildly but firmly, but only received insolence in return. Nevertheless I continued to treat him well on account of the interest you felt in him. So things went on till we reached Calcutta. He left me at that time, and to my surprise did not return to the ship. I was able to account for his disappearance, however, when I missed one hundred and

fifty dollars, of which I have not the slightest doubt that he robbed me. I should have taken measures to have him arrested, but since you felt an interest in him I preferred to suffer the loss in silence. I fear, Mr. Morgan, that you have been greatly deceived in him."

"I suspect that I have been deceived," said Mr. Morgan, gravely. "It is only fair, however, Captain Haley, to hear both sides, and I will therefore summon the boy himself to answer your charge. Robert!"

At the summons, to Captain Haley's equal surprise and dismay, Robert stepped from the closet in which he had been concealed.

"What have you to say, Robert?" asked the merchant.

"Captain Haley knows very well the falsehood of what he says," said our hero, calmly. "It was not at Calcutta I left the Argonaut, nor was it of my own accord. Captain Haley, with his own hands, tied me to a tree on a small island in the Southern Ocean, and there left me, as he supposed, to a solitary death. But Heaven did not forsake me, and sent first a brave sailor and afterward a ship to my assistance. The charge that I stole money from him I shall not answer, for I know Mr. Morgan will not believe it."

Captain Haley was not a fool, and he knew that it would be useless to press the charge further. He rose from his seat; his face was dark with anger and smarting under a sense of defeat.

"You have not done with me yet," he said to Robert, and without another word left the office.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CUP AND THE LIP.

Affairs in Millville had gone on much as usual. Mrs. Rushton had not yet exhausted the supply of money left by Robert in the hands of his friend the lawyer. Her expenses were small, and were eked out by her earnings; for she continued to braid straw, and was able in this way to earn two dollars a week. Indeed, she made it a point to be as economical as possible, for she thought it likely Robert would spend all his money, and return penniless. She had received no letter from him since the one announcing his being about to sail for Calcutta, and this made her naturally anxious. But Mr. Paine assured her that letters were likely to be irregular, and there was no ground for alarm. So she waited with what patience she could till Robert should return, hoping that by some strange chance he might succeed in his quest, and bring his father back with him.

Meanwhile, fortune had improved with Mr. Davis, the superintendent of the factory. He had lost largely by speculation, but had blundered at last into the purchase of a stock in which some interested parties had effected a corner. It went up rapidly, and on the morning when we introduce him again to the reader he was in high good spirits, having just received intelligence from his broker that he had cleared seven thousand dollars by selling at the top of the market.

"Another cup of coffee, Mrs. Davis," he said, passing his cup across the table.

Seeing that his father appeared in good humor, Halbert ventured to prefer a request, which, however, he had little hope of having granted.

"Have you seen Will Paine's pony?" he said, paving the way for the request.

"Yes," said his father; "I saw him on it yesterday."

"It's a regular beauty--I wish I had one."

"How much did it cost?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"That is rather a high price."

"But it will increase in value every year. I wish you would buy me one, father."

"I think I will," said the superintendent, helping himself to a fresh slice of toast.

"Do you mean it?" asked Halbert, in the utmost astonishment.

"Certainly I do. I can afford you a pony as well as Mr. Paine can afford to buy William one."

"Thank you!" said Halbert, his selfish nature more nearly affected by gratitude than ever before. "You are very kind. When will you see about it?"

"I am busy. You may go yourself and ask Mr. Paine where he got William's pony, and if he knows of any other equally good."

"That I will," said Halbert, leaving the table in haste.

"Halbert, you have eaten scarcely anything," said his mother.

"I am not hungry," said the excited boy, seizing his hat, and dashing off in the direction of Mr. Paine's office.

"By the way, Mrs. Davis," said the husband, "I think you mentioned last week that the parlor needed a new carpet."

"So it does. The old one is looking very shabby."

"How much will a new one cost?"

"I can get a nice Brussels for a hundred dollars."

"Well, you may order one."

It was the wife's turn to be astonished, for on broaching the subject the week previous, her husband had given her a lecture on extravagance, and absolutely refused to consider her request. This was before the

tidings of his good fortune. She was not slow to accept the present concession, and assumed an unusually affectionate manner, in the excess of her delight.

Meanwhile, Halbert, in opening the front door, came in collision with a boy taller and stouter than himself, brown and sunburned. But, changed as he was, he was not slow in recognizing his old enemy, Robert Rushton.

"What, are you back again?" he said, ungraciously.

"So it appears. Is your father at home?"

"Yes; but he is at breakfast. I don't think you can see him."

"I'll make the attempt, at any rate," said Robert.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked Halbert, more from curiosity than interest.

"I went to Calcutta."

"Common sailor, I suppose," said Halbert, contemptuously.

"No, I was a passenger."

"Where did you get your money to pay the passage?"

"I'm sorry that I can't stop to gratify your curiosity just at present, but I have important business with your father."

"You're getting mighty important," sneered Halbert.

"Am I?"

"I wouldn't advise you to put on so many airs, just because you've been to Calcutta."

"I never thought of putting on any. I see you haven't changed much since I went away. You have the same agreeable, gentlemanly manners."

"Do you mean to say that I am not a gentleman?" blustered Halbert.

"Not at all. You may be one, but you don't show it."

"I have a great mind to put you out of the yard."

Robert glanced at Halbert's figure, slight compared with his own, and laughed.

"I think you would find it a difficult undertaking," he said.

Halbert privately came to the same conclusion, and decided to war only with words.

"I have got something better to do than to stand here listening to your impudence. I won't soil my fingers by touching you."

"That's a sensible conclusion. Good-morning."

Halbert did not deign to respond, but walked off, holding his nose very high in the air. Then, as he thought of the pony, he quickened his pace, and bent his steps to Mr. Paine's office.

"A young man to see you, Mr. Davis," said Bridget, entering the breakfast-room.

"Who is it?"

"I think it's young Robert Rushton, but he's much grown entirely."

"That boy home again!" exclaimed the superintendent, in displeased surprise. "Well, you may ask him into the next room."

"Good-morning, Mr. Davis," said Robert, as the superintendent entered.

"Good-morning. When did you get home?" was the cold reply.

"Last evening."

"Where have you been?"

"To Calcutta."

"On a fool's errand."

"I felt it my duty to search for my father."

"I could have told you beforehand you would not succeed. Did you go as a sailor?"

"No."

"Where did you raise money to pay your expenses?"

"I found friends who helped me."

"It is a poor policy for a boy to live on charity."

"I never intend to do it," said Robert, firmly. "But I would rather do it than live on money that did not belong to me."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" said the superintendent, suspiciously.

"It was a general remark," said Robert.

"May I ask what is your motive in calling upon me?" asked Mr. Davis. "I suppose you have some object."

"I have, and I think you can guess it."

"I am not good at guessing," said Davis, haughtily.

"Then I will not put you to that trouble. You remember, before I sailed for Calcutta, I called here and asked you to restore the sum of five thousand dollars deposited with you by my father?"

"I remember it, and at the time I stigmatized the claim as a fraudulent one. No such sum was ever deposited with me by your father."

"How can you say that, when my father expressly stated it in the letter, written by him, from the boat in which he was drifting about on the ocean?"

"I have no proof that the letter was genuine, and even if it were, I deny the claim. I am not responsible for money I never received."

"I understand you then refuse to pay the money?"

"You would have understood it long ago, if you had not been uncommonly thick-headed," sneered the superintendent. "Let this be the end of it. When you present my note of acknowledgment for the amount, I will pay it and not before."

"That is all I ask," said Robert.

"What?" demanded the superintendent.

"I mean that this assurance is all I want. The note shall be presented to you in the course of the day."

"What do you mean?" asked Davis, startled.

"I mean this, Mr. Davis: that I found my father in Calcutta. He came home with me, and, far from having perished at sea, is now alive and well. He has with him your note for five thousand dollars, and will present it in person."

"You are deceiving me!" exclaimed Davis, in consternation.

"You will soon learn whether I am deceiving you or not," said Robert. "I will now bid you good-morning. My father will call upon you in the course of the day."

He rose to go, leaving the superintendent thunderstruck at the intelligence of Captain Rushton's return. The five thousand dollars, with arrears of interest, would take the greater part of the money whose sudden acquisition had so elated him. While he was considering the situation, his wife entered.

"I think, Mr. Davis," she said, "I will go to New York to-day to buy carpeting, if you can spare the money."

"Neither now nor at any other time," he roared, savagely; "the old carpet must do."

"Why, then, did you tell me fifteen minutes since that I might buy one? What do you mean by such trifling, Mr. Davis?" said his wife, her eyes flashing.

"I mean what I say. I've changed my mind. I can't afford to buy a new carpet."

There was a stormy scene between man and wife, which may be passed over in silence. It ended with a fit of hysterics on the part of Mrs. Davis, while her husband put on his hat and walked gloomily over to the factory. Here he soon received a call from Halbert, who informed him, with great elation, that Mr. Paine knew of a desirable pony which could

be had on the same terms as his son's.

"I've changed my mind," said his father. "A pony will cost too much money."

All Halbert's entreaties were unavailing, and he finally left his father's presence in a very unfilial frame of mind.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

The arrival of Captain Rushton, confidently supposed to be dead, produced a great sensation in Millville, and many were the congratulatory visits received at the little cottage. Mrs. Rushton was doubly happy at the unexpected return of her husband and son, and felt for the first time in her life perfectly happy. She cared little for poverty or riches, as long as she had regained her chief treasures.

When Captain Rushton called upon the superintendent, the latter received him with embarrassment, knowing that the captain was aware of his intended dishonesty. He tried to evade immediate payment, but on this point his creditor was peremptory. He had no further confidence in Mr. Davis, and felt that the sooner he got his money back into his hands the better. It was fortunate for him that the superintendent had been at last successful in speculation, or restitution would have been impossible. As it was, he received his money in full, nearly six thousand dollars, which he at once invested in bank stock of reliable city banks, yielding a good annual income. Only the day after the payment of this sum, a committee of investigation appointed by the directors, whose suspicions had been excited, visited the factory, and subjected the superintendent's books to a thorough scrutiny. The result showed that Mr. Davis, in whom hitherto perfect confidence had been felt, had for years pursued a system of embezzlement, which he had covered up by false entries in his books, and had appropriated to his own use from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars belonging to the corporation. While this investigation was pending, the superintendent disappeared, leaving his wife and son unprovided for. His estate was seized in part satisfaction of the amounts he had appropriated, and Halbert's pride was brought low. The wealth and position upon which he had based his aristocratic pretensions vanished, and in bitter mortification he found himself reduced to poverty. He could no longer flaunt his cane and promenade the streets in kid gloves, but was glad to accept a position in the factory store, where he was compelled to dress according to his work. In fact, he had exchanged positions with Robert, who was now, owing to a circumstance which will at once be mentioned, possessed of a considerable inheritance.

The old farmer, Paul Nichols, whom Robert tried to defend from his unprincipled nephew, Ben Haley, died suddenly of heart disease. Speculation was rife as to who would inherit the estate which he left behind him. He had no near relation except Ben Haley, and so great was the dislike he entertained toward him that no one anticipated that the estate would go to him, unless through Paul's dying intestate. But shortly after Haley's visit, his uncle made a will, which he deposited

in the hands of Lawyer Paine. On the day after the funeral, the latter met Captain Rushton and Robert, and said:

"Will you come to my office this afternoon at three o'clock?"

"Certainly," said the captain.

"I suppose you don't want me, Mr. Paine?" said Robert.

"I do want you, particularly," said the lawyer.

Our hero wondered a little why his presence was required, but dismissed the matter from his mind, until three o'clock found him in the lawyer's office.

"Gentlemen," said the lawyer, "I am about to read the last will and testament of our neighbor, Paul Nichols, recently deceased."

This preamble created surprise, for this was the first intimation that such a will was in existence.

The document was brief, and the substance of it was contained in the following paragraph:

"Having no near relatives, except Benjamin Haley, for whom I have neither regard nor affection, and who, moreover, has recently stolen a considerable sum of money from me, I leave all of which I may die possessed, whether in land or money, to my brave young friend, Robert Rushton, who courageously defended me from my said nephew, at his own bodily risk, and I hope he may live long to enjoy the property I bequeath him."

No one was more surprised than Robert at the unexpected inheritance. He could hardly realize that he was now possessed of a considerable property in his own right. It may be said here that, including the value of the farm, and the gold concealed, his inheritance amounted to quite ten thousand dollars. Paul had considerably supplied the lawyer with a list of the hiding places where he had secreted his money on the strictest injunctions of secrecy, and this made the task of finding it quite easy.

Congratulations poured in upon our hero, who received them with modest satisfaction.

"It is a good thing to have a rich son," said Captain Rushton, humorously. "Robert, I hope you won't look down upon me on account of my comparative poverty."

"Father," said Robert, "I wish you would take this money--I don't want it."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Robert. It is fairly and deservedly yours, though I confess you may attribute it partly to good luck, for virtue is not always so well rewarded in this world. I will take care of it for you, and if you choose to pay your own expenses out of your income, I shall allow you to do so, since you are now rich and prosperous."

"You must take all the income, father. Then it will not be necessary for

you to go to sea again."

"I have already made up my mind to stay on land hereafter," said Captain Rushton. "My cruise in an open boat without provisions has cured me of my love for the sea. With the little money I have saved, and the help of a rich son, I think I can afford to stay on shore."

The cottage was enlarged by the erection of another story, as well as by the addition of a wing and the throwing out of two bay windows, and was otherwise refitted and so metamorphosed by fresh paint and new furniture, that it became one of the most attractive houses in Millville. Captain Rushton, who knew something of agriculture, decided to carry on Robert's farm himself, and found the employment both pleasant and profitable.

"My only trouble," he used to say, jocosely, "is that I have a very exacting landlord. Unless the rent were punctually paid, he would be sure to resort to legal means to recover it."

When Ben Haley heard that his uncle's estate had been bequeathed to the boy whom he had persecuted, and whom for that reason he hated, his rage and disappointment were unbounded. If he had not been within two hours of sailing in command of a ship bound to South America, he would at once have gone down to Millville, and in his fury he might have done serious injury to the boy who had superseded him. But he could not delay the day of sailing, and so, much against his will, he was forced to forego his vengeance until his return. But this was destined to be his last voyage. While at Rio Janeiro he became engaged in a fracas with the keeper of a low grogshop, when the latter, who was a desperate ruffian, snatched a knife from his girdle, and drove it into the heart of the unhappy captain, who fell back on the floor and expired without a groan. Thus terminated a misguided and ill-spent life. I should have been glad to report Ben Haley's reformation instead of his death, but for the sake of Robert, whom he hated so intensely, I am relieved that thin source of peril is closed.

Robert, being now in easy circumstances, decided to pursue his studies for two years longer, and accordingly placed himself in a school of high reputation, where he made rapid improvement. He then entered upon a business life under the auspices of his friend, Mr. Morgan, and promises in time to become a prominent and wealthy merchant. He passes every Sunday at home in the little cottage occupied by his father, who, however, has ceased to be a farmer, having been promoted to the post of superintendent of the factory, formerly occupied by Mr. Davis. For the first twelve months the post was filled by a new man, who proved to be incompetent, and then was offered to Captain Rushton, whose excellent executive talents were well known. He soon made himself familiar with his duties, and the post is likely to be his as long as he cares to hold it.

Hester Paine, as a young lady, fulfills the promise of her girlhood. The mutual attachment which existed between her and Robert, when boy and girl, still continues, and there is some ground for the report which comes from Millville--that they are engaged. The alliance will be in the highest degree pleasing to both families, for if Hester is fair and attractive, Robert is energetic and of excellent principles, and possessed of precisely those qualities which, with fair good fortune will, under the favor of Providence, insure his success in life.

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