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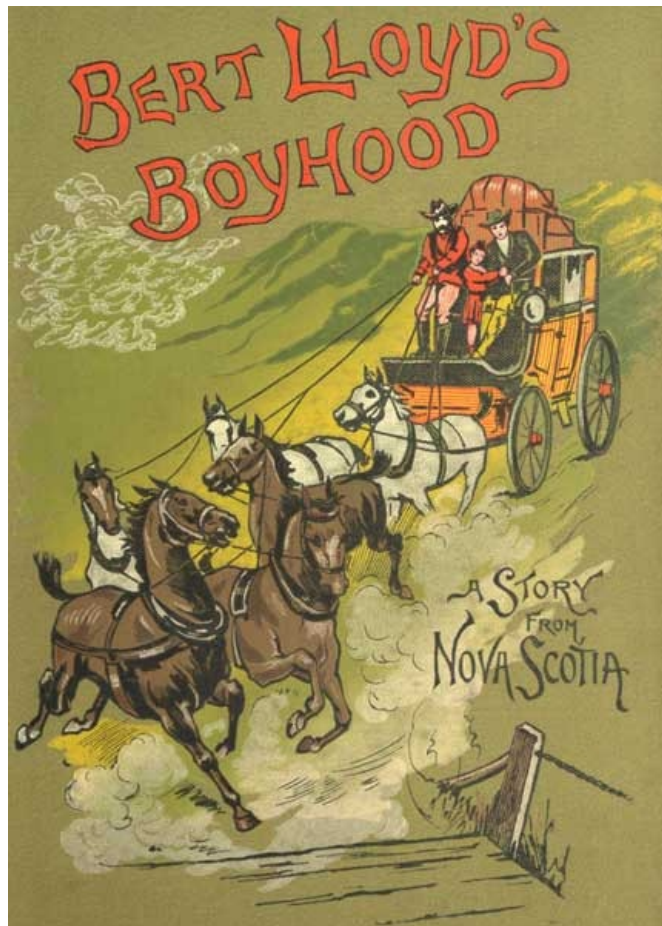
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BERT LLOYD'S BOYHOOD: A STORY FROM
NOVA SCOTIA ***



BERT LLOYD'S BOYHOOD.

A Story from Nova Scotia

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY, LL.D.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. FINNEMORE

London
HODDER AND STOUGHTON



"The whole crowd then precipitated themselves upon him, and proceeded to pummel any part of his body they could reach."—

Page 165. Frontispiece.

PREFACE.

There is something so pleasing to the author of this volume—the first of several which have been kindly received by his American cousins—in the thought of being accorded the privilege of appearing before a new audience in the "old home," that the impulse to indulge in a foreword or two cannot be withstood.

And yet, after all, there would seem to be but two things necessary to be said:—Firstly, that in attempting a picture of boy life in Nova Scotia a fifth of a century ago, the writer had simply to fall back upon the recollections of his own school-days, and that in so doing he has striven to depart as slightly as possible from what came within the range of personal experience; and, Secondly, while it is no doubt to be regretted that Canada has not yet attained that stage of development which would enable her to support a literature of her own, it certainly is no small consolation for her children, however ardent their patriotism, who would fain enter the literary arena, that not only across the Border, but beyond the ocean in the Motherland, there are doors of opportunity standing open through which they may find their way before the greatest and kindest audience in the world.

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J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

OTTAWA, CANADA,
29th August, 1892.

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CHAPTER I.

BERT IS INTRODUCED.

If Cuthbert Lloyd had been born in the time of our great grandfathers, instead of a little later than the first half of the present century, the gossips would assuredly have declared that the good fairies had had it all their own way at his birth.

To begin with, he was a particularly fine handsome baby; for did not all the friends of the family say so? In the second place, he was an only son, which meant that he had no big brothers to bully him. Next, his birthplace was the stirring seaport of Halifax, where a sturdy, energetic boy, such as Cuthbert certainly gave good promise of being, need never lack for fun or adventure. Finally, he had plenty of relations in the country to whom he might go in the summer time to learn the secrets and delights of country life.

Now, when to all these advantages are added two fond but sensible parents in comfortable circumstances, an elder sister who loved little Cuthbert with the whole strength of her warm unselfish heart, and a pleasant home in the best part of the city, they surely make us as fine a list of blessings as the most benevolent fairy godmother could reasonably have been expected to bestow.

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And yet there was nothing about Master Cuthbert's early conduct to indicate that he properly appreciated his good fortune. He was not half as well-behaved a baby, for instance, as red-headed little Patsey Shea, who, a few days after his first appearance, brought another hungry mouth to the already over-populated cottage of the milkwoman down in Hardhand's lane. As he grew older, it needed more whippings than the sum total of his own chubby fingers and toes to instil into him a proper understanding of parental authority. Sometimes his mother, who was a slight small woman, stronger of mind than of body, would feel downright discouraged about her vigorous, wilful boy, and wonder, half-despairingly, if she were really equal to the task of bringing him up in the way he should go.

Cuthbert was in many respects an odd mixture. His mother often said that he seemed more like two boys of opposite natures rolled into one, than just one ordinary boy. When quite a little chap, he would at one time be as full of noise, action, and enterprise as the captain of an ocean steamer in a gale, and at another time be as sedate, thoughtful, and absentminded as the ancient philosopher who made himself famous by walking into a well in broad daylight.

Cuthbert, in fact, at the age of three, attracted attention to himself in a somewhat similar way. His mother had taken him with her in making some calls, and at Mrs. Allen's, in one of his thoughtful moods, with his hands clasped behind him, he went wandering off unobserved. Presently he startled the whole household by tumbling from the top to the bottom of the kitchen stairs, having calmly walked over the edge in an absorbed study of his surroundings.

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The other side of his nature was brilliantly illustrated a year later. Being invited to spend the day with a playmate of his own age, he built a big fire with newspapers in the bath room, turned on all the taps, pretending that they were the hydrants, and then ran through the hall, banging a dustpan and shouting "fire" at the top of his voice.

"He is such a perfect 'pickle,' I hardly know what to do with him, Robert," said Mrs. Lloyd to her husband, with a big sigh, one evening at dinner.

"Don't worry, my dear, don't worry. He has more than the usual amount of animal spirits, that is all. Keep a firm hand on him and he'll come out all right," answered Mr. Lloyd, cheerfully.

"It's easy enough to say, 'Keep a firm hand on him,' Robert, but my hand gets pretty tired sometimes, I can assure you. I just wish you'd stay at home for a week and look after Bert, while I go to the office in your place. You'd get a better idea of what your son is like than you can by seeing him for a little while in the morning and evening."

"Thank you, Kate, I've no doubt you might manage to do my work at the office, and that my clients would think your advice very good; but I'm no less sure that I would be a dismal failure in doing your work at home," responded Mr. Lloyd, with a smile, adding, more seriously: "Anyway, I have too much faith in your ability to make the best of Bert to think of spoiling your good work by clumsy interference."

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"It's a great comfort to have you put so much faith in me," said Mrs. Lloyd, with a grateful look, "for it's more than Bert does sometimes. Why, he told me only this morning that he thought I wasn't half as good to him as Frankie Clayton's mother is to him, just because I wouldn't let him have the garden hose to play fireman with."

"Just wait until he's fifteen, my dear," returned Mr. Lloyd, "and if he doesn't think then that he has one of the best mothers in the world, why—I'll never again venture to prophesy, that's all. And here comes my little man to answer for himself," as the door opened suddenly and Bert burst in, making straight for his father. "Ha! ha! my boy, so your mother says you're a perfect pickle. Well, if you're only pickled in a way that will save you from spoiling, I shall be satisfied, and I think your mother may be, too."

Mrs. Lloyd laughed heartily at the unexpected turn thus given to her complaint; and Bert, seeing both his parents in such good humour, added a beaming face on his own account, although, of course, without having the slightest idea as to the cause of their merriment.

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Climbing up on his father's knee, Bert pressed a plump cheek lovingly against the lawyer's brown whiskers and looked, what indeed he was, the picture of happy content.

"What sort of a man are you going to make, Bert?" asked Mr. Lloyd, quizzingly, the previous conversation being still in his mind.

"I'm going to be a fireman," replied Bert, promptly; "and Frankie's going to be one too."

"And why do you want to be a fireman, Bert?"

"Oh, because they wear such grand clothes and can make such a noise without anybody telling them to shut up," answered Bert, whose knowledge of firemen was based upon a torchlight procession of them he had seen one night, and their management of a fire that had not long before taken place in the near neighbourhood, and of which he was a breathless spectator.

Mr. Lloyd could not resist laughing at his son's naive reply, but there was no ridicule in his laugh, as Bert saw clearly enough, and he was encouraged to add:

"Oh, father, please let me be a fireman, won't you?"

"We'll see about it, Bert. If we can't find anything better for you to do than being a fireman, why we'll try to make a good fireman of you, that's all. But never mind about that now; tell me what was the best fun you had to-day." Thus invited, Bert proceeded to tell after his own fashion the doings of the day, with his father and mother an attentive audience.

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It was their policy to always manifest a deep interest in everything Bert had to tell, and in this way they made him understand better perhaps than they could otherwise have done how thoroughly they sympathised with him in both the joys and sorrows of his little life. They were determined that the most complete confidence should be established between them and their only boy at the start, and Bert never appeared to such advantage as when, with eyes flashing and graphic gestures, he would tell about something wonderful in his eyes that had happened to him

that afternoon.

By the time Bert had exhausted his budget and been rewarded with a lump of white sugar, the nurse appeared with the summons to bed, and after some slight demur he went off in good humour, his father saying, as the door closed upon him:

"There's not a better youngster of his age in Halifax, Kate, even if he hasn't at present any higher ambition than to be a fireman."

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CHAPTER II.

FIREMAN OR SOLDIER.

Halifax has already been mentioned as a particularly pleasant place for a boy to be born in; and so indeed it is. Every schoolboy knows, or ought to know, that it is the capital of Acadia, one of the Maritime Provinces of the Dominion of Canada. It has a great many advantages, some of which are not shared by any other city on the continent. Situated right on the sea coast, it boasts a magnificent harbour, in which all the war vessels of the world, from the mightiest iron-clad to the tiniest torpedo boat, might lie at anchor. Beyond the harbour, separated from it by only a short strait, well-named the "Narrows," is an immense basin that seems just designed for yachting and excursions; while branching out from the harbour in different directions are two lovely fiords, one called the Eastern Passage, leading out to the ocean again, and the other running away up into the land, so that there is no lack of salt water from which cool breezes may blow on the torrid days.

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The city itself is built upon the peninsula that divides the harbour from the north-west arm, and beginning about half-a-mile from the point of the peninsula, runs northward almost to the Narrows, and spreads out westward until its farthest edge touches the shore of the arm. The "Point" has been wisely set aside for a public park, and except where a fort or two, built to command the entrance to the harbour, intrudes upon it, the forest of spruce and fir with its labyrinth of roads and paths and frequent glades of soft waving grass, extends from shore to shore, making a wilderness that a boy's imagination may easily people with Indians brandishing tomahawk and scalping knife, or bears and wolves seeking whom they may devour.

Halifax being the chief military and naval station for the British Colonies in America, its forts and barracks are filled with red-coated infantry or blue-coated artillery the whole year round. All summer long great iron-clads bring their imposing bulks to anchor off the Dockyard, and Jack Tars in foolish, merry, and alas! too often vicious companies, swagger through the streets in noisy enjoyment of their day on shore.

On either side of the harbour, on the little island which rests like an emerald brooch upon its bosom, and high above the city on the crown of the hill up which it wearily climbs, street beyond street, stand frowning fortresses with mighty guns thrusting their black muzzles through the granite embrasures. In fact, the whole place is pervaded by the influences of military life; and Cuthbert, whose home overlooked a disused fort, now serving the rather ignoble purpose of a dwelling-place for married soldiers, was at first fully persuaded in his mind that the desire of his life was to be a soldier; and it was not until he went to a military review, and realised that the soldiers had to stand up awfully stiff and straight, and dare not open their mouths for the world, that he dismissed the idea of being a soldier, and adopted that of being a fireman.

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Yet there were times when he rather regretted his decision, and inclined to waver in his allegiance. His going to the Sunday school with his sister had something to do with this. A favourite hymn with the superintendent—who, by the way, was a retired officer—was—

"Onward, Christian soldiers."

The bright stirring tune, and the tremendous vigour with which the scholars sang it, quite took Cuthbert's heart. He listened eagerly, but the only words he caught were the first, which they repeated so often:

"Onward, Christian soldiers."

Walking home with his sister, they met a small detachment of soldiers, looking very fine in their Sunday uniforms:

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"Are those Christian soldiers, Mary?" he asked, looking eagerly up into her face.

"Perhaps so, Bert, I don't know," Mary replied. "What makes you ask?"

"Because we were singing about Christian soldiers, weren't we?" answered Bert.

"Oh! is that what you mean, Bert? They may be, for all I know. Would you like to be a Christian soldier?"

"Yes," doubtfully; then, brightening up—"but couldn't I be a Christian fireman, too?"

"Of course you could, Bert, but I'd much rather see you a Christian soldier. Mr. Hamilton is a

Christian soldier, you know."

This reply of his sister's set Bert's little brain at work. Mr. Hamilton, the superintendent of the Sunday school, was a tall, erect handsome man, with fine grey hair and whiskers, altogether an impressive gentleman; yet he had a most winning manner, and Bert was won to him at once when he was welcomed by him warmly to the school. Bert could not imagine anything grander than to be a Christian soldier, if it meant being like Mr. Hamilton. Still the fireman notion had too many attractions to be lightly thrown aside, and consequently for some time to come he could hardly be said to know his own mind as to his future.

The presence of the military in Halifax was far from being an unmixed good. Of course, it helped business, gave employment to many hands, imparted peculiar life and colour to society, and added many excellent citizens to the population. At the same time it had very marked drawbacks. There was always a great deal of drunkenness and other dissipation among the soldiers and sailors. The officers were not the most improving of companions and models for the young men of the place, and in other ways the city was the worse for their presence.

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Mrs. Lloyd presently found the soldiers a source of danger to her boy. Just around the corner at the entrance to the old fort, already mentioned, was a guardhouse, and here some half-dozen soldiers were stationed day and night. They were usually jolly fellows, who were glad to get hold of little boys to play with, and thereby help to while away the time in their monotonous life. Cuthbert soon discovered the attractions of this guardhouse, and, in spite of commands to the contrary, which he seemed unable to remember, wandered off thither very often. All the other little boys in the neighbourhood went there whenever they liked, and he could not understand why he should not do so too. He did not really mean to defy his parents. He was too young for that, being only six years old. But the force of the example of his playmates seemed stronger than the known wishes of his parents, and so he disobeyed them again and again.

Mrs. Lloyd might, of course, have carried her point by shutting Bert up in the yard, and not allowing him out at all except in charge of somebody. But that was precisely what she did not wish to do. She knew well enough that her son could not have a locked-up world to live in. He must learn to live in this world, full of temptations as it is, and so her idea was not so much to put him out of the way of temptation, as to teach him how to withstand it. Consequently, she was somewhat at a loss just what to do in the matter of the guardhouse, when a letter that came from the country offered a very timely and acceptable solution of the difficulty.

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CHAPTER III.

NO. FIVE FORT STREET.

Cuthbert Lloyd's home was a happy one in every way. The house was so situated that the sunshine might have free play upon it all day, pouring in at the back windows in the morning and flooding the front ones with rich and rare splendour at evening. A quiet little street passed by the door, the gardens opposite being filled with noble trees that cast a grateful shade during the dog days. At the back of the house was the old fort, its turfed casemates sloping down to a sandy beach, from whose centre a stone wharf projected out into the plashing water. Looking over the casemates, one could see clear out to the lighthouse which kept watch at the entrance to the harbour, and could follow the ships as they rose slowly on the horizon or sped away with favouring breeze.

A right pleasant house to live in was No. Five Fort Street, and right pleasant were the people who lived in it. Cuthbert certainly had no doubt upon either point, and who had a better opportunity of forming an opinion? Mr. Lloyd, the head of the household, was also the head of one of the leading legal firms in Halifax. His son, and perhaps his wife and daughter, too, thought him the finest-looking man in the city. That was no doubt an extravagant estimate, yet it was not without excuse; for tall, erect, and stalwart, with regular features, large brown eyes that looked straight at you, fine whiskers and moustache, and a kindly cordial expression, Mr. Lloyd made a very good appearance in the world. Especially did he, since he never forgot the neatness and good taste in dress of his bachelor days, as so many married men are apt to do.

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Cuthbert's mother was of quite a different type. Her husband used to joke her about her being good for a standard of measurement because she stood just five feet in height, and weighed precisely one hundred pounds. Bert, one day, seemed to realise what a mite of a woman she was; for, after looking her all over, he said, very gravely:

"What a little mother you are! I will soon be as big as you, won't I?"

Brown of hair and eyes, like Mr. Lloyd, her face was a rare combination of sweetness and strength. Bert thought it lovelier than any angel's he had ever seen in a picture. Indeed, there was much of the angelic in his mother's nature. She had marvellous control over her feelings, and never by any chance gave way to temper openly, so that in all his young life her boy had no remembrance of receiving from her a harsh word, or a hasty, angry blow. Not that she was weak or indulgent. On the contrary, not only Bert, but Bert's playmates, and some of their mothers, too, thought her quite too strict at times, for she was a firm believer in discipline, and Master

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Bert was taught to abide by rules from the outset.

The third member of the household was the only daughter, Mary, a tall, graceful girl, who had inherited many of her father's qualities, together with her mother's sweetness. In Bert's eyes she was just simply perfect. She was twice as old as he when he had six years to his credit, and the difference in age made her seem like a second mother to him, except that he felt free to take more liberties with her than with his mother. But she did not mind this much, for she was passionately fond of her little brother, and was inclined to spoil him, if anything.

As for Bert himself—well, he was just a stout, sturdy, hearty boy, with nothing very remarkable about him, unless, perhaps, it was his superabundant health and spirits. Nobody, unless it was that most partial judge, Mary, thought him handsome, but everybody admitted that he was good-looking in every sense of the term. He promised to be neither tall, like his father, nor short, like his mother, but of a handy, serviceable medium height, with plenty of strength and endurance in his tough little frame. Not only were both eyes and hair brown, as might be expected, but his face, too, as might also be expected, seeing that no bounds were placed upon his being out of doors, so long as the day was fine, and he himself was keeping out of mischief.

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Father, mother, daughter, and son, these four made up a very affectionate and happy family, pulling well together; and, so far as the three older ones were concerned, with their faces and hearts set toward Jerusalem, and of one mind as to taking Bert along with them. Mr. Lloyd and his wife were thoroughly in accord with Dr. Austin Phelps as to this:—That the children of Christians should be Christian from the cradle. They accordingly saw no reason why the only son that God had given them should ever go out into sin, and then be brought back from a far off land. Surely, if they did their duty, he need never stray far away. That was the way they reasoned; and although, of course, little Bert knew nothing about it, that was the plan upon which they sought to bring him up. The task was not altogether an easy one, as succeeding chapters of Bert's history will make plain. But the plan was adhered to, and the result justified its wisdom.

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CHAPTER IV.

OFF TO THE COUNTRY.

The letter which came in such good time to relieve Mrs. Lloyd from the difficulty about Bert's fondness for the guardroom and its hurtful influences, was from her father, and contained an invitation so pressing as to be little short of a demand, for her to pay him a long visit at the old homestead, bringing Bert with her.

Mrs. Lloyd very readily and gladly accepted the invitation. Midsummer was near at hand. She had not visited her old home for some years. Her father and mother were ageing fast; and then, naturally enough, she was eager to show them what a fine boy Bert was growing to be.

When Bert heard of it he showed the utmost delight. Three years before, he had spent a summer at grandfather's; but, then, of course, he was too young to do more than be impressed by the novelty of his surroundings. The huge oxen, the noisy pigs, the spirited horses, even the clumsy little calves, bewildered, if they did not alarm him. But now he felt old enough to enjoy them all; and the very idea of going back to them filled him with joy, to which he gave expression after his own boisterous fashion.

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"Mother, are we going to grandfather's to-morrow?" he would eagerly ask, day after day, his little heart throbbing with impatience.

"We're going soon, Bert dear. You must be patient, you know," his mother would gently reply; and the little fellow would make a very heroic effort to control himself.

At length the day of departure arrived. Too full of importance and great expectations to manifest a proper amount of sorrow at leaving his father and sister, who felt very reluctant, indeed, to part with him, Master Bert took his place in the cab and drove up to the railway station. Hardly had he entered it than he made a dash for the train, climbed up on the rear platform with the agility of a monkey, much to the amusement of the conductor, whose proffer of assistance he entirely ignored; and when Mr. Lloyd entered the train a minute later, he found his enterprising son seated comfortably upon a central seat, and evidently quite ready for the train to start.

"Would you go away without saying good-bye to your father and to Mary?" asked Mr. Lloyd, in a deeply reproachful tone.

Bert blushed violently on being thus reminded of his apparent selfishness and, with the threat of a tear in his eye, was about to make some sort of a defence, when his father put him all right again by saying brightly:

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"Never mind, my boy. It isn't every day you go off on a hundred-and-fifty-miles' journey. Mary and I will forgive you for forgetting us this time, won't we, Mary?"

The lunch basket, the wraps, and their other belongings were placed on the seat, the engine whistled, "all aboard," the bell rang, the conductor shouted, affectionate farewells were hastily

exchanged, and presently the train rolled noisily out of the dark station into the bright sunshine; and Bert, leaning from the window, caught a last glimpse of his father and sister as they stood waving the handkerchiefs which one of them, at least, could not refrain from putting to another use, as the last car swept round the turn and vanished.

But Bert was in no mood for tears. In fact, he never felt less like anything of the kind. He felt much more disposed to shout aloud for very joy, and probably would have done so, but for the restraining influence exercised by the presence of the other passengers, of whom there were a good many in the carriage. As it was, he gave vent to his excited feelings by being as restless as a mosquito, and asking his mother as many questions as his active brain could invent.

"You'll be tired out by mid-day, Bert, if you go on at this rate," said his mother, in gentle warning.

"Oh, no, I won't, mother; I won't get tired. See! What's that funny big thing with the long legs in that field?" [Pg 24]

"That's a frame for a hay stack, I think. You'll see plenty of those at grandfather's."

"And what's that queer thing with arms sticking out from that building?"

"That's a wind-mill. When the wind blows hard those arms go round, and turn machinery inside the barn."

"And has grandpapa got a wind-mill, mother?"

"Yes; he has one on his big barn."

"Oh, I'm so glad; I can watch it going round, and stand quite close, can't I?"

"Yes, but take care not to go too close to the machinery. It might hurt you very much, you know."

And so it went on all through the morning. Mrs. Lloyd would have liked very much to read a little in an interesting book she had brought with her, but what with watching Bert's restless movements, and answering his incessant questions, there seemed slight hope of her succeeding in this until, after they had been a couple of hours on their journey, a good-natured gentleman on the opposite seat, who had finished his paper, and had nothing particular to do, took in the situation and came to her relief.

"Won't you come over and keep me company for a while, my little man?" he said, pleasantly, leaning across the seat. "I will try and answer all your questions for you." [Pg 25]

Bert looked curiously at the speaker, and then, the inspection proving satisfactory, inquiringly at his mother. She nodded her assent, so forthwith he ran over to his new friend, and climbed up beside him. He was given the corner next the window, and while his bright eyes took in everything as the train sped on, his tongue wagged no less swiftly as question followed question in quick succession. Mrs. Lloyd, thoroughly at ease now, returned to her book with a grateful sigh of relief, and an hour slipped away, at the end of which Bert's eyes grew heavy with sleep. He no longer was interested in the scenery; and at last, after a gallant struggle, his curly head fell over on the cushion, and he went into a deep sleep, from which he did not waken until at mid-day the train drew up at the station, beyond which they could not go by rail.

"Come, Bert, wake up! We must get out here," cried his mother, shaking him vigorously.

Rubbing his eyes hard, yawning as though he would put his jaws out of joint, and feeling very uncomfortable generally, Bert nevertheless managed to pull himself together sufficiently to thank the gentleman who had been so kind to him, before he followed his mother out of the car.

They had dinner at Thurso, and by the time it was ready Bert was ready too. He had been altogether too much excited at breakfast time to eat much then, but he made up for it now. Mrs. Lloyd laughed as he asked again and again for more, but she did not check him. She knew very well that the contented frame of mind produced by a good dinner was just the right thing with which to enter upon the second part of their journey. This was to be by coach, and as even the best of coaches is a pretty cramped sort of an affair unless you have it all to yourself, the quieter Bert was disposed to be the better for all concerned. [Pg 26]

"What are we to ride in now, mother?" asked Bert, after the vacancy underneath his blue blouse had been sufficiently filled to dispose him to conversation.

"In a big red coach, dear, with six fine horses to draw us," answered Mrs. Lloyd.

"Oh, mother, won't that be splendid? And may I sit up with the driver?"

"Perhaps you may, for a little while, anyway, if he will let you."

"Hooray!" cried Bert, clapping his hands with delight; "I'm sure the driver will let me, if you'll only ask him. You will, won't you, mother?"

"Yes, I will, after we get out of the town. But you must wait until I think it's the right time to ask him."

"I'll wait, mother, but don't you forget."

Forget! There was much likelihood of Mrs. Lloyd forgetting with this lively young monkey before

her as a constant reminder.

They had just finished dinner, when, with clatter of hoofs, rattle of springs, and crush of gravel under the heavy wheels, the great Concord coach drew up before the hotel door in dashing style. [Pg 27]

Bert was one of the first to greet it. He did not even wait to put on his hat, and his mother, following with it, found him in the forefront of the crowd that always gathers about the mail coach in a country town, gazing up at the driver, who sat in superb dignity upon his lofty seat, as though he had never beheld so exalted a being in his life before.

There was something so impassive, so indifferent to his surroundings, about this big, bronzed, black-moustached, and broad-hatted driver, that poor Bert's heart sank within him. He felt perfectly sure that *he* could never in the world muster up sufficient courage to beg for the privilege of a seat beside so impressive a potentate, and he doubted if his mother could, either.

Among the passengers Bert was glad to see the gentleman who had befriended him on the train, and when this individual, after having the audacity to hail the driver familiarly with, "Good-morning, Jack; looks as if we were going to have a pleasant trip down," sprang up on the wheel, and thence to the vacant place beside Jack Davis, just as though it belonged to him of right, a ray of hope stole into Bert's heart. If his friend of the train, whose name, by the way, he told Bert, was Mr. Miller, was on such good terms with the driver, perhaps he would ask him to let a little boy sit up in front for a while.

Taking much comfort from this thought, Bert, at a call from his mother, who was already seated, climbed up into the coach, and being allowed the corner next the window, with head thrust forth as far as was safe he awaited eagerly the signal to start. [Pg 28]
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CHAPTER V.

THE RIDE IN THE COACH.

The last passenger had taken his seat, the last trunk been strapped on behind, and the canvas covering drawn tightly over it, the mail bags safely stowed away in the capacious boot; and then big Jack Davis, gathering the reins of his six impatient steeds skilfully into one hand, and grasping the long-lashed whip in the other, sang out to the men who stood at the leaders' heads:

"Let them go!"

The men dropped the bridles and sprang aside, the long lash cracked like a pistol shot, the leaders, a beautiful pair of grey ponies, perfectly matched, reared, curvetted, pranced about, and then would have dashed off at a wild gallop had not Jack Davis' strong hands, aided by the steadiness of the staid wheelers, kept them in check: and soon brought down to a spirited canter, they led the way out of the town.

The coach had a heavy load. It could hold twelve passengers inside, and every seat was occupied on top. Besides Mr. Miller, who had the coveted box seat, there were two other men perched upon the coach top, and making the best of their uncomfortable position; and there was an extra amount of baggage. [Pg 30]

"Plenty of work for my horses to-day, Mr. Miller," said Jack Davis, looking carefully over the harnessing to make sure that every strap was securely buckled, and every part in its right place.

"Yes, indeed; you'll need to keep the brake on hard going down the hills," replied Mr. Miller.

Bending over, so that those behind could not hear him, the driver said, under his breath:

"Don't say anything; but, to tell the truth, I'm a little shaky about my brake. It is none too strong, and I won't go out with it again until it's fixed; but it can't be mended this side of Riverton, and I'm going to push through as best I can."

"Well, if anything happens, just let us know when to jump," returned Mr. Miller, with a reassuring smile, for he felt no anxiety, having perfect confidence in Davis' ability to bring his coach safely to the journey's end.

It was a lovely summer day, and in the early afternoon the coach bowled smoothly along over the well-kept road, now rolling over a wooden bridge on whose timbers the rapid tramp of the horses' feet sounded like thunder, climbing the slope on the other side, then rattling down into the valley, and up the opposite hill, almost at full speed, and so on in rapid succession. Bert, kneeling at the window, with arms resting on the ledge, and just able to see the three horses on his side, was so engrossed in watching them, or peering into the forest through which the road cut its way, that he quite forgot his desire to be up on top of the coach. [Pg 31]

Having gone fifteen miles at a spanking pace, the coach drove into a long—covered barn for the horses to be changed, and everybody got out to stretch their legs; while this was being done, Bert's longing came back in full force. As he stood watching the tired foam-flecked horses being led away, and others, sleek, shining, and spirited put in their places, who should pass by but Mr. Miller. Recognising at once his little acquaintance of the morning, he greeted him with a cheery:

"Hallo! my little man, are we fellow-travellers still? And how do you like riding in a coach?"

"I think it's just splendid, sir," replied Bert; and then, as a bright thought flashed into his mind,—"but I do so want to be up where the driver is."

Mr. Miller looked down at the little face turned up to his, and noting its eager expression asked, kindly:

"Do you think your mother would let you go up there?"

"Oh, yes; she said I might if I would only wait a little, and it is a good deal more than a little while now."

"Very well, Bert, you run and ask her if you may get up now, and I'll try and manage it," said Mr. Miller. [Pg 32]

Bert was not long in getting his mother's sanction, and when he returned with beaming face, Mr. Miller taking him up to Jack Davis, said:

"Jack, this little chap is dying to sit up with us. He wants to see how the best driver in Acadia handles his horses, I suppose."

There was no resisting such an appeal as this. Ticked with the compliment, Jack said, graciously:

"All right, Mr. Miller, you can chuck him up, so long as you'll look after him yourself."

And so when the fresh horses were harnessed, and the passengers back in their places, behold Cuthbert Lloyd, the proudest, happiest boy in all the land, perched up between the driver and Mr. Miller, feeling himself as much monarch of all he surveyed, as ever did Robinson Crusoe in his island home. It was little wonder if for the first mile or two he was too happy to ask any questions. It was quite enough from his lofty, but secure position, to watch the movements of the six handsome horses beneath him as, tossing their heads, and making feigned nips at one another, they trotted along with the heavy coach as though it were a mere trifle. The road ran through a very pretty district; well-cultivated farms, making frequent gaps in the forest, and many a brook and river lending variety to the scene. After Bert had grown accustomed to the novelty of his position, his tongue began to wag again, and his bright, innocent questions afforded Mr. Miller so much amusement, that with Jack Davis' full approval, he was invited to remain during the next stage also. Mrs. Lloyd would rather have had him with her inside, but he pleaded so earnestly, and Mr. Miller assuring her that he was not the least trouble, she finally consented to his staying up until they changed horses again. [Pg 33]

When they were changing horses at this post, Mr. Miller drew Bert's attention to a powerful black horse one of the men was carefully leading out of the stable. All the other horses came from their stalls fully harnessed, but this one had on nothing except a bridle.

"See how that horse carries on, Bert," said Mr. Miller.

And, sure enough, the big brute was prancing about with ears bent back and teeth showing in a most threatening fashion.

"They daren't harness that horse until he is in his place beside the pole, Bert. See, now, they're going to put the harness on him."

And as he spoke another stable hand came up, deftly threw the heavy harness over the horse's back, and set to work to buckle it with a speed that showed it was a job he did not care to dally over. No sooner was it accomplished than the other horses were hastily put in their places, the black wheeler in the meantime tramping upon the barn floor in a seeming frenzy of impatience, although his head was tightly held. [Pg 34]

"Now, then, 'all aboard' as quick as you can," shouted Jack Davis, swinging himself into his seat. Mr. Miller handed up Bert and followed himself, the inside passengers scrambled hurriedly in, and then with a sharp whinny the black wheeler, his head being released, started off, almost pulling the whole load himself.

"Black Rory does not seem to get over his bad habits, Jack," remarked Mr. Miller.

"No," replied Jack; "quite the other way. He's getting worse, if anything; but he's too good a horse to chuck over. There's not a better wheeler on the route than Rory, once he settles down to his work."

After going a couple of miles, during which Rory behaved about as badly as a wheeler could, he did settle down quietly to his work and all went smoothly. They were among the hills now, and the steep ascents and descents, sharp turns, and many bridges over the gullies made it necessary for Davis to drive with the utmost care. At length they reached the summit of the long slope, and began the descent into the valley.

"I'd just as soon I hadn't any doubts about this brake," said Davis to Mr. Miller, as he put his foot hard down upon it. [Pg 35]

"Oh, it'll hold all right enough, Jack," replied Mr. Miller, reassuringly.

"Hope so," said Davis. "If it doesn't, we'll have to run for it to the bottom."

The road slanted steadily downward, and with brake held hard and wheelers spread out from the pole holding back with all their strength, the heavy coach lumbered cautiously down. Now it was that Black Rory proved his worth, for, thoroughly understanding what was needed of him, he threw his whole weight and strength back upon the pole, keeping his own mate no less than the leaders in check.

"We'll be at Brown's Gully in a couple of minutes," said the driver. "Once we get past there, all right; the rest won't matter."

Brown's Gully was the ugliest bit of road on the whole route. A steep hill, along the side of which the road wound at a sharp slant, led down to a deep, dark gully crossed by a high trestle bridge. Just before the bridge there was a sudden turn which required no common skill to safely round when going at speed.

As they reached the beginning of the slant, Jack Davis' face took on an anxious look, his mouth became firm and set, his hand tightened upon the reins, and his foot upon the brake, and with constant exclamation to his horses of "Easy now!—go easy!—hold back, my beauties!" he guided the great coach in its descent.

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Mr. Miller put Bert between his knees, saying:

"Stick right there, my boy; don't budge an inch."

Although the wheelers, and particularly Black Rory, were doing their best, the coach began to go faster than Davis liked, and with a shout of "Whoa there! Go easy, will you!" he had just shoved his foot still harder against the brake, when there was a sharp crack, and the huge vehicle suddenly sprang forward upon the wheelers' heels.

"God help us!" cried Jack, "the brake's gone. We've got to run for it now."

And run for it they did.

It was a time of great peril. Mr. Miller clung tightly to the seat, and Bert shrank back between his knees. Davis, with feet braced against the dashboard, and reins gathered close in his hands, put forth all his great strength to control the horses, now flying over the narrow road at a wild gallop. Brown's Gully, already sombre with the shadows of evening, showed dark and deep before them. Just around that corner was the bridge. Were they to meet another carriage there, it would mean destruction to both. Davis well knew this, and gave a gasp of relief when they swung round the corner and saw that the road was clear. If they could only hit the bridge, all right; the danger would be passed.

"Now, Rory, *now*," shouted Davis, giving a tremendous tug at the horse's left rein, and leaning far over in that direction himself.



"Davis put forth all his strength to

**control the horses, now flying over the
road at a wild gallop." Page 36.**

Mr. Miller shut his eyes; the peril seemed too great to be gazed upon. If they missed the bridge, they must go headlong into the gully. Another moment and it was all over. [Pg 37]

As the coach swung round the corner into the straight road beyond, its impetus carried it almost over the edge, but not quite. With a splendid effort, the great black wheeler drew it over to the left. The front wheels kept the track, and although the hind wheels struck the side rail of the bridge with a crash and a jerk that well-nigh hurled Bert out upon the horses' backs, and the big coach leaned far over to the right, it shot back into the road again, and went thundering over the trembling bridge uninjured.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Miller, fervently, when the danger was passed.

"Amen!" responded Jack Davis.

"I knew He would help us," added Bert.

"Knew who would, Bert?" inquired Mr. Miller, bending over him tenderly, while something very like a tear glistened in his eye.

"I knew God would take care of us," replied Bert, promptly. "The driver asked Him to; and didn't you ask Him, too?"

"I did," said Mr. Miller, adding, with a sigh, "but I'm afraid I had not much right to expect Him to hear me."

They had no further difficulties. The road ran smoothly along the rest of the way, and shortly after sundown the coach, with great noise and clatter, drove into the village of Riverton, where grandpapa was to meet Mrs. Lloyd and Bert, and take them home in his own carriage. [Pg 38]
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CHAPTER VI.

AT GRANDFATHER'S.

Easily distinguished in the crowd gathered to welcome the coach, whose arrival was always the event of the evening, was Bert's grandfather, Squire Stewart, a typical old Scotchman, from every point of view. As the passengers got out, he stood watching them in silent dignity, until Mrs. Lloyd, catching sight of him, ran impulsively up, and taking his face between her two hands, gave him a warm kiss on each cheek, saying:

"Dear father, I'm so glad to see you looking so well."

"And I'm well pleased to see you, Kate," responded the Squire, in a tone of deep affection, adding: "And is this your boy?" as Bert, who in the meantime had been lifted down from his place, came to his mother's side.

"He's a fine big boy, and not ill-looking, either. I trust his manners have not been neglected."

"You'll have to judge of that for yourself, father," replied Mrs. Lloyd. "He's by no means perfect, but he's pretty good, upon the whole." [Pg 40]

"Well, daughter, I'll go and get the carriage, if you'll just wait here a moment," said Mr. Stewart, going off toward the stables.

Presently he returned, driving an elegant carriage with a fine pair of well-matched bays, which, old man though he was, he held in complete control.

"We won't mind the trunks now, Kate; I will send in for them in the morning," said he, as he helped them into their seats.

Maplebank, Squire Stewart's place, was situated about four miles from Riverton, and on the way out father and daughter had much to say to one another. As for Bert, he sat in silence on his seat. He felt very much awed by his grandfather. There was something so stern and severe about his time-worn countenance, he seemed so stiff in his bearing, and his voice had such a deep, rough tone in it, that, to tell the truth, Bert began to feel half sorry he had come. But this feeling disappeared entirely when, on arriving at Maplebank, he found himself in the arms of Aunt Sarah before he had time to jump out of the carriage, and was then passed over to his grandmother, who nearly smothered him with kisses.

If his grandfather filled him with awe, his grandmother inspired him with love, from the very start. And no wonder, indeed, for she was the very poetry of a grandmother. A small woman, with slender frame, already stooping somewhat beneath the burden of years, her snow-white hair and spotless cap framed one of the sweetest faces that ever beamed on this earth. Bert gave her his whole heart at once, and during all the days he spent at Maplebank she was his best loved friend. [Pg 41]

Yet he did not fail to be very fond of his two aunts, likewise. With an uncle, who remained at

home, assisting his father in the management of the property, they comprised the household, and the three apparently conspired to do their best to spoil Master Bert during that summer. Bert took very kindly to the spoiling, too, and under the circumstances it was a wonder he did not return to Halifax quite demoralised, as regards domestic discipline. But of this further.

They were a merry party sitting down to tea that evening, and Bert, having appeased his hunger and found his tongue, amused them all very much by his account of what he had seen from the coach top. The narrow escape they had had at Brown's Gully was of course much discussed. Squire Stewart had nothing but censure for the driver.

"The man had no business to go out with anything likely to break. Better for you to have waited a day than run any such risks. I shall certainly bring the matter to the attention of Mr. Lindsay," he said.

Nobody ventured to say anything to the contrary; but Bert, who was sitting by his mother, turned an anxious face up to hers, and whispered: "Grandpapa won't hurt Mr. Davis, will he? He was so good to me, and he asked God to save us; and He did."

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"It will be all right, dear," his mother whispered back. "Don't worry yourself about it." And Bert, reassured, said nothing more.

Bedtime for him soon came, and then, to his great delight, he found that instead of being banished to a room somewhere away upstairs, he was to be put in a curious bed, that filled a corner of the parlour in which the family sat. Bert had never seen anything like that bed before. It looked just like a closet, but when you opened the closet door, behold, there was a bed, and a very comfortable one, too. Just behind the parlour, with a door between, was the best bedroom, which his mother would have, and there Bert undressed, returning in his night-gown to say goodnight to all before tumbling into bed.

With the closet door wide open, he could see everything that went on in the room; and it was so delightful to lie there watching the family reading or talking, until at last, sleep came to claim him.

"Now, if you're a good boy, and don't attempt to talk after your head's on the pillow, I'll leave the door open, so you can see us all," said Aunt Sarah, as she tucked Bert snugly in; and he had sense enough to be a good boy, so that not a sound came from him ere his brown eyes closed for the night.

Many a night after that did he lie there luxuriously, watching his grandfather reading the newspaper, with a candle placed between his face and the paper, in such close proximity to both, that Bert's constant wonder was that one or the other of them never got burned; his grandmother, whose eyes no longer permitted her to read at night, knitting busily in her arm-chair, or nodding over her needles; Aunt Sarah, reading in the book that always lay at hand for leisure moments; Aunt Martha, stitching away, perhaps on some of his own torn garments; his mother writing home to Mr. Lloyd, or to Mary; while from the kitchen, outside, came the subdued sound of the servants' voices, as they chattered over their tasks. Bert thought it a lovely way to go to sleep, and often afterward, when at home, going up alone to bed in his own room, wished that he was back at grandfather's again.

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Bert slept late the next morning, for he was a very tired boy when he went to bed; and for this once he was indulged. But as he entered the dining-room, his grandfather, who had finished breakfast a full hour before, looking at him with that stern expression which was habitual to him, said:

"City boys must keep country hours when they come to the country. Early to bed, early to rise, is the rule of this house, my boy."

Poor Bert was rather disconcerted by this reception, but managed to say:

"All right, grandpapa, I'll try," as he took his seat.

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The day was full of novelty and delight to the city boy, as, under Uncle Alec's guidance, he went about the farm, and visited the horses in the stable, the cattle in the pasture, the pigs in the sty; and then, with Aunt Martha, inspected the dairy, a big cool room in a small building, well shaded by trees, where long rows of shallow pans stood filled with rich milk or golden cream; while just before tea, Aunt Sarah claimed him for a walk in the garden, where tiger lilies, hollyhocks, mock oranges, peonies, and other old-fashioned flowers grew in gay profusion.

Grandmother was too much engrossed with her daughter to pay much attention to Bert that day. Yet he had more than one token of affection at her hands; and, taken altogether, it was a very happy day.

After tea, Mrs. Lloyd took her son off for a little chat alone, wishing to draw him out as to his first impressions.

"Have you had a happy day, Bert?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed, mother. It has been just splendid. I think grandmamma and uncle and my aunts are lovely, but"—and here Bert hesitated as if afraid to finish his remark.

"But what, Bert?" asked Mrs. Lloyd. "What were you going to say when you stopped?"

"I don't like grandpapa, mother," said Bert, after a little pause, bringing the words out slowly, and then adding, almost in a whisper, "I'm afraid of grandpapa, mother."

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"Hush, Bert. You shouldn't say that you don't like your grandfather. But, tell me, why are you afraid of him?"

"Oh, because he seems so cross, and isn't kind to me like the others."

"But he isn't really cross, Bert. He loves you quite as much as the others do, but then he is an old man and has a great deal to think about. Now, Bert darling, I want you to learn to love your grandpapa, and to try and never be any bother to him. You will, won't you?"

"I'll try not to be a bother to him, mother, but I don't think it's much use my trying to love him unless he stops looking so cross."

"Well, try your best, at all events, Bert," said Mrs. Lloyd, giving her son a tender kiss. "And now come, let's see if we can find grandmother."

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CHAPTER VII.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES.

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Bert had come to Maplebank just in time for the haying season. The long slopes of upland and the level stretches of intervale waved before the breeze their russet and green wealth, awaiting the summons of the scythe and reaper. A number of extra hands had been hired to help in gathering the crop, which this year was unusually abundant, and a few days after Bert's coming the attack was begun.

The mowing machine had not yet reached Maplebank. The papers were talking about it a good deal, but Squire Stewart was not the man to quickly adopt new inventions, and nobody else in the neighbourhood could afford to do so. Consequently, the West River Valley still continued to witness the good, old-fashioned way of mowing with the scythe; and Bert, accompanying Uncle Alec to the field, was filled with admiration for the stalwart "Rorys" and "Donalds" and "Sandys" as they strode along through the thick grass, cutting a wide swath before them. There was something in the work that appealed to the boy's bump of destructiveness, and filled him with eagerness to join in it.

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"Oh, Uncle Alec, mayn't I mow?" he asked.

"Certainly, Bert, if you know how; but if you don't, I wouldn't advise you to try it," was the smiling reply.

Not at all discouraged, Bert waited patiently until one of the mowers stopped to sharpen his scythe, and then stepping to him, asked, in his most engaging way:

"Please, sir, won't you let me mow a little?"

The man looked down at him in surprise.

"You couldn't hold a scythe, sonny," he said, with a grin of amusement.

"Oh, yes, I could. Please let me try; won't you?" pleaded Bert.

The man yielded, and placing his scythe in Bert's hands, told him to go ahead.

With much difficulty Bert succeeded in grasping the two short handles which projected from the long curved shaft, and, summoning all his strength, he tried to move the scythe in the way the mowers were doing. But at the first attempt the sharp point stuck in the turf, and instantly the long handle flew up, turned over, and hit him a hard crack, square between the eyes, that felled him to the ground.

The stars were dancing before his eyes, and the next moment the tears would have been there too, had he not, as he picked himself up, caught sight of the men laughing heartily over his mishap.

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"They shan't see me cry," said he to himself; and, putting forth a heroic effort, he swallowed his tears, though the gulping them down was positively painful, and, standing up straight, looked bravely about him. Uncle Alec saw it all and understood just how Bert felt.

"Well done, my little hero," said he, clapping him on the back. "You have the right stuff in you."

"That he has, sir," said Big Sandy, with an admiring look. "He would make a right good laddie for the farm."

Bert's heart was filled with joy at these praises, and he determined that nobody on the farm should ever see him cry, unless he really couldn't at all help it.

The scythe handle gave him quite an ugly bruise, which caused many a question when he went back to the house; and Aunt Sarah, who was as nervous as she was loving and sympathetic, made

much ado over it, and insisted on a bandage, which made Bert look like a little soldier who had been in action. Mrs. Lloyd took the matter much more quietly. She knew her son had to get his share of bumps and bruises, and that each one would bring wisdom with it; so she contented herself with a kiss of sympathy, and the hope that he would have better fortune next time.

The succeeding days were full of surprises and enjoyments to Bert.

His mother gave him full liberty to go and come as he pleased, so long as he did not roam beyond the borders of the homestead, except when with Uncle Alec. The hay mows, the carriage loft, the sheep pens, the cattle stalls, were all explored; and ever so many cosy little nooks discovered, that seemed just made for "hide and seek" or "I spy." Squire Stewart had three barns on his homestead; one very large double barn, and two smaller ones. Each of these had its own attractions; but the big barn, that stood to your left, half way between the red gate and the house, was the best of all. It contained great hay mows, in which vast quantities of hay could be stored; a row of stalls where the horses stood when not out at pasture; queer dark pens, into which the sheep were gathered at winter time; and then, down underneath, great ranges of uprights, between which the patient cattle were fastened, and fed with hay, in the months when the snow lay deep upon their accustomed pastures. There was an air of shadowy mystery about this huge, rambling structure, with its lichen-patched roof, that fascinated Bert, and that even the saucy chirpings of the sparrows, which boldly built their nests in its dusty corners, could not dispel.

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Bert often wished that his city playmates could come and share with him the enjoyments of "grandfather's." He was not without companions, however. Cameron, the big blacksmith at the cross-roads, had three freckle-faced boys that were very glad to play with the little gentleman at Squire Stewart's, when they could get away from the numerous duties they were required to do at home; and other playmates soon turned up. Bert was at first not very much inclined to be sociable with them. Not only did they seem to have no shoes and stockings, but their entire clothing was usually limited to a battered straw hat, an unbleached cotton shirt, and a pair of rough homespun trousers; and the city boy was inclined to look upon the country lads with some contempt, until his Aunt Martha cured him effectually one day by a remark made in a quiet way.

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Bert had been making some unflattering comments upon the barefooted youngsters, when Aunt Martha interrupted him:

"You had better not make fun of those boys, Bert," said she, with a curious smile. "They may look as though they were poor, but remember that their fathers have all of them their own carriage and horses, and your father has not."

Bert saw the point at once, and never again ventured to ridicule boys who were the sons of "real carriage folk." Not only so, but he began at once to feel a respect for them, which wrought such a change in his bearing toward them, that they, who were not at all favourably impressed at first, changed their minds and decided that he was a "right smart little fellow."

It was while playing "hide and seek" in the big barn with half-a-dozen of these youngsters, that Bert had a narrow escape from serious injury, if not, indeed, from death. The great, gaping mows were being filled with hay, which was pitched in any way, and not, of course, packed firmly. Consequently, it was in some places like snow upon the Alpine slopes—ready to fall in an avalanche, at the slightest temptation.

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In endeavouring to reach a far corner of the barn, where he felt sure no one could possibly find him, Bert tried to cross a hill of hay, that had piled up in one division of the mow. His hasty movements were just what was needed to bring the whole mass toppling down in confusion to the bottom of the mow. Unfortunately for him, he was involved in the overthrow, and without a moment's warning was buried beneath a huge mass of hay. As he went sliding helplessly down he uttered a cry of terror, which startled little Rory Chisholm, who sprang out from his hiding-place just in time to see poor Bert disappear.

"Hi! Hi! boys—come here; Bert Lloyd's under the hay."

The boys quickly gathered, and with eager hands set to work, to rescue their imperiled playmate. But, vigorously though they toiled, it was slow progress they made; and in the meantime the little fellow, pressed upon by many hundredweight of hay, was fast losing breath and consciousness. He could hear them very indistinctly, but could not make a sound himself.

By a fortunate accident, one of the men happened along, just as the boys were near giving up the task as too great for them.

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"Donald! Donald! Quick! Bert Lloyd's under the hay. Dig him out, or he'll die," cried Rory, at the top of his voice.

Seizing a pitchfork, Donald attacked the hay like a giant, getting more and more careful as he drew near the bottom of the mow, until at last, with a shout of "I've got him," he stooped down and dragged the senseless form of Bert from the very bottom of the pile. Taking him in his arms, he ran with him to the house, and gave Aunt Sarah a great fright by suddenly plumping him into her lap, as she sat on the verandah reading, saying, breathlessly:

"Here, miss, bring him to, and he'll be none the worse for it."

Aunt Sarah screamed for hartshorn, spirits of wine, and the dear knows what, but Mrs. Lloyd,

bringing a glass of water, dashed it freely over her boy's pale face, and in a minute or two he opened his eyes again. As Donald said, he was none the worse for his experience, for no bones were broken, nor muscles strained; yet all felt thankful that he had escaped so well.

It was not long after this that Bert had another adventure, which also came near costing him his life. He was not only very fond of water, but as fearless about it as a Newfoundland puppy. The blue sea, calm as a mirror or flecked with "white caps," formed part of his earliest recollections. He would play at its margin all day long, building forts out of sand for the advancing billows of the tide to storm and overwhelm. He was never happier than when gliding over it in his father's skiff. It was the last thing in nature he looked upon before lying down at night, and the first thing to which he turned on awaking in the morning. Thus he got so used to the great salt sea, that when he came to Maplebank and looked at the quiet stream, which glided along so noiselessly at the bottom of the slope before the house, he thought it a mere plaything, and could hardly be made to understand that, innocent as the river appeared, there was water enough in it to drown him ten times over.

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One day some of the village folk came out to spend the day at Maplebank, and the weather being decidedly warm, Uncle Alec proposed that the men of the party should go with him for a bathe. They gladly assented, and Bert having begged to accompany them was given leave to do so. Uncle Alec took them to a lovely spot for a bath—a tempting nook in which one might almost have expected to surprise a water nymph or two, if you drew near quietly enough. On one side, the bank rose high and steep, affording perfect seclusion; a narrow beach of gravel made a fine place for undressing. The river rolled gently along with plenty of depth, and beyond it was another beach, and then the swelling intervale.

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Amid much laughter and excitement the men undressed, Uncle Alec allowing Bert to do the same, as he had promised to carry him across the river on his back. So soon as they were ready the bathers dived in; and, with much splashing and noise, swam races to the opposite bank, leaving Bert alone upon the shore. Skylarking with one another there they quite forgot their little companion until Uncle Alec looking across, gave a start, and cried out:

"Hallo! What's become of the boy?"

Not a sign of Bert was to be seen. His little pile of clothes, with hat placed carefully on top, was plain enough but no Bert. Full of anxiety, Uncle Alec sprang into the water, and with great sweeping strokes made for the other side. The water fairly foamed about his broad, white shoulders as he tore through it. He steered straight for the spot where he had seen Bert last. Three-fourths of the distance had been covered, when suddenly he stopped, and reaching down into the water, pulled up—What do you think? Why, Bert, of course, whose big brown eyes had startled him as they looked up at him through the clear, cool water. But how did Bert get there? Well, easily enough. He had got tired waiting for his uncle to come back for him. He wanted to be over there where the men were all having such fun. He could not swim across, so he just coolly accepted the only alternative, and started to walk across! When Uncle Alec found him there was a clear foot of water over his head. A step or two more and he would certainly have lost his footing, been carried away by the current, and drowned perhaps before Uncle Alec could have found him.

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The men all voted him a young hero when they were told of his attempt, and Uncle Alec vowed he'd teach him to swim the next time he paid a visit to Maplebank.

Aunt Sarah was greatly excited when she heard of her darling Bert's second escape, and had Mrs. Lloyd taken her advice the poor boy would have been tied to somebody's apron strings for the rest of the summer. But Mrs. Lloyd thought it better to do no more than caution Bert, and trust to the Providence that protects children to keep him from harm. He would have to learn to take care of himself sooner or later, and the sooner the better.

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CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPTATION AND TRIUMPH.

The one day in the week that Bert did not like at Maplebank was Sunday; and, indeed, under the circumstances, he was not without excuse. At home, the Lord's Day was always made as bright and cheerful as possible. The toys and playthings of the week-days were of course put aside, and wading by the seashore or coasting down the lane was not to be thought of, but in their place Bert had his father's company, of which he never had enough, and Mr. Lloyd made it a point, whether he really felt in good spirits himself or not, to appear to be so to Bert; and, in consequence, the little chap never thought his father quite so delightful as on the day of rest, that was so welcome to the lawyer, tired by a week's toil at his profession.

Then mother had more leisure, too; and besides the pleasure of going with his parents to church, dressed in his best clothes, a privilege Bert fully appreciated, there was the enjoyment of having her read to him wonderfully interesting stories from the Bible or Pilgrim's Progress, and explaining to him whatever puzzled his brain.

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If the day was fine, Mary would take him with her to the Sunday school, where, with a number of

youngsters like himself, the hour would pass quickly enough, as Miss Brightley entertained them with song and story, and pictures bearing upon the lesson. And then, after Sunday school, in summer time, his father would lead him off to the old fort, where they would sit on the grassy ramparts, watching the white sailed ships cleaving the blue waters, that never seemed more beautiful than on Sunday afternoon.

But at Maplebank it was all very different. Squire Stewart was a Presbyterian of the stern old Covenanter stock. To him the Lord's Day meant a day to be spent in unsmiling strictness of conversation and demeanour. No laughter, no bright talk, no semblance of joyousness was sanctioned; nor, indeed, could have existed within the range of his solemn countenance. He was a grave and silent man at any time, but on Sunday the gravity of his appearance was little short of appalling. One meeting him for the first time would certainly have thought that he had just been visited by some overwhelming affliction. Bert, on the morning of his first Sunday, coming out of his mother's room, after receiving the finishing touches to his dress, and dancing along the hall, in joyous anticipation of the drive in the big carriage to the village, ran right into his grandfather. Laying a strong hand on the boy's shoulder, Squire Stewart looked down at him, with disapproval written on every line of his stern face.

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"My boy," said he, in his deepest tones, "know you not that this is the Sabbath day, and that you are to keep it holy, and not be dancing along the hall?"

Poor Bert shrank away, with a trembling, "I didn't mean to, sir," and thenceforth avoided his grandfather as completely as though he were a criminal and the Squire was a policeman.

Not only at the house, but at the church, did Bert find Sunday a day of dreariness. And here again, who could blame him? He was only a boy and a very restless, active boy, at that, to whom one half-hour's sitting still was about as much as he could endure. How, then, could he be expected to be equal to four whole hours of stillness? Yet that was what his grandfather required of him whenever he went to church.

The order of the day was as follows:—Leaving the house about ten o'clock in the big covered carriage, of which the Squire felt duly proud, as being the only one in the county, they drove leisurely into the village, where the horses were put up, and after the ladies had dropped in at a friend's to make sure their bonnets and dresses were as they ought to be, they wended their way to the church, which, standing right in the centre of the village, was noisily summoning its worshippers to its seats as the big bell swung to and fro high up in the steeple.

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The church service began at eleven o'clock, and was of the most old-fashioned orthodox type. No organ had yet profaned the sanctity of that holy place, but instead thereof, a quartette of singers, selected seemingly more for the strength than the sweetness of their voices, occupied a large box right under the pulpit, and thence led the congregation by a whole bar at least, in the rendering of Tate and Brady's metrical version of the Psalms. Very weird and sorrowful were many of the tunes. None were bright and inspiring like those Bert was wont to hear at home, and as choir and congregation vied with one another in the vigour of their singing, the little fellow was sometimes half-frightened at the bewildering noise they made.

A saintlier pastor than the Reverend Mr. Goodman, D.D., few congregations possessed; but only those members of his audience who were of like age with himself thought him a good preacher. He had, indeed, some gifts in expounding the Bible, and even Bert would be interested if the lesson happened to be one of those stirring stories from the Old Testament which seem so full of life and truth. But when it came to preaching a sermon—well, it must be confessed there were then few dryer preachers throughout the whole Province of Acadia. Bending low over his manuscript, for his eyesight was poor, and lifting his head only now and then to wipe his brow, or relieve his throat, with a dry, hard cough, Mr. Goodman pursued his way steadily and monotonously from "firstly" to "lastly" every Sunday.

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And not only once, but twice on every Sunday. For be it understood, that although many of the congregation lived too far away from the church to make two trips to it from their homes, they were not thereby going to be deprived of two services. Accordingly, after the morning service—which usually lasted until one o'clock—was over, a recess of one hour for lunch and fresh air followed, and at two o'clock a second service, precisely similar in character, was entered upon, which occupied two hours more. And then, having thus laid in a supply of sound theology for the rest of the week, the good people of Calvin church, after indulging in a little harmless gossiping at the church door—of which indulgence, by the way, Squire Stewart strongly disapproved, and would have prohibited, had he been able—harnessed up their horses and drove away home.

Four hours of church service of so unattractive a character, and that in mid-summer! Poor little Bert! He did not want to shock his grandfather, or bring his mother's discipline into condemnation; but really, how could he be all that the Squire, who, if he ever had been a boy himself, must have quite forgotten about it, expected him to be? If he went to sleep, Aunt Sarah or Aunt Martha, in obedience to signals from grandfather, shook or pinched him awake again. If he stayed awake, he felt that he must wriggle or die. Sometimes the temptation to scream out loud was so strong that it seemed little short of a miracle he did not yield to it. Mrs. Lloyd fully sympathised with her son's troubles, but accustomed from infancy to obey her father unquestioningly, she would not venture to do more than softly plead for Bert, now and then, when he was more restless than usual. Her pleadings were not altogether vain, and frequently they had the result of securing for Bert a boon that he highly appreciated.

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Squire Stewart was bothered by a troublesome chronic cough. He did not mind it very much when at home, but at church he felt it to be a nuisance both to himself and his neighbours. To ease it somewhat he always carried to church with him a number of black currant lozenges, a supply of which he kept in his big mahogany desk at home. Occasionally, either as encouragement to him to try and be a better boy, or as a token of relenting for being over severe, he would pass Bert one of these lozenges, and Bert thought them the most delicious and desirable sweetmeat ever invented. Not that they were really anything wonderful, though they were very expensive; but the circumstances under which he received them gave them a peculiar relish; and it was in regard to them that Bert fought and won the sharpest battle with the tempter of all his early boyhood. It happened in this way:

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As already mentioned, Squire Stewart kept a supply of these lozenges in his big mahogany desk, that had a table to itself in the parlour. This desk was always kept locked, and Bert had many a time, when alone in the room, gone up to it, and passed his hand over its polished surface, thinking to himself how nice it would be if the package of lozenges was in his pocket instead of shut up in there where nobody could get at it.

One morning, as Bert was playing about the house, a message came that the Squire was wanted at once at the farthest barn, as one of the horses had been hurt by another. He went out hastily, and shortly after, Bert, going into the parlour, saw the desk wide open, his grandfather having been looking for a paper when so suddenly called away. The moment his eyes fell upon the open desk, a thought flashed into his mind that set every nerve tingling. As though the old desk exerted some strange and subtle fascination, he drew near it; slowly, hesitatingly, almost on tiptoe, yet steadily. His heart beat like a trip-hammer, and his ears were straining to catch the slightest sound of any one's approach. The house was wonderfully quiet. He seemed to be quite alone in it; and presently he found himself close beside the desk. Although open, the inner lids were still shut, and ere Bert put out his hand to lift the one under which he thought the package of lozenges lay, the thought of the wrong he was doing came upon him so strongly as well-nigh to conquer the temptation. For a moment he stood there irresolute; and then again the hand that had dropped to his side was stretched forth. As it touched the desk lid a thrill shot through his heart; and again he hesitated and drew back.

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It was really a tremendous struggle, and one upon which great issues hung, so far as that boy, alone in that room with the tempter, was concerned. Bert fully realized how wrong it would be for him to touch the lozenges; but, oh! what a wonderful fascination they had for him!

Reaching forward again, he lifted up the desk lid, and there, fully exposed to view, lay the package temptingly wide open, displaying its toothsome contents. The crisis of the temptation had come. An instant more, and Bert would have yielded; when suddenly his better nature got the upper hand, and with a quick resolution, the secret of which he never fully understood, he cried out:

"No, I won't." And slamming down the desk lid, he tried to run out of the room, and ran right into the arms of his grandfather, who, unseen and unsuspected, had witnessed the whole transaction from the door.

Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and terror at having been detected by the one person of all others whom he dreaded most, Bert sank down on the floor, sobbing as though his heart would break. But, strange to say, the stern old man had no harsh words for him now. On the contrary, he bent down and lifting the little fellow gently to his feet said, in tones of deepest tenderness:

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"No tears, laddie; no tears. You've fought a grand fight, and glad am I that I was there to see you win it. God grant you like success to the end of your days. I'm proud of you, Bert boy; I'm proud of you."

Scarce able to believe his ears, Bert looked up through his tears into his grandfather's face. But there was no mistaking the expression of that rugged old countenance. It fairly beamed with love and pride, and throwing himself into his arms, Bert for the first time realised that his grandfather loved him.

He never forgot that scene. Many a time after it came back to him, and helped him to decide for the right. And many a time, too, when grandfather seemed unduly stern, did the remembrance of his face that morning in the parlour drive away the hard feelings that had begun to form against him.

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CHAPTER IX.

LOST AND FOUND.

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The summer days passed very quickly and happily for Bert at Maplebank, especially after the surprising revelation of the love and tenderness that underlay his grandfather's stern exterior. No one did more for his comfort or happiness than his grandmother, and he loved her accordingly with the whole strength of his young heart. She was so slight and frail, and walked with such slow, gentle steps, that the thought of being her protector and helper often came into his mind and caused him to put on a more erect, important bearing as he walked beside her in

the garden, or through the orchard where the apples were already beginning to give promise of the coming ripeness.

Mrs. Stewart manifested her love for her grandson in one way that made a great impression upon Bert. She would take him over to the dairy, in its cool place beneath the trees, and, selecting the cooler with the thickest cream upon it, would skim off a teaspoonful into a large spoon that was already half filled with new oatmeal, and then pour the luscious mixture into the open mouth waiting expectantly beside her.

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"Is not that fine, Bertie boy?" she would say, patting him affectionately upon the head; and Bert, his mouth literally too full for utterance, would try to look the thanks he could not speak.

Maplebank had many strange visitors. It stood a little way back from the junction of three roads, and the Squire's hospitality to wayfarers being unbounded, the consequence was that rarely did a night pass without one or more finding a bed in some corner of the kitchen. Sometimes it would be a shipwrecked sailor, slowly finding his way on foot to the nearest shipping port. Sometimes a young lad with pack on back, setting out to seek his fortune at the capital, or in the States beyond. Again it would be a travelling tinker, or tailor, or cobbler, plying his trade from house to house, and thereby making an honest living.

But the most frequent visitors of all—real nuisances, though, they often made themselves—were the poor, simple folk, of whom a number of both sexes roamed ceaselessly about. Not far from Maplebank was what the better class called a "straglash district"—that is, a settlement composed of a number of people who had by constant intermarriage, and poor living, caused insanity of a mild type to be woefully common. Almost every family had its idiot boy or girl, and these poor creatures, being, as a rule, perfectly harmless, were suffered to go at large, and were generally well treated by the neighbours, upon whose kindness they were continually trespassing.

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The best known of them at the time of Bert's visit, was one called "Crazy Colin," a strange being, half wild, half civilised, with the frame of an athlete, and the mind of a child. Although more than thirty years of age, he had never shown much more sense than a two-year-old baby. He even talked in a queer gibberish, such as was suitable to that stage of childhood. Everybody was kind to him. His clothes and his food were given him. As for a roof, he needed none in summer save when it stormed, and in winter he found refuge among his own people. His chief delight was roaming the woods and fields, talking vigorously to himself in his own language, and waving a long ash staff that was rarely out of his hands. He would thus spend whole days in apparent content, returning only when the pangs of hunger could be borne no longer.

Bert took a great deal of interest in these "straglash" people, and especially in Crazy Colin, who was a frequent visitor at the Squire's kitchen, for Mrs. Stewart never refused him a generous bowl of porridge and milk, or a huge slice of bread and butter. At first he was not a little afraid of Crazy Colin. But soon he got accustomed to him, and then, boy-like, presuming upon acquaintance, began to tease him a bit when he would come in for a "bite and sup." More than once the idiot's eyes flashed dangerously at Bert's prank; but, fool though he was, he had sense enough to understand that any outbreak would mean his prompt expulsion and banishment, and so he would restrain himself. One memorable day, however, when Bert least expected or invited it, the demon of insanity broke loose in a manner that might have had serious consequences.

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It was on a Sunday. The whole family had gone off to church, except Bert, who had been left at home in the charge of the cook. She was a strapping big Scotch lassie, and very fond of Bert. About an hour after the family left, Crazy Colin sauntered along and took his seat in the kitchen. Neither Kitty nor Bert was by any means pleased to see him, but they thought it better to keep their feelings to themselves. Bert, indeed, made some effort to be entertaining, but Crazy Colin seemed in rather a sulky mood, an unusual thing for him, so Bert soon gave it up, and went off into the garden.

The roses were blooming beautifully there, and he picked several before returning to the kitchen. When he came back, he found the unwelcome visitor alone, Kitty having gone into the other part of the house. He was sitting beside the table with his head bent forward upon his hands, apparently in deep dejection. Upon the table was a large knife which Kitty had just been using in preparing the meat for dinner. Thinking it would please poor Colin, Bert selected the finest rose in his bunch and handed it to him, moving off toward the door leading into the hall as he did so. Colin lifted his head and grasped the rose rudely. As his big hand closed upon it, a thorn that hid under the white petals pierced deep into the ball of his thumb. In an instant the sleeping demon of insanity awoke. With eyes blazing and frame trembling with fury, he sprang to his feet, seized the knife, and with a hoarse, inarticulate shout, turned upon Bert, who, paralysed with terror, stood rooted to the spot half-way between the idiot and the door. It was a moment of imminent peril, but ere Crazy Colin could reach the boy, his hoarse cry was echoed by a shrill shriek from behind Bert, and two stout arms encircling him, bore him off through the door and up the stairs, pausing not until Squire Stewart's bedroom was gained and the door locked fast. Then depositing her burden upon the floor, brave, big Kitty threw herself into a chair, exclaiming, breathlessly:

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"Thank God, Master Bert, we're safe now. The creature darsen't come up those stairs."

And Kitty was right; for although Crazy Colin raged and stormed up and down the hall, striking the wall with the knife, and talking in his wild, unintelligible way, he did not attempt to set foot upon the stairs. Presently he became perfectly quiet.

"Has he gone away, Kitty?" asked Bert, eagerly, speaking for the first time. "He's not making any

noise now."

Kitty stepped softly to the door, and putting her ear to the crack, listened intently for a minute.

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"There's not a sound of him, Master Bert. Please God, he's gone, but we hadn't better go out of the room until the folks come home. He may be waiting in the kitchen."

And so they stayed, keeping one another company through the long hours of the morning and afternoon until at last the welcome sound of wheels crushing the gravel told that the carriage had returned, and they might leave their refuge.

The indignation of Squire Stewart when he heard what had occurred was a sight to behold. Sunday though it was, he burst forth into an unrestrained display of his wrath, and had the cause of it ventured along at the time, he certainly would have been in danger of bodily injury.

"The miserable trash!" stormed the Squire. "Not one of them shall ever darken my threshold again. Hech! that's what comes of being kind to such objects. They take you to be as big fools as themselves, and act accordingly. The constable shall lay his grip on that loon so sure as I am a Stewart."

There were more reasons for the Squire's wrath, too, than the fright Crazy Colin had given Bert and Kitty, for no dinner awaited the hungry church-goers, and rejoiced as they all were at the happy escape of the two who had been left at home, that was in itself an insufficient substitute for a warm, well-cooked dinner. But Kitty, of course, could not be blamed, and there was nothing to be done but to make the best of the situation, and satisfy their hunger upon such odds and ends as the larder afforded.

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As for poor Crazy Colin, whether by some subtle instinct on coming to himself he realised how gravely he had offended, or whether in some way or other he got a hint of the Squire's threats, cannot be said. Certain it was, that he did not present himself at Maplebank for many days after, and then he came under circumstances, which not only secured him complete forgiveness, but made him an actual hero, for the time, and won him a big place in the hearts of both Bert and his mother.

Although Bert had been forbidden to leave the homestead, unless in company with some grown-up person, he had on several occasions forgotten this injunction, in the ardour of his play, but never so completely as on the day that, tempted by Charlie Chisholm, the most reckless, daring youngster in the neighbourhood, he went away off into the back-lands, as the woods beyond the hill pasture were called, in search of an eagle's nest, which the unveracious Charlie assured him was to be seen high up in a certain dead monarch of the forest.

It was a beautiful afternoon, toward the end of August, when Bert, his imagination fired by the thought of obtaining a young eagle, Charlie having assured him that this was entirely possible, broke through all restraints, and went off with his tempter. Unseen by any of the household, as it happened, they passed through the milk yard, climbed the hill, hastened across the pasture, dotted with the feeding cows, and soon were lost to sight in the woods that fringed the line of settlement on both sides of the valley, and farther on widened into the great forest that was traversed only by the woodsman and the hunter.

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On and on they went, until at length Bert was tired out. "Aren't we far enough now, Charlie?" he asked, plaintively, throwing himself down upon a fallen tree to rest a little.

"Not quite, Bert; but we'll soon be," answered Charlie. "Let's take a rest, and then go ahead," he added, following Bert's example.

Having rested a few minutes, Charlie sprang up saying:

"Come along, Bert; or we'll never get there." And somewhat reluctantly the latter obeyed. Deeper and deeper into the forest they made their way, Charlie going, ahead confidently, and Bert following doubtfully; for he was already beginning to repent of his rashness, and wish that he was home again.

Presently Charlie showed signs of being uncertain as to the right route. He would turn first to the right and then to the left, peering eagerly ahead, as if hoping to come upon the big dead tree at any moment. Finally he stopped altogether.

"See here, Bert; I guess we're on the wrong track," said he, coolly. "I've missed the tree somehow, and it's getting late, so we'd better make for home. We'll have a try some other day."

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Poor little Bert, by this time thoroughly weary, was only too glad to turn homeward, and the relief at doing this gave him new strength for a while. But it did not last very long, and soon, footsore and exhausted, he dropped down upon a bank of moss, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Charlie, I wish we were home," he sobbed. "I'm so tired, and hungry, too."

Charlie did not know just what to do. It was getting on toward sundown; he had quite lost his way, and might be a good while finding it again, and he felt pretty well tired himself. But he put on a brave face and tried to be very cheerful, as he said:

"Don't cry, Bert. Cheer up, my boy, and we'll soon get home."

It was all very well to say "cheer up," but it was another thing to do it. As for getting home soon,

if there were no other way for Bert to get home than by walking the whole way, there was little chance of his sleeping in his own bed that night.

How thoroughly miserable he did feel! His conscience, his legs, and his stomach, were all paining him at once. He bitterly repented of his disobedience, and vowed he would never err in the same way again. But that, while it was all very right and proper, did not help him homeward.

At length Charlie grew desperate. He had no idea of spending the night in the woods if he could possibly help it, so he proposed a plan to Bert: [Pg 76]

"See here, Bert," said he, "you're too played out to walk any more. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll run home as fast as I can, and saddle the old mare and bring her here, and then we'll ride back again together. What do you say?"

"Oh, don't leave me here alone?" pleaded Bert. "I'll be awfully frightened."

"Chut! Bert. There's nothing to frighten you but some old crows. Stay just where you are, and I'll be back inside of an hour." And without waiting to argue the point, Charlie dashed off into the woods in the direction he thought nearest home; while Bert, after crying out in vain for him to come back, buried his face in the moss and gave himself up to tears.

One hour, two hours, three hours passed, and still Bert was alone. The sun had set, the gloaming well-nigh passed, and the shadows of night drew near. All kinds of queer noises fell upon his ear, filling him with acute terror. He dared not move from the spot upon which Charlie had left him, but sat there, crouched up close against a tree, trembling with fear in every nerve. At intervals he would break out into vehement crying, and then he would be silent again. Presently the darkness enveloped him, and still no succour came.

Meantime, there had been much anxiety at Maplebank. On Bert's being missed, diligent inquiry was made as to his whereabouts, and at length, after much questioning, some one was found who had seen him, in company with Charlie Chisholm, going up through the hill pasture toward the woods. When Mrs. Lloyd heard who his companion was, her anxiety increased, for she well knew what a reckless, adventurous little fellow Charlie was, and she determined that search should be made for the boys at once. But in this she was delayed by Uncle Alec and the men being off at a distance, and not returning until supper time. So soon as they did get back, and heard of Bert's disappearance, they swallowed their supper, and all started without delay to hunt him up. [Pg 77]

The dusk had come before the men—headed by Uncle Alec, and followed, as far as the foot of the hill, by the old Squire—got well started on their search; but they were half-a-dozen in number, and all knew the country pretty well, so that the prospect of their finding the lost boy soon seemed bright enough.

Yet the dusk deepened into darkness, and hour after hour passed—hours of intense anxiety and earnest prayer on the part of the mother and others at Maplebank—without any token of success.

Mrs. Lloyd was not naturally a nervous woman, but who could blame her if her feelings refused control when her darling boy was thus exposed to dangers, the extent of which none could tell. [Pg 78]

The Squire did his best to cheer her in his bluff blunt way:

"Tut! tut! Kate. Don't worry so. The child's just fallen asleep somewhere. He'll be found as soon as it's light. There's nothing to harm him in those woods."

Mrs. Lloyd tried hard to persuade herself that there wasn't, but all kinds of vague terrors filled her mind, and refused to be allayed.

At length, as it drew toward midnight, a step was heard approaching, and the anxious watchers rushed eagerly to the door, hoping for good news. But it was only one of the men, returning according to arrangement to see if Bert had been found, and if not to set forth again along some new line of search. After a little interval another came, and then another, until all had returned, Uncle Alec being the last, and still no news of Bert.

They were bidden to take some rest and refreshment before going back in to the woods. While they were sitting in the kitchen, Uncle Alec, who was exceedingly fond of Bert, and felt more concerned about him than he cared to show, having no appetite for food, went off toward the red gate with no definite purpose except that he could not keep still.

Presently the still midnight air was startled with a joyful "Hurrah!" followed close by a shout of "Bert's all right—he's here," that brought the people in the house tumbling pell-mell against each other in their haste to reach the door and see what it all meant. [Pg 79]



"Crazy Colin strode up the road, bearing Bert high upon his shoulder."—Page 79.

The light from the kitchen streamed out upon the road, making a broad luminous path, up which the next moment strode Crazy Colin, bearing Bert high upon his broad shoulders, while his swarthy countenance fairly shone with a smile of pride and satisfaction that clearly showed he did not need Uncle Alec's enthusiastic clappings on the back, and hearty "Well done, Colin! You're a trump!" to make him understand the importance of what he had done.

The two were at once surrounded by the overjoyed family. After giving her darling one passionate hug, Mrs. Lloyd took both of Crazy Colin's hands in hers, and, looking up into his beaming face, said, with a deep sincerity even his dull brain could not fail to appreciate: "God bless you, Colin. I cannot thank you enough, but I'll be your friend for life;" while the Squire, having blown his nose very vigorously on his red silk handkerchief, grasped Colin by the arm, dragged him into the house, and ordered that the best the larder could produce should be placed before him at once. It was a happy scene, and no one enjoyed it more than did Crazy Colin himself.

The exact details of the rescue of Bert were never fully ascertained; for, of course, poor Colin could not make them known, his range of expression being limited to his mere personal wants, and Bert himself being able to tell no more than that while lying at the foot of the tree, and crying pretty vigorously, he heard a rustling among the trees that sent a chill of terror through him, and then the sound of Crazy Colin's talk with himself, which he recognised instantly. Forgetting all about the fright Colin had given him a few days before, he shouted out his name. Colin came to him at once, and seeming to understand the situation at a glance, picked him up in his strong arms, flung him over his shoulder, and strode off toward Maplebank with him as though he were a mere feather-weight and not a sturdy boy. Dark as it was, Colin never hesitated, nor paused, except now and then to rest a moment, until he reached the red gate where Uncle Alec met him, and welcomed him so warmly.

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Mrs. Lloyd did not think it wise nor necessary to say very much to Bert about his disobedience. If ever there was a contrite, humbled boy, it was he. He had learned a lesson that he would be long in forgetting. As for his tempter, Charlie Chisholm, he did not turn up until the next morning, having lost himself completely in his endeavour to get home; and it was only after many hours of wandering he found his way to an outlying cabin of the backwoods settlement, where he was given shelter for the night.

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CHAPTER X.

BERT GOES TO SCHOOL.

With the waning of summer came the time for Mrs. Lloyd to return to the city. Both she and Bert

felt very sorry to leave Maplebank, and the family there was unanimous in seeking to persuade her to allow Bert to remain for the winter. But this was not practicable, because, in the first place, Mr. Lloyd had been writing to say that he was quite tired of being without his boy, and would like to have him back again as soon as was convenient; and, in the second place, Bert had reached the age when he ought to begin his schooling, and must return home for that purpose.

So at length, after more than one postponement, the day of departure arrived. Grandmother and Aunt Martha, and Aunt Sarah, could not restrain their tears, and big, kind Kitty was among the mourners too, as Bert and his mother took their seat in the carriage beside the Squire and Uncle Alec, to drive in to the village where the coach would be met.

With many a promise to come back ere very long, and many a fond "Good-bye! God bless you, my darling!" the travellers started on their homeward journey. The village was reached in good time, the coach found awaiting its passengers, the trunks safely stowed behind, the last good-bye to grandfather and Uncle Alec said, and then, amid cracking of whips and waving of handkerchiefs, the big coach rolled grandly off, and Bert had really parted with dear, delightful Maplebank, where he had spent such a happy summer.

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The homeward journey was a very pleasant one, and marked by no exciting incidents. Jack Davis was in his place on the box, and, recognising Bert when the passengers got out at the first change of horses, hailed him with a hearty: "Holloa, youngster! Are you on board? Would you like to come up on top with me again?"

It need hardly be said that Bert jumped at the invitation, and, his mother giving her consent, he rode on the box seat beside Davis the greater part of the day as happy as a bird. The weather was perfect, it being a cool, bright day in early September, and Bert enjoyed very much recognising and recalling the different things that had particularly interested him on the way down. "Black Rory" was as lively as ever, and seemed determined to run away and dash everything to pieces as they started out from his stable, but calmed down again after a mile or two, as usual, and trotted along amiably enough the rest of his distance.

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It happened that Davis had no one on the outside with whom he cared to talk, so he gave a good deal of attention to Bert, telling him about the horses and their peculiarities, and how they were in so many ways just like people, and had to be humoured sometimes, and sometimes punished, and how it was, upon the whole, so much better to be kind than cruel to them.

"If your father ever lets you have a pony, Bert," said Davis, "take my word for it it'll pay you to treat that ere pony like a brother. Just let him know you're fond of him from the start; give him a lump of sugar or a crust of bread now and then—it's wonderful how fond horses are of such things—and he'll follow you about just like a dog. Horses have got a good deal more human nature in 'em than folks generally give 'em credit for, I can tell you, and I think I know what I am talking about, for I've had to do with them ever since I've been as big as you."

Bert listened to this lecture with very lively interest, for his father had more than once hinted at getting him a pony some day if he were a good boy, and showed he could be trusted with one. He confided his hopes to his friend, and received in return for the confidence a lot more of good advice, which need not be repeated here.

The sun was setting as the coach drove up to the hotel at Thurso, where Mrs. Lloyd and Bert were to remain for the night, taking the train for Halifax the next morning. Bert felt quite sorry at parting with his big friend, the driver, and very gladly promised him that the next time he was going to Maplebank he would try to manage so as to be going down on Jack Davis' day that their friendship might be renewed.

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Both Bert and his mother were very glad to get to bed that night. Coaching is fine fun in fine weather, but it is fatiguing, nevertheless. You cannot ride all day in a coach without more or less backache, and Bert was so sleepy that, but for his mother preventing him, he would have flung himself upon his bed without so much as taking off his boots. He managed to undress all right enough, however, and then slept like a top until next morning.

Bright and early they took the train, and by mid-day were at Halifax, where Mr. Lloyd and Mary received them with open arms and many a glad kiss.

After allowing him a few days to settle down to home life again, the question of Bert's going to school was raised. He was now full eight years of age, and quite old enough to make a beginning. His mother and sister had between them given him a good start in the "three R's" at home, for he was an apt pupil, and he was quite ready to enter a larger sphere.

At first his parents were somewhat undecided as to whether they would send him to a school presided over by a woman or a man. It was usual in Halifax for those who preferred the private to the public schools to send their boys for a year or two to a dame's school as a sort of easy introduction to school life; and in the very same street as that in which the Lloyds lived there was such a school where two rather gaunt and grim old-maid sisters aided one another in the application of primer and taws. To this institution Mrs. Lloyd thought it would be well for Bert to go. His father had no very decided views to the contrary, but on Bert himself being consulted, it became very clear that his mind was quite made up.

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"Please don't send me to 'Old Goggles' school, father," pleaded he, earnestly.

"'Old Goggles!' Why, Bert, what do you mean by calling Miss Poster by such a name as that?"

"It's most disrespectful," interrupted his mother, with a very much shocked expression, while Mr. Lloyd tried hard, but unsuccessfully, to conceal a smile beneath his moustache.

"Well, mother, that's what they all call her," explained Bert.

"Even though they do, Bert, you should not. Miss Poster is a lady, and you must act the gentleman toward her," replied Mrs. Lloyd. "But why don't you want to go to school there? Several boys about your own age are going."

"Oh, because a lot of girls go there, and I don't want to go to school with girls," was Master Bert's ungallant reply.

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Mr. Lloyd, who had evidently been much amused at the conversation, now joined in it by drawing Bert toward him and asking, in a half-serious, half-humorous tone:

"Is my boy Bert afraid of little girls?"

Bert's face flushed till it was crimson, and dropping his head upon his breast, he muttered:

"I'm not afraid of them, but I don't like 'em, and I don't want to go to school with 'em."

The fact of the matter was that Bert not only had his full share of the repugnance to the other sex common to all boys of his age, but he had besides a strong notion that it was not a manly thing to go to school with girls, and if there was one thing more than another that he aspired after, it was manliness.

Mr. Lloyd thoroughly understood his son's feelings, and felt disposed to humour them. Accordingly, lifting up his head, he gave him a kiss on the forehead, saying:

"Very well, Bert; we'll see about it. Since you have such decided objections to Miss Goggles'—I beg her pardon, Miss Poster's—excellent establishment, I will make inquiry, and see if I cannot find something that will suit you better. I want you to like your school, and to take an interest in it."

Bert's face fairly beamed at these words, and he heaved a huge sigh of relief which brought another smile out on his father's countenance.

"You're such a good father," said Bert, hugging his knees, and there the matter dropped for a few days.

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When it came up again, Mr. Lloyd had a new proposition to make. In the interval he had been making some inquiries, and had been recommended to send his boy to a school just lately established by an accomplished young lawyer, who had adopted that method of earning an honest penny while waiting for his practice to become more lucrative. It was a good deal of an experiment, Mr. Lloyd thought but possibly worth trying.

Accordingly, one fine morning in October, behold Master Bert in a rather perturbed frame of mind trotting along beside his father, who pretended not to be aware of his son's feelings, although at the same time seeking in every way to divert him. But it was not with much success. Bert felt thoroughly nervous over the new experience that awaited him. He had never seen Mr. Garrison, who was to be his teacher, and imagined him as a tall, thin man with a long beard, a stern face, a harsh voice, and an ever-ready "cat-o'-nine tails." As for his future schoolmates, they were no doubt a lot of rough, noisy chaps, that would be certain to "put him through a course of sprouts" before they would make friends with him.

If, then, such thoughts as these filled Bert's mind, it must not be wondered at that he lagged a good deal both as to his talking and walking, although he was always spry enough with both when out with his father. Much sooner than he wished they reached the building, a large rambling stone structure, only one room of which was occupied by the school; they climbed the broad free-stone staircase to the upper storey, knocked at a door from behind which came a confused hum of voices, and being bidden "Come in," entered a big room that at first seemed to Bert to be completely filled by a misty sea of faces with every eye turned right upon him. He cowered before this curious scrutiny, and but for his father's restraining grasp would probably have attempted a wild dash for the still unclosed door, when he heard his father saying:

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"Good-morning, Mr. Garrison; I have brought my boy to place him in your care for a while, if you will have him as a pupil." Looking up, Bert beheld a person approaching very different from the schoolmaster of his gloomy anticipations.

Mr. Garrison was indeed tall, but there the similarity ended. He was youthful, slight, and very attractive in appearance, his manner being exceedingly graceful and easy, as he came forward with a winning smile upon his countenance, and extending his right hand to Mr. Lloyd, placed the other upon Bert's shoulder, and said, in a mellow, pleasant voice:

"Good-morning, Mr. Lloyd. I shall be very glad indeed to have your boy in my school, and if he is anything like as good a man as his father, he will make one of my very best pupils."

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Mr. Lloyd laughed heartily at this flattering remark.

"Listen to that, Bert," said he. "When you are in any doubt just how to behave, you have only to ask yourself what I would do under the same circumstances, and act accordingly." Then, turning to Mr. Garrison, he said: "Perhaps you would like me to join your school, too, so as to set a good

example to the other boys."

"Right glad would I be to have you, Mr. Lloyd," answered Mr. Garrison, with a cordial smile. "Many a time I find my boys almost too much for one man to handle."

Bert, clinging fast to his father's hand, and half-hoping he was in earnest, felt a pang of disappointment when he replied:

"I'm afraid it's too late, Mr. Garrison. My school-days are past; except so far as I may be able to live them over with this little chap here. I will leave him with you now; do your best with him. He can learn well enough when he likes, but he is just as fond of fun as any youngster of his age." Then giving Bert an affectionate pat on the shoulder, and whispering in his ear, "Now, be a man, Bert," Mr. Lloyd went away, and Bert followed Mr. Garrison up to the desk, where his name, age, and address were duly entered in the register book.

The next business was to assign him a seat. A few questions as to what he knew showed that his proper place was in the junior class of all, and there accordingly Mr. Garrison led him. A vacancy was found for him in a long range of seats, extending from the door almost up to the desk, and he was bidden sit down beside a boy who had been eyeing him with lively curiosity from the moment of his entrance into the room. So soon as Mr. Garrison went away, this boy opened fire upon the new-comer.

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"Say, sonny, whats yer name?" he asked, with unhesitating abruptness.

Bert looked the questioner all over before replying. He was a short, stout, stubble-haired chap, evidently a year or two older than himself, with a broad, good-humoured face, and the inspection being, upon the whole, satisfactory, Bert replied, very pleasantly:

"Bert Lloyd—and what's yours?"

Ignoring the question put to him, the other boy gave a sort of grunt that might be taken as an expression of approval of his new schoolmate's name, and then said:

"Guess you don't live down our way; never seen you before, that I know of."

"I live in Fort Street. Where do you live?" replied Bert, giving question for question.

"I'm a West-ender," said the other, meaning that his home was in the western part of the city.

"But whats your name?" asked Bert again.

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"Oh, my name's Frank Bowser," was the careless reply. "But everybody calls me 'Shorty,' and you may as well, too."

"All right," said Bert. And the two began to feel quite good friends at once.

As the morning passed, and Bert came to feel more at home, he took in the details of his surroundings. Mr. Garrison's school consisted of some fifty boys, ranging in age from sixteen downward, Bert being about the youngest of them all. They all belonged to the better class, and were, upon the whole, a very presentable lot of pupils. Scanning their countenances curiously as they sat at their desks or stood up in rows before the teacher to recite, Bert noticed more than one face that he instinctively liked, and, being charmed with Mr. Garrison, and well pleased with his new friend "Shorty," his first impressions were decidedly favourable.

He had, of course, nothing to do that morning, save to look about him, but Mr. Garrison gave him a list of books to be procured, and lessons to be learned in them before the school broke up for the day; and with this in his pocket he went home in excellent spirits, to tell them all there, how well he had got on his first day in school.

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CHAPTER XI.

SCHOOL LIFE AT MR. GARRISON'S.

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Bert had not been long at Mr. Garrison's school before he discovered that it was conducted on what might fairly be described as "go-as-you-please" principles. A sad lack of system was its chief characteristic. He meant well enough by his pupils, and was constantly making spurts in the direction of reform and improvement, but as often falling back into the old irregular ways.

The fact of the matter was that he not only was not a schoolmaster by instinct, but he had no intention of being one by profession. He had simply adopted teaching as a temporary expedient to tide over a financial emergency, and intended to drop it so soon as his object was accomplished. His heart was in his profession, not in his school, and the work of teaching was at best an irksome task, to be got through with each day as quickly as possible. Had Mr. Lloyd fully understood this, he would never have placed Bert there. But he did not; and, moreover, he was interested in young Mr. Garrison, who had had many difficulties to encounter in making his way, and he wished to help him.

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In the first place, Mr. Garrison kept no record of attendance, either of the whole school, or of the

different classes into which it was divided. A boy might come in an hour after the proper time, or be away for a whole day without either his lateness or his absence being observed. As a consequence "meeching"—that is, taking a holiday without leave from either parents or teachers—was shamefully common. Indeed, there was hardly a day that one or more boys did not "meech." If by any chance they were missed, it was easy to get out of the difficulty by making some excuse about having been sick, or mother having kept them at home to do some work, and so forth. Schoolboys are always fertile in excuses, and, only too often, indifferent as to the quantity of truth these may contain.

Another curious feature of Mr. Garrison's system, or rather lack of system, was that he kept no record of the order of standing in the classes; and so, when the class in geography, for instance, was called to recite, the boys would come tumbling pell-mell out of their seats, and crowd tumultuously to the space in front of the desk, with the invariable result that the smaller boys would be sent to the bottom of the class, whether they deserved to be there or not. Then as to the hearing of the lesson, there was absolutely no rule about it. Sometimes the questions would be divided impartially among the whole class. Sometimes they would all be asked of a single boy, and if he happened to answer correctly,—which, however, was an extremely rare occurrence,—the class would be dismissed without one of the others being questioned.

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Another peculiarity of Mr. Garrison's was his going out on business for an hour or more at a time, and leaving the school in charge of one of the older boys, who would exercise the authority thus conferred upon him in a lax and kindly, or severe and cruel manner, according to his disposition. One of the boys generally chosen for this duty was a big, good-hearted fellow named Munro; another was an equally big, but sour-dispositioned chap named Siteman; and whenever Mr. Garrison showed signs of going out, there was always intense excitement among the boys, to see who would be appointed monitor, and lively satisfaction, or deep disappointment, according to the choice made.

It was a little while, of course, before Bert found all this out, and in the meantime he made good headway in the school, because his father took care that his lessons were well learned every evening before he went to bed; and Mr. Garrison soon discovered that whoever else might fail, there was one boy in Bert's classes that could be depended upon for a right answer, and that was Bert himself.

There was another person who noticed Bert's ready accuracy, and that was "Shorty" Bowser.

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"Say, Bert," said he one day, "how is that you always have your lessons down so fine? You never seem to trip up at all."

"Because father always sees that I learn 'em," answered Bert. "If I don't learn 'em in the evening, I've got to do it before breakfast in the morning."

"I wish my dad 'ud do as much for me; but he don't seem to care a cent whether I ever learn 'em or not," said poor Shorty, ruefully. For he was pretty sure to miss two out of every three questions asked him, and Mr. Garrison thought him one of his worst scholars.

"Won't your mother help you, then?" asked Bert, with interest.

"Got no mother," was the reply, while Shorty's eyes shone suspiciously. "Mother's been dead this good while."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Bert, in tones of genuine sympathy that went right to Frank Bowser's heart, and greatly strengthened the liking he had felt from the first for his new schoolmate.

It was not long before he gave proof of what he thought of Bert in a very practical way. They were for the most part in the same classes, and it soon became evident that Shorty felt very proud of his friend's accuracy at recitation. That he should remain at the foot while Bert worked his way up steadily toward the head of the class, did not arouse the slightest feeling of jealousy in his honest heart; but, on the contrary, a frank admiration that did him infinite credit.

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But it was just the other way with Bob Brandon, an overgrown, lanky boy, who seemed to have taken a dislike to Bert from the first, and seized every opportunity of acting disagreeably toward him. Being so much smaller, Bert had to endure his slights as best he could, but he found it very hard, and particularly so that Bob should prevent him from getting his proper place in his class. Again and again would Bert pass Bob, who, indeed, rarely knew his lessons; but so sure as the class reassembled, Bob would roughly shoulder his way toward the top and Bert would have to take a lower position, unless Mr. Garrison happened to notice what was taking place and readjusted matters, which, however, did not often occur.

This sort of thing had been going on for some time, until at last one day Bert felt so badly over it that when he went back to his seat he buried his head in his hands and burst out crying, much to the surprise of Shorty, who at once leaned over and asked, with much concern:

"What's the matter, Bert? Missed your lesson?"

Bert checked his tears and told his trouble.

"Sho! that's what's the matter, hey? I guess I'll fix Bob as sure as my name's Bowser."

"What'll you do?" asked Bert. "Tell the master?"

"No, sir. No tattling for me," replied Shorty, vigorously. "I'll just punch his head for him, see if I don't." [Pg 98]

And he was as good as his word. Immediately after the dismissal of the school, while the boys still lingered on the playground, Shorty stalked up to Bob Brandon, and told him if he didn't stop shoving Bert Lloyd out of his proper place in the classes he would punch his head. Whereat Bob Brandon laughed contemptuously, and was rewarded with a blow on the face that fairly made him stagger. Then, of course, there was a fight, the boys forming a ring around the combatants, and Bert holding his champion's coat and hat, and hardly knowing whether to cry or to cheer. The fight did not last long. Bob was the taller, but Frank the stouter of the two. Bob, like most bullies, was a coward, but Frank was as plucky as he was strong. Burning with righteous wrath, Frank went at his opponent hammer and tongs, and after a few minutes' ineffective parrying and dodging, the latter actually ran out of the ring, thoroughly beaten, leaving Frank in possession of the field, to receive the applause of his companions, and particularly of Bert, who gave him a warm hug, saying gratefully:

"Dear, good Shorty. I'm so glad you beat him."

That fight united the two boys in firmer bonds of friendship than ever, especially as it proved quite effective so far as Bob Brandon was concerned, as he needed no other lesson. It was curious how Bert and Frank reacted upon one another. At first the influence proceeded mainly from Bert to Frank, the latter being much impressed by his friend's attention to his lessons and good behaviour in school, and somewhat stirred up to emulate these virtues. But after Bert had been going to the school for some little time, and the novelty had all worn off, he began to lose some of his ardour and to imitate Frank's happy-go-lucky carelessness. Instead of being one of the first boys in the school of a morning, he would linger and loiter on the playground until he would be among those who were the last to take their places. He also began to take less interest in his lessons, and in his standing in the classes, and but for the care exercised at home would have gone to school very ill prepared. [Pg 99]

Frank Bowser was not by any means a bad boy. He had been carelessly brought up, and was by nature of rather a reckless disposition, but he generally preferred right to wrong, and could, upon the whole, be trusted to behave himself under ordinary circumstances, at all events. His influence upon Bert, while it certainly would not help him much, would not harm him seriously. He did get him into trouble one day, however, in a way that Bert was long in forgetting.

The winter had come, and over in one corner of the playground was a slide of unusual length and excellence, upon which the Garrison boys had fine times every day before and after school. Coming up one morning early, on purpose to enjoy this slide, Bert was greatly disappointed to find it in possession of a crowd of roughs from the upper streets, who clearly intended to keep it all to themselves so long as they pleased. While Bert, standing at a safe distance, was watching the usurpers with longing eyes, Shorty came up, and, taking in the situation, said: [Pg 100]

"Let 'em alone, Bert; I know of another slide just as good, a couple of squares off. Let's go over there."

"But, isn't it most school time?" objected Bert.

"Why, no," replied Shorty. "There's ten minutes yet. Come along." And thus assured, Bert complied.

The slide was farther away than Shorty had said, but proved to be very good when they did reach it, and they enjoyed it so much that the time slipped away unheeded, until presently the town clock on the hill above them boomed out ten, in notes of solemn warning.

"My sakes!" exclaimed Bert, in alarm. "There's ten o'clock. What will we do?"

"Guess we'd better not go to school at all. Mr. Garrison will never miss us," suggested Shorty.

"Do you mean to meech?" asked Bert, with some indignation.

"That's about it," was the reply. "What's the harm?" [Pg 101]

"Why, you know it ain't right; I'm not going to do it if you are." And Bert really meant what he said.

But, as luck would have it, on their way back to the school, what should they meet but that spectacle, one of the most attractive of the winter's sights in the eyes of a Halifax schoolboy, a fireman's sleigh drive. Driving gaily along the street, between lines of spectators, came sleigh after sleigh, drawn by four, six, or even eight carefully matched and brightly decked horses, and filled to overflowing with the firemen and their fair friends, while bands of music played merry tunes, to which the horses seemed to step in time.

Bert and Shorty had of course to stop and see this fine sight, and it chanced that when it was about one-half passed, one of the big eight horse teams got tangled up with a passing sleigh, and a scene of confusion ensued that took a good while to set right. When at length all was straightened out, and the procession of sleighs had passed, Shorty asked a gentleman to tell him the time.

"Five minutes to eleven, my lad," was the startling reply.

Shorty looked significantly at Bert. "Most too late now, don't you think?"

Bert hesitated. He shrank from the ordeal of entering the crowded schoolroom, and being detected and punished by Mr. Garrison, in the presence of all the others. Yet he felt that it would be better to do that than not go to school at all—in other words, meech. [Pg 102]

"Oh, come along, Bert," said Shorty; "old Garrison can do without us to-day."

Still Bert stood irresolute.

"Let's go down and see the big steamer that came in last night," persisted Shorty, who was determined not to go to school, and to keep Bert from going too.

Yielding more to Shorty's influence than to the attraction of the steamer, Bert gave way, and spent the rest of the morning playing about, until it was the usual time for going home.

He said nothing at home about what he had done, and the next morning went back to school, hoping, with all his heart, that his absence had not been noted, and that no questions would be asked.

But it was not to be.

Soon after the opening of the school when all were assembled and quiet obtained, Mr. Garrison sent a thrill of expectation through the boys by calling out, in severe tones, while his face was clouded with anger:

"Frank Bowser and Cuthbert Lloyd come to the desk."

With pale faces and drooping heads the boys obeyed, Frank whispering in Bert's ear as they went up:

"Tell him you were kept at home." [Pg 103]

Trembling in every nerve, the two culprits stood before their teacher. Mr. Garrison was evidently much incensed. A spasm of reform had seized him. His eyes had been opened to the prevalence of "meeching," and he determined to put a stop to it by making an example of the present offenders. He had missed them both from school the day before, and suspected the cause.

"Young gentlemen," said he, in his most chilling tones, "you were absent yesterday. Have you any reason to give?"

Frank without answering looked at Bert, while the whole school held their breath in suspense. Bert remained silent. It was evident that a sharp struggle was going on within. Becoming impatient, Mr. Garrison struck the desk with his hands, and said, sternly:

"Answer me this moment. Have you any excuse?"

With a quick, decided movement, Bert lifted his head, and looking straight into Mr. Garrison's face with his big brown eyes, said, clearly:

"No, sir. I meeched."

Quite taken aback by this frank confession, Mr. Garrison paused a moment, and then, turning to Frank, asked:

"And how about you, sir?"

Without lifting his head, Frank muttered, "I meeched, too," in tones audible only to his questioner. [Pg 104]

So pleased was Mr. Garrison with Bert's honesty, that he would have been glad to let him off with a reprimand; but the interests of good discipline demanded sterner measures. Accordingly, he called to one of his monitors:

"Munro, will you please go over to the Acadian School and get the strap?"

For be it known that Mr. Garrison shared the ownership of a strap with his brother, who taught a school in an adjoining block, and had to send for it when a boy was to be punished.

While Munro was gone, Bert and Frank stood before the desk, both feeling deeply their position, and dreading what was yet to come. When Munro returned, bearing the strap—a business-like looking affair, about two feet in length—Mr. Garrison laid it on the desk, and seemed very reluctant to put it in use. At length, overcoming his disinclination, he rose to his feet, and, taking it up, said:

"Cuthbert Lloyd, come forward!"

Bert, his head drooping upon his breast, and his face flushed and pale by turns, moved slowly forward. Grasping the strap, Mr. Garrison raised it to bring it down upon Bert's outstretched hand, when suddenly a thought struck him that brought a look of immense relief to his countenance, and he arrested the movement. Turning to the boys, who were watching him with wondering eyes, he said:

"Boys, I ask for your judgment. If Bert and Frank say, before you all, that they are sorry for what they have done, and will promise never to do it again, may I not relieve them of the whipping?" [Pg 105]

A hearty and unanimous chorus of "Yes, sir," "Yes, sir," came from the school at once.

"Now, my lads, do you hear that?" continued Mr. Garrison in a kindly tone, turning to the two offenders. "Will you not say you are sorry, and will never meech again."

"I am sorry, and promise never to do so again," said Bert, in a clear distinct voice, as the tears gathered in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, and won't do it again," echoed Frank, in a lower tone.

"That's right, boys," said Mr. Garrison, his face full of pleasure. "I am sure you mean every word of it. Go to your seats now, and we will resume work."

It took the school some little time to settle down again after this unusual and moving episode, the effect of which was to raise both Mr. Garrison and Bert a good deal higher in the estimation of every one present, and to put a check upon the practice of "meeching" that went far toward effecting a complete cure.

Although the result had been so much better than he expected, Bert felt his disgrace keenly, and so soon as he got home from school he told the whole story from the start to his mother, making no excuses for himself, but simply telling the truth.

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His mother, of course, was very much surprised and pained, but knew well that her boy needed no further reproaches or censure to realise the full extent of his wrong-doing. Bidding him, therefore, seek forgiveness of God as well as of her, she said that she would tell his father all about it, which was a great relief to Bert, who dreaded lest he should have to perform this trying task himself; and so the matter rested for the time.

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CHAPTER XII.

A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE.

When Mr. Lloyd heard the story of Bert's "meeching," it was evident that it hurt him sorely. He was quite prepared for a reasonable amount of waywardness in his boy, but this seriously exceeded his expectations. He could not, of course, put himself exactly in Bert's place, and he was inclined to think him guilty of far more deliberate wrong than poor Bert had for a moment contemplated.

Then, again, he was much puzzled as to what should be done with reference to Frank Bowser. He had evidently been Bert's tempter, and Bert ought, perhaps, to be forbidden to have any more to do with him than he could possibly help. On the other hand, if Bert were to be interdicted from the companionship of his schoolmates, how would he ever learn to take care of himself among other dangerous associations? This was a lesson he must learn some day. Should he not begin now?

So Mr. Lloyd was not a little bewildered, and his talk with Bert did not give him much light; for while Bert, of course, was thoroughly penitent and ready to promise anything, what he had to tell about Frank was simply how good-natured and generous and plucky he was, and so forth.

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The three of them, father, mother, and sister, held a consultation over the matter that night after Bert had gone to bed.

"I wish I felt more sure as to what is the wisest thing to do," said Mr. Lloyd. "We can't keep Bert in a glass case, and yet it seems as if we should do our best to protect him from every evil influence. I would like to know more about that Bowser boy."

"Bert tells me he has no mother," said Mrs. Lloyd, in sympathetic tones, "and from what he says himself, his father does not seem to take much interest in him. Poor boy! he cannot have much to help him at that rate."

"He's a good, sturdy little chap," put in Mary. "He came down from school with Bert one day. He seems very fond of him."

"Well, what had we better do?" asked Mr. Lloyd. "Forbid Bert to make a companion of him, or say nothing about it, and trust Bert to come out all right?"

"I feel as though we ought to forbid Bert," answered Mrs. Lloyd. "Frank Bowser's influence cannot help him much, and it may harm him a good deal."

"Suppose you put that the other way, mother," spoke up Mary, her face flushing under the inspiration of the thought that had just occurred to her. "Frank Bowser has no help at home, and Bert has. Why, then, not say that Bert's influence cannot harm Frank, and it may help him a good deal?"

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"Mary, my dear," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd, bending over to pat her affectionately on the shoulder, "that's a brilliant idea of yours. You're right. Bert should help Frank, and not let Frank harm him. We must make Bert understand that clearly, and then there will be nothing to fear."

And so the consultation closed, with Mary bearing off the honours of having made the best suggestion.

It was acted upon without delay. Calling Bert to him next morning while they were awaiting breakfast, Mr. Lloyd laid the matter before him:

"Bert," said he, kindly, "we were talking about you last night, and wondering whether we ought to forbid your making a companion of Frank Bowser. What do you think?"

"Oh, father, don't do that," answered Bert, looking up with a startled expression. "He's been so good to me. You remember how he served Bob Brandon for shoving me down in class?"

"Yes, Bert; but I'm afraid he's leading you into mischief, and that is not the sort of companion I want for you."

Bert dropped his head again. He had no answer ready this time.

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"But then there are always two sides to a question, Bert," continued Mr. Lloyd, while Bert pricked up his ears hopefully. "Why should you not help Frank to keep out of mischief, instead of his leading you into it? What do you say to that?"

Bert did not seem quite to understand, so his father went on:

"Don't you see, Bert? You must either help Frank to be better, or he will cause you to be worse. Now, which is it to be?"

Bert saw it clearly now.

"Why, father," he cried, his face beaming with gladness at this new turn to the situation, "I'll do my best to be a good boy, and I know Shorty will, too, for he always likes to do what I do."

"Very well then, Bert," said Mr. Lloyd, "that's a bargain. And now, suppose you invite Frank, or 'Shorty,' as you call him, to spend next Saturday afternoon with you, and take tea with us."

"Oh, father, that will be splendid," cried Bert, delightedly. "We can coast in the fort all the afternoon and have fun in the evening. I'm sure Shorty will be so glad to come."

The question thus satisfactorily settled, Bert took his breakfast, and went off to school in high glee and great impatience to see Frank, for the invitation he bore for him fairly burned in his mouth, so to speak.

As he expected, Frank needed no pressing to accept it. He did not get many invitations, poor chap! and the prospect of an afternoon at Bert's home seemed very attractive to him. He did enjoy himself thoroughly, too, even if he was so shy and awkward that Mrs. Lloyd and Mary were afraid to say very much to him; he seemed to find it so hard to answer them.

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But Mr. Lloyd got on much better with him. Although his boyhood was a good way in the past, he kept its memories fresh, and could enter heartily into the discussion of any of the sports the younger generation delighted in. He knew all the phrases peculiar to baseball, cricket, marbles, and so forth, and fairly astonished Frank by his intimate knowledge of those amusements, so that ere long Frank, without knowing just how it happened, was chatting away as freely as though he were out on the Garrison playground instead of being in Mr. Lloyd's parlour.

Having once got him well started, Mr. Lloyd led him on to talk about himself and his home, and his way of spending his time, and thus learned a great deal more about him than he had yet known. One fact that he learned pointed out a way in which Bert's influence could be exerted for good at once. Frank attended no Sunday school. He went to church sometimes, but not very often, as his father took little interest in church-going, but he never went to Sunday school; in fact, he had not been there for years. Mr. Lloyd said nothing himself on the subject to Frank. He thought it better to leave it all to Bert.

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After Frank had gone, leaving behind him a very good impression upon the whole, Mr. Lloyd told Bert of the opportunity awaiting him.

"Wouldn't you like to ask Frank to go with you to Sunday school, Bert?" he inquired.

"Of course, I would, father," replied Bert, promptly; "and I'm sure he'd go, too, and that Mr. Silver would be very glad to have him in our class."

When Bert, however, came to talk to Frank about it, he found him not quite so willing to go as he had been to accept the invitation for Saturday.

"I'm not anxious to go to Sunday school, Bert," said he. "I shan't know anybody there but you, and it'll be awfully slow."

"But you'll soon get to know plenty of people," urged Bert; "and Mr. Silver is so nice."

And so they argued, Frank holding back, partly because his shyness made him shrink from going into a strange place, and partly because, having been accustomed to spend his Sunday afternoons pretty much as he pleased, he did not like the idea of giving up his liberty. But Bert was too much in earnest to be put off. The suggestion of his father that he should try to do Frank some good had taken strong hold upon his mind, and he urged, and pleaded, and argued until, at last, Frank gave way, and promised to try the Sunday school for a while, at any rate.

Bert reported the decision at home with much pride and satisfaction. He had no doubt that when once Frank found out what a pleasant place the Sunday school was, and how kind and nice Mr. Silver—his teacher there—was, he would want to go every Sunday. [Pg 113]

The Sunday school of Calvary Baptist Church certainly had about as pleasant and cheery quarters as could be desired. For one thing, it was not held in a damp, dark, unventilated basement as so many Sunday schools are.

And, oh, what a shame—what an extraordinary perversion of sense this condemning of the children to the cellars of the churches is! Just as though anything were good enough for them, when in them lies the hope of the Church, and every possible means should be employed to twine their young affections about it! But these words do not apply to the Calvary Sunday School, for it was not held in a dingy basement, but in a separate building that united in itself nearly every good quality such an edifice should possess. It was of ample size, full of light and air, had free exposure to the sunshine, and was so arranged that every convenience was offered for the work of the school. Around the central hall were arranged rooms for the Bible classes, the infant class, and the library, so planned that by throwing up sliding doors they became part of the large room. The walls were hung with pictures illustrating Bible scenes, and with mottoes founded upon Bible texts; and finally, the benches were of a special make that was particularly comfortable. [Pg 114]

All this was quite a revelation to Frank when, after some little coaxing, Bert brought him to the school. His conception of a Sunday school was of going down into a gloomy basement, and being lectured about the Bible by a severe old man with a long grey beard. Instead of that, he found himself in one of the brightest rooms he had ever seen, and receiving a cordial welcome from a handsome young gentleman, to whom Bert had just said:

"This is my friend Frank, Mr. Silver. He's going to come to school with me after this."

"Very glad indeed to have you, Frank," said Mr. Silver, giving him a warm grasp of the hand. "Sit right down with Bert, and make yourself at home."

And Frank sat down, so surprised and pleased with everything as to be half inclined to wonder if he was not dreaming. Then the fine singing, as the whole school, led by an organ and choir, burst forth into song, the bright pleasant remarks of the superintendent, Mr. Hamilton, Bert's ideal of a "Christian soldier," and the simple earnest prayer offered,—all impressed Frank deeply.

No less interesting did he find Mr. Silver's teaching of the lesson. Mr. Silver attached great importance to his work in the Sunday school. Nothing was permitted to interfere with thorough preparation for it, and he always met his class brimful of information, illustration, and application, bearing upon the passage appointed for the day. And not only so, but by shrewd questioning and personal appeal he sent the precious words home to his young hearers and fixed them deep in their memories. He was a rare teacher in many respects, and Bert was very fond of him. Frank did not fail to be attracted by him. As he and Bert left the school together, Bert asked: [Pg 115]

"Well, Frank, how do you like my Sunday school?"

"First rate," replied Frank, heartily. "Say, but isn't Mr. Silver nice? Seems as though I'd known him for ever so long instead of just to-day."

"Guess he is nice," said Bert. "He's just the best teacher in the school. You'll come every Sunday now, won't you, Frank?"

"I think so," answered Frank; "I might just as well be going there as loafing about on Sunday afternoon doing nothing."

Mr. Lloyd was very much pleased when he heard of Bert's success in getting Frank to the Sunday school. He recognised in Bert many of those qualities which make a boy a leader among his companions, and his desire was that his son's influence should always tell for that which was manly, pure, and upright. To get him interested in recruiting for the Sunday school was a very good beginning in church work, and Mr. Lloyd felt thankful accordingly.

Neither was he alone in feeling pleased and thankful. Mr. John Bowser, Frank's father, although he showed great indifference to both the intellectual and moral welfare of his boy, was, nevertheless, not opposed to others taking an interest in him. He cared too little about either church or Sunday school to see that Frank was a regular attendant. But he was very willing that somebody else should take an interest in the matter. Moreover, he felt not a little complacency over the fact that his son was chosen as a companion by Lawyer Lloyd's son. Engrossed as he was in the making of money, a big, burly, gruff, uncultured contractor, he found time somehow to acquire a great respect for Mr. Lloyd. He thought him rather too scrupulous and straightforward a man to be *his* lawyer, but he admired him greatly, nevertheless; and, although he said nothing about it, secretly congratulated himself upon the way things were going. He had little idea that the circle of influence Bert had unconsciously started would come to include him before its force would be spent. [Pg 116]

CHAPTER XIII.

BERT AT HOME.

It was an article of faith in the Lloyd family that there was not a house in Halifax having a pleasanter situation than theirs, and they certainly had very good grounds for their belief. Something has already been told about its splendid view of the broad harbour, furrowed with white-capped waves, when of an afternoon the breeze blew in smartly from the great ocean beyond; of its snug security from northern blasts; of the cosy nook it had to itself in a quiet street; and of its ample exposure to the sunshine. But, perhaps, the chief charm of all was the old fort whose grass-grown casemates came so close to the foot of the garden, that ever since Bert was big enough to jump, he had cherished a wild ambition to leap from the top of the garden fence to the level top of the nearest casemate.

This old fort, with its long, obsolete, muzzle-loading thirty-two pounders, was associated with Bert's earliest recollection. His nurse had carried him there to play about in the long, rank grass underneath the shade of the wide-spreading willows that crested the seaward slope before he was able to walk; and ever since, summer and winter, he had found it his favourite playground.

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The cannons were an unfailing source of delight to him. Mounted high upon their cumbrous carriages, with little pyramids of round iron balls that would never have any other use than that of ornament lying beside them, they made famous playthings. He delighted in clambering up and sitting astride their smooth, round bodies as though they were horses; or in peering into the mysterious depths of their muzzles. Indeed, once when he was about five years old he did more than peer in. He tried to crawl in, and thereby ran some risk of injury.

He had been playing ball with some of the soldier's children, and seemed so engrossed in the amusement that his mother, who had taken him into the fort, thought he might very well be left for a while, and so she went off some little distance to rest in quiet, in a shady corner. She had not been there more than a quarter of an hour, when she was startled by the cries of the children, who seemed much alarmed over something; and hastening back to where she had left Bert, she beheld a sight that would have been most ludicrous if it had not been so terrifying.

Protruding from the mouth of one of the cannons, and kicking very vigorously, were two sturdy, mottled legs that she instantly recognised as belonging to her son, while from the interior came strange muffled sounds that showed the poor little fellow was screaming in dire affright, as well he might in so distressing a situation. Too young to be of any help, Bert's playmates were gathered about him crying lustily, only one of them having had the sense to run off to the carpenter's shop near by to secure assistance.

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"Fortunately, a big soldier came along, and, slipping both hands as far up on Bert's body as he could reach, with a strong, steady pull drew him out of the

Mrs. Lloyd at once grasped Bert's feet and strove to pull him out, but found it no easy matter. In his efforts to free himself he had only stuck the more firmly, and was now too securely fastened for Mrs. Lloyd to extricate him. Fortunately, however, a big soldier came along at this juncture, and, slipping both hands as far up on Bert's body as he could reach, grasped him firmly, and with one strong, steady pull, drew him out of the cannon.

When he got him out, Bert presented so comical a spectacle that his stalwart rescuer had to lay him down and laugh until the tears rolled down his cheeks. Mrs. Lloyd, too, relieved from all anxiety, and feeling a reaction from her first fright, could not help following his example. His face, black with grime, which was furrowed with tears, his hands even blacker, his nice clothes smutched and soiled, and indeed, his whole appearance suggested a little chimney-sweep that had forgotten to put on his working clothes before going to business. Bert certainly was enough to make even the gravest laugh.

Beyond a bruise or two, he was, however, not a whit the worse for his curious experience, which had come about in this way:—While they were playing with the ball, one of the children had, out of mischief, picked it up and thrown it into the cannon, where it had stayed. They tried to get it out by means of sticks, but could not reach it. Then Bert, always plucky and enterprising to the verge of rashness, undertook to go after the ball himself. The other boys at once joined forces to lift him up and push him into the dark cavern, and then alarmed by his cries and unavailing struggles to get out again, began to cry themselves, and thus brought Mrs. Lloyd to the scene.

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Mr. Lloyd was very much amused when he heard about Bert's adventure.

"You've beaten Shakespeare, Bert," said he, after a hearty laugh, as Mrs. Lloyd graphically described the occurrence. "For Shakespeare says a man does not seek the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth, until he becomes a soldier, but you have found it, unless I am much mistaken, before you have fairly begun being a schoolboy."

Bert did not understand the reference to Shakespeare, but he did understand that his father was not displeased with him, and that was a much more important matter. The next Sunday afternoon, when they went for their accustomed stroll in the fort, Bert showed his father the big gun whose dark interior he had attempted to explore.

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"Oh, but father, wasn't I frightened when I got in there and couldn't get out again!" said he earnestly, clasping his father's hand tightly, as the horror of the situation came back to him.

"You were certainly in a tight place, little man," answered Mr. Lloyd, "and the next time your ball gets into one of the cannons you had better ask one of the artillerymen to get it out for you. He will find it a much easier job than getting you out."

Bert loved the old fort and its cannons none the less because of his adventure, and as he grew older he learned to drop down into it from the garden fence, and climb back again, with the agility of a monkey. The garden itself was not very extensive, but Bert took a great deal of pleasure in it, too, for he was fond of flowers—what true boy, indeed, is not?—and it contained a large number within its narrow limits, there being no less than two score rose bushes of different varieties, for instance. The roses were very plenteous and beautiful when in their prime, but at opposite corners of the little garden stood two trees that had far more interest for Bert than all the rose trees put together. These were two apple trees, planted, no one knew just how or when, which had been allowed to grow up at their own will, without pruning or grafting, and, as a consequence, were never known to produce fruit that was worth eating. Every spring they put forth a brave show of pink and white blossoms, as though this year, at all events, they were going to do themselves credit, and every autumn the result appeared in half-a-dozen hard, small, sour, withered-up apples that hardly deserved the name. And yet, although these trees showed no signs of repentance and amendment, Bert, with the quenchless hopefulness of boyhood, never quite despaired of their bringing forth an apple that he could eat without having his mouth drawn up into one tight pucker. Autumn after autumn he would watch the slowly developing fruit, trusting for the best. It always abused his confidence, however, but it was a long time before he finally gave it up in despair.

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At one side of the garden stood a neat little barn that was also of special interest to Bert, for, besides the stall for the cow, there was another, still vacant, which Mr. Lloyd had promised should have a pony for its tenant so soon as Bert was old enough to be trusted with such a playmate.

Hardly a day passed that Bert did not go into the stable, and, standing by the little stall, wonder to himself how it would look with a pretty pony in it. Of course, he felt very impatient to have the pony, but Mr. Lloyd had his own ideas upon that point, and was not to be moved from them. He thought that when Bert was ten years old would be quite time enough, and so there was nothing to do but to wait, which Bert did, with as much fortitude as he could command.

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Whatever might be the weather outside, it seemed always warm and sunny indoors at Bert's home. The Lloyds lived in an atmosphere of love, both human and Divine. They loved one another dearly, but they loved God still more, and lived close to Him. Religion was not so much expressed as implied in their life. It was not in the least obtrusive, yet one could never mistake their point of view. Next to its sincerity, the strongest characteristic of their religion was its cheeriness. They saw no reason why the children of the King should go mourning all their days; on the contrary,

was it not rather their duty, as well as their privilege, to establish the joy of service?

Brought up amid such influences, Bert was, as a natural consequence, entirely free from those strange misconceptions of the true character of religion which keep so many of the young out of the kingdom. He saw nothing gloomy or repellent in religion. That he should love and serve God seemed as natural to him as that he should love and serve his parents. Of their love and care he had a thousand tokens daily. Of the Divine love and care he learned from them, and that they should believe in it was all the reason he required for his doing the same. He asked no further evidence.

There were, of course, times when the spirit of evil stirred within him, and moved him to rebel against authority, and to wish, as he put it himself one day when reminded of the text, "Thou God seest me," that "God would let him alone for a while, and not be always looking at him." But then he wasn't an angel by any means, but simply a hearty, healthy, happy boy, with a fair share of temper, and as much fondness for having his own way as the average boy of his age.

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His parents were very proud of him. They would have been queer parents if they were not. Yet they were careful to disguise it from him as far as possible. If there was one thing more than another that Mr. Lloyd disliked in children, and, therefore, dreaded for his boy, it was that forward, conscious air which comes of too much attention being paid them in the presence of their elders. "Little folks should be seen and not heard," he would say kindly but firmly to Bert, when that young person was disposed to unduly assert himself, and Bert rarely failed to take the hint.

One trait of Bert's nature which gave his father great gratification was his fondness for reading. He never had to be taught to read. He learned, himself. That is, he was so eager to learn that so soon as he had mastered the alphabet, he was always taking his picture books to his mother or sister, and getting them to spell the words for him. In this way he got over all his difficulties with surprising rapidity, and at five years of age could read quite easily. As he grew older, he showed rather an odd taste in his choice of books. One volume that he read from cover to cover before he was eight years old was Layard's "Nineveh." Just why this portly sombre-hued volume, with its winged lion stamped in gold upon its back, attracted him so strongly, it would not be easy to say. The illustrations, of course, had something to do with it, and then the fascination of digging down deep into the earth and bringing forth all sorts of strange things no doubt influenced him.

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Another book that held a wonderful charm for him was the Book of Revelation. So carefully did he con this, which he thought the most glorious of all writings, that at one time he could recite many chapters of it word for word. Its marvellous imagery appealed to his imagination if it did nothing more, and took such hold upon his mind that no part of the Bible, not even the stories that shine like stars through the first books of the Old Testament, was more interesting to him.

Not only was Bert's imagination vivid, but his sympathies were also very quick and easily aroused. It was scarcely safe to read to him a pathetic tale, his tears were so certain to flow. The story of Gellert's hound, faithful unto death, well-nigh broke his heart, and that perfect pearl, "Rab and His Friends," bedewed his cheeks, although he read it again and again until he knew it almost by heart.

No one ever laughed at his tenderness of heart. He was not taught that it was unmanly for a boy to weep. It is an easy thing to chill and harden an impressionable nature. It is not so easy to soften it again, or to bring softness to one that is too hard for its own good.

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With such a home, Bert Lloyd could hardly fail to be a happy boy, and no one that knew him would ever have thought of him as being anything else. He had his dull times, of course. What boy with all his faculties has not? And he had his cranky spells, too. But neither the one nor the other lasted very long, and the sunshine soon not only broke through the clouds, but scattered them altogether. Happy are those natures not given to brooding over real or fancied troubles. Gloom never mends matters: it can only make them worse.

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CHAPTER XIV.

AN HONOURABLE SCAR.

Bert was not learning very much at Mr. Garrison's school. He had some glimmering of this himself, for he said to Frank one day, after they had returned to their seats from having gone through the form—for really it was nothing more—of saying one of their lessons:

"It's mighty easy work getting through lessons at this school, isn't it, Shorty?" And Shorty, being of the same opinion, as he had happened not to be asked any questions, and, therefore, had not made any mistakes, promptly assented.

"That's so, Bert," said he, "and the oftener he asks Munro and you to say the whole lesson, and just gives me the go-by, the better I like it."

But Bert was not the only one who noticed that his education was not making due progress. His father observed it too, and, after some thinking on the subject, made up his mind that he would

allow Bert to finish the spring term at Mr. Garrison's, and then, after the summer holidays, send him to some other school.

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The winter passed away and spring drew near. Spring is the most dilatory and provoking of all the seasons at Halifax. It advances and retreats, pauses and progresses, promises and fails to perform, until it really seems, sometimes, as though mid-summer would be at hand and no spring at all. With the boys it is a particularly trying time of the year. The daily increasing heat of the sun has played havoc with the snow and ice, and winter sports are out of the question. Yet the snow and ice—or rather the slush they make—still lingers on, and renders any kind of summer sport impossible. For nearly a month this unsatisfactory state of affairs continues, and then, at length, the wet dries up, the frost comes out of the ground, the chill leaves the air, and marbles, rounders, baseball, and, later on, cricket make glad the hearts and tire the legs of the eager boys.

This spring was made memorable for Bert by an occurrence that left its mark upon him, lest, perhaps, he might be in danger of forgetting it. In front of the large building, in one room of which Mr. Garrison's school was held, there was a large open square, known as the Parade. It was a bare, stony place kept in order by nobody, and a great resort for the roughs of the city, who could there do pretty much what they pleased without fear of interruption from the police. On the upper side of this square, and over toward the opposite end from Mr. Garrison's, was another school, called the National, and having a large number of scholars, of a somewhat commoner class than those which attended Mr. Garrison's. It need hardly be said that the relations between the two schools were, to use a diplomatic phrase, "chronically strained." They were always at loggerheads. A Garrison boy could hardly encounter a National boy without giving or getting a cuff, a matter determined by his size, and riots, on a more or less extensive scale, were continually taking place when groups of boys representing the two schools would happen to meet.

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Bert was neither quarrelsome nor pugnacious by nature. He disliked very much being on bad terms with anyone, and could not understand why he should regard another boy as his natural enemy simply because he happened to go to a different school. More than once he had quite an argument with Frank Bowser about it. Frank was always full of fight. He hated every National boy as vigorously as though each one had individually done him some cruel injury. As sure as a collision took place, and Frank was present, he was in the thick of it at once, dealing blows right and left with all his might.

In obedience to the dictation of his own nature, strengthened by his father's advice, Bert kept out of these squabbles so far as he possibly could, and as a natural consequence fell under suspicion of being a coward. Even Frank began to wonder if he were not afraid, and if it were not this which kept him back from active participation in the rows. He said something about it to Bert one day, and it hurt Bert very much.

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"I'm not afraid, Shorty; you know well enough I'm not," said he, indignantly. "But I'm not going to fight with fellows who never did me any harm. It's wrong, that's what it is, and I'm not going to do it. I don't care what you say."

"But you ought to chip in sometimes, Bert, or the boys will think that you're a coward," urged Frank.

"I can't help it if they do, Shorty," was Bert's unshaken reply. "I don't feel like it myself, and, what's more, father doesn't want me to."

The very next day there was a row of unusual dimensions, brought about by one of the Garrison boys at the noon recess having started a fight with one of the National boys, which almost in a twinkling of an eye involved all the boys belonging to both schools then in the Parade. It was a lively scene, that would have gladdened the heart of an Irishman homesick for the excitement of Donnybrook Fair. There were at least one hundred boys engaged, the sides being pretty evenly matched, and the battle ground was the centre of the Parade. To drive the other school in ignominious flight from this spot was the object of each boyish regiment, and locked in hostile embrace, like the players in a football match when a "maul" has been formed, they swayed to and fro, now one side gaining, now the other, while shouts of "Go in, Nationals!" "Give it to them, Garrisons!" mingling with exclamations of anger or pain, filled the air.

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Bert was not present when the struggle began. In fact, it was well under way before he knew anything about it, as he had lingered in the schoolroom to ask Mr. Garrison some question after the other boys had run out. On going out upon the Parade, he was at first startled by the uproar, and then filled with an intense desire to be in the midst of the battle. But, remembering his father's injunctions, he paused for a moment irresolute. Then he noticed that the National boys were gaining the advantage, and the Garrison boys retreating before them. The next instant he caught sight of Frank Bowser, who had, of course, been in the forefront of the fight, left unsupported by his comrades, and surrounded by a circle of threatening opponents. Bert hesitated no longer. With a shout of "Come on, boys!" he sprang down the steps, rushed across the intervening space, and flung himself into the group around Frank with such force that two of the Nationals were hurled to the ground, and Frank set at liberty. Inspired by Bert's gallant onset, the Garrisons returned to the charge, the Nationals gave way before them, and Bert was just about to raise the shout of victory when a big hulk of a boy who had been hovering on the outskirts of the Nationals, too cowardly to come to any closer quarter, picked up a stone and threw it with wicked force straight at Bert's face. His aim was only too good. With a sharp thud, the stone struck Bert on his left temple, just behind the eye, and the poor boy fell to the ground

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insensible.

Instantly the struggle and confusion ceased, but not before Frank, in a passion of fury, had dealt Bert's cowardly assailant a blow that sent him reeling to the ground, and had then sprung to his friend's side.

"Get a doctor, some fellow," he shouted, holding up the pale, calm face, down which the blood was trickling from an ugly wound. "Let's carry him into the school!"

A dozen eager volunteers came forward. Carefully and tenderly Bert was lifted up, and carried into the schoolroom, which, fortunately, Mr. Garrison had not yet left. Placed upon one of the benches, with Frank's coat for a pillow, his head was bathed with cold water, and presently he revived, much to the relief and delight of the anxious boys standing round. A few minutes later the doctor arrived. With quick, deft fingers he stanchd the wound, covered it with plaster, enveloped it with bandages, and then gave directions that Bert should be sent home in a cab without delay.

"Why, Bert darling, what does this mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Lloyd, as she opened the door for him.

"Ask Frank, mother; my head's aching too bad to tell you," replied Bert, putting up his hand with a gesture of pain. And so, while Bert lay on the sofa, with his mother close beside him, and Mary preparing him a refreshing drink, Frank told the story in his own, rough, straightforward fashion, making it all so clear, with the help of a word now and then from Bert, that when he ended, Mrs. Lloyd, bending over her son, kissed him tenderly on the forehead, saying:

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"You know, Bert, how I dislike fighting, but I cannot find it in my heart to blame you this time. You acted like a hero."

In this opinion Mr. Lloyd, when he came home, fully concurred. He had not a word of blame for Bert, but made the boy's heart glad by telling him to always stand by his friends when they were in trouble, and then he would never be without friends who would stand by him.

Bert's wound took some time to heal, and when it did heal, a scar remained that kept its place for many years after. But he did not suffer for nought. The incident was productive of good in two directions. It established Bert's character for courage beyond all cavil, and it put an end to the unseemly rows between the schools. The two masters held a consultation, as a result of which they announced to their schools that any boys found taking part in such disturbances in future would be first publicly whipped, and then expelled; and this threat put an effectual stop to the practice.

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The days and weeks slipped by, and the summer vacation, so eagerly looked forward to by all schoolboys, arrived. None were more delighted at its arrival than Bert and Frank. Their friendship had grown steadily stronger from the day of their first acquaintance. They had few disagreements. Frank, although the older and larger of the two, let Bert take the lead in almost all cases, for Bert had the more active mind, and his plans were generally the better. Happily for the serenity of their relations, Bert, while he was fond enough of being the leader, never undertook to "boss" his companions. If they did not readily fall into line with him, why he simply fell into line with them, and that was an end of it. His idea of fun did not consist in being an autocrat, and ordering others about. He very much preferred that all should work together for whatever common purpose happened to be in their minds at the time; and thus it was, that of the boys who played together in the old fort, and waded in the shallow water that rippled along the sand beach at its foot, no one was more popular than Bert Lloyd.

They had fine fun during this summer vacation. Neither Frank nor Bert went out of the city, and they played together every day, generally in the fort; but sometimes Bert would go with Frank to the Horticultural Gardens, where a number of swings made a great attraction for the young folk, or down to the point where they would ramble through the woods, imagining themselves brave hunters in search of bears, and carrying bows and arrows to help out the illusion.

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The greatest enjoyment of all, however, was to go out upon the water. Of course, they were not allowed to do this by themselves. They were too young for that yet, but very often Mr. Lloyd would leave his office early in the afternoon in order to take them out in the pretty skiff he kept at the fort, or the whole family would spend the long summer evenings together on the water.

Bert was at his happiest then. Under his father's directions he was vigorously learning to row, and it was very stimulating to have his mother and sister as spectators. They took such a lively interest in his progress, that he did not mind if they did laugh heartily, but of course not unkindly, when sometimes in his eagerness to take an extra big stroke he would "catch a crab," and roll over on his back in the bottom of the boat, with his feet stuck up like two signals of distress. Bert accomplished this a good many times, but it did not discourage him. He was up and at it again immediately.

"Don't look at your oar, boys! Don't look at your oar! Keep your faces toward the stern," Mr. Lloyd would call out as Bert and Frank tugged away manfully, and they, who had been watching their oars to make sure that they went into the water just right, would answer "Ay, ay, sir!" in true sailor fashion; and then for the next few moments they would keep their eyes fixed straight astern, only to bring them back again soon to those dripping blades that had such a saucy way of getting crooked unless they were well watched.

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A more delightful place than Halifax harbour of a fine summer evening could hardly be desired.

The wind, which had been busy making "white caps" all the afternoon, went to rest at sundown. The ruffled waters sank into a glassy calm, the broad harbour becoming one vast mirror in which the rich hues of the sunset, the long dark lines of the wharves, and the tall masts of the ships sleeping at their moorings were reflected with many a quaint curve and curious involution. Boats of every kind, the broad-bottomed dory, the sharp-bowed flat, the trim keel-boat, the long low whaler, with their jolly companies, dotted the placid surface, while here and there a noisy steam launch saucily puffed its way along, the incessant throb of its engine giving warning of its approach. Far up the harbour at their moorings off the dockyard, the huge men-of-war formed centres around which the boats gathered in numerous squads, for every evening the band would play on board these floating castles, and the music never seemed more sweet than when it floated out over the still waters. Sometimes, too, after the band had ceased, the sailors would gather on the fore-castle and sing their songs, as only sailors can sing, winning round after round of applause from their appreciative audience in the boats.

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All of this was very delightful to Bert. So, too, was the paddling about on the beach that fringed the bottom of the fort's grassy slope, and the making of miniature forts out of the warm, dry sand, only to have them dissolve again before the advancing tide. Just as delightful, too, was the clambering over the boulders that marked the ruins of an old pier, searching for periwinkles, star-fish, and limpets, with never-ceasing wonder at the tenacity with which they held on to the rocks. Playing thus in the sunshine almost from dawn to dark, Bert grew visibly bigger and browner and sturdier, as the days slipped swiftly by.

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CHAPTER XV.

A CHANGE OF SCHOOLS.

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With the coming of September the holidays ended, and the question of schools once more was earnestly discussed in the Lloyd household.

"I have quite made up my mind not to send Bert back to Mr. Garrison," said Mr. Lloyd. "He seems to be learning little or nothing there. The fact of the matter is, what he does learn, he learns at home, and Mr. Garrison simply hears him recite his lessons."

"That's very true," assented Mrs. Lloyd. "I am only too glad to help Bert all I can in his studies, but I do not see the propriety of our having the greater part of the work of teaching him ourselves when we are at the same time paying some one else to do it. Do you, Mary?" she added, turning to her daughter.

"No, mother," replied Mary. "I suppose it is not quite fair. Yet I would feel sorry if Bert went to a school where everything was done for him, and nothing left for us to do. I like to help him. He gets hold of an idea so quickly; it is a pleasure to explain anything to him."

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"It seems to me that a school where there is a good deal of healthful rivalry among the boys would be the best place for Bert. He is very ambitious, and eager to be at the top, and in a school of that kind his energies would be constantly stimulated," said Mr. Lloyd. "What do you think, Kate?" addressing his wife.

"I think that would be very good, indeed," answered Mrs. Lloyd. "But do you know of any such school?"

"I have been hearing good accounts of Dr. Johnston's school, and he certainly seems to have a great deal of system in his methods, so that I am inclined to give him a trial."

"Oh, Dr. Johnston's is a splendid school," spoke up Mary, with enthusiasm. "Both of Edie Strong's brothers go there, and I have often heard them tell about it. But isn't Bert too young for it yet? He's only nine, you know, and they are mostly big boys who go to Dr. Johnston's."

"Not a bit!" said Mr. Lloyd, emphatically. "Not a bit! True, Bert is only nine, but he looks more like twelve, and thinks and acts like it, too. It will be all the better for him to be with boys a little older than himself. He will find it hard to hold his own among them, and that will serve to strengthen and develop him."

"Poor little chap!" said Mrs. Lloyd, tenderly. "I expect he will have a pretty hard time of it at first. I wish Frank were going with him, for he thinks all the world of Bert, and is so much older and bigger that he could be a sort of protector for him."

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"I'm glad you mentioned Frank, Kate," exclaimed Mr. Lloyd. "You've given me an idea. If I decide to send Bert to Dr. Johnston's, I will make a point of seeing Mr. Bowser, to ask him if he will not consent to send Frank, too. I hardly expect he will make any objection, as it is not likely there will be any difference in the expense."

"Oh, I do hope Frank will go, too," cried Mary, clapping her hands. "If he does, I shall feel ever so much easier about Bert. Frank is so fond of him that he won't let him be abused, if he can help it."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Lloyd, bringing the conversation to a close. "I will make some further

inquiries about Dr. Johnston's, and if the results are satisfactory I will see Mr. Bowser, and do what I can to persuade him to let Frank accompany Bert."

A few days after, Mr. Lloyd called Bert to him, while they were all sitting in the parlour, just after dinner.

"Come here, Bert," said he. "I want to have a talk with you about going to school. You know I don't intend you to go back to Mr. Garrison's. Now, where would you like to go yourself?"

"Oh, I don't know, father," replied Bert. "I don't want to go to the Acadian or National school anyway."

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"You need not feel troubled on that score. So far as I can learn, they are no better than the one you have been going to. But what do you think of Dr. Johnston's school? How would you like to become a pupil there?"

"Oh, father," exclaimed Bert, looking up, with a face expressive of both surprise and concern, "I'm not big enough for that school. They're all big boys that go there."

"But you're a big boy,—for your age, at all events,—Bert," returned Mr. Lloyd, with a reassuring smile, "and you'll soon grow to be as big as any of them."

"But, father," objected Bert, "they're awfully rough there, and so hard on the new fellows. They always hoist them."

"Hoist them?" inquired Mr. Lloyd. "What do you mean?"

"Why, they hang them up on the fence, and then pound them. It hurts awfully. Robbie Simpson told me about it. They hoisted him the first day."

"Humph!" said Mr. Lloyd. "I must say I don't like that, but at the worst I suppose you can survive it, just as the others have done. Is there any other reason why you wouldn't like to go to Dr. Johnston's?"

"Well, father, you know he has a dreadful strap, most a yard long, and he gives the boys dreadful whippings with it."

"Suppose he has, Bert; does he whip the boys who know their lessons, and behave properly in school?" asked Mr. Lloyd, with a quizzical glance at his son.

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Bert laughed. "Of course not, father," said he. "He only whips the bad boys."

"Then why should his long strap be an objection, Bert? You don't propose to be one of the bad boys, do you?"

"Of course not, father; but I might get a whipping, all the same."

"We'll hope not, Bert; we'll hope not. And now, look here. Would you like it any better going to Dr. Johnston's if Frank were to go with you?"

"Oh, yes indeed, father," exclaimed Bert, his face lighting up. "If Frank goes too, I won't mind it."

"All right then, Bert; I am glad to say that Frank is going, too. I went to see his father to-day, and he agreed to let him go, so I suppose we may consider the matter settled, and next Monday you two boys will go with me to the school." And Mr. Lloyd, evidently well-pleased at having reconciled Bert to the idea of the new school, took up his paper, while Bert went over to his mother's side to have a talk with her about it.

Mrs. Lloyd felt all a mother's anxiety regarding this new phase of life upon which her boy was about to enter. Dr. Johnston's was the largest and most renowned school in the city. It was also in a certain sense the most aristocratic. Its master charged high rates, which only well-to-do people could afford, and as a consequence the sons of the wealthiest citizens attended his school. Because of this, it was what would be called select; and just in that very fact lay one of the dangers Mrs. Lloyd most dreaded. Rich men's sons may be select from a social point of view, but they are apt to be quite the reverse from the moral standpoint. Frank Bowser, with all his clumsiness and lack of good manners, would be a far safer companion than Dick Wilding, the graceful, easy-mannered heir of the prosperous bank president.

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On the other hand, the school was undoubtedly the best in the city. A long line of masters had handed down from one to the other its fame as a home of the classics and mathematics with unimpaired lustre. At no other school could such excellent preparation for the university be obtained, and Bert in due time was to go to the university. Many a long and serious talk had Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd over the matter. True, they had great confidence in their boy, and in the principles according to which they had sought to bring him up. But then he was their only boy, and if their confidence should perchance be found to have been misplaced, how could the damage be repaired? Ah! well, they could, after all, only do their best, and leave the issue with God. They could not always be Bert's shields. He must learn to fight his own battles, and it was as well for him to begin now, and at Dr. Johnston's school.

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Bert himself took quite a serious view of the matter, too. He was a more than ordinarily thoughtful boy, and the prospect of going to Dr. Johnston's made his brain very busy. While the school was not without its attractions for him, there were many reasons why he shrank from

going to it. The most of the boys were, as he knew from often seeing them when on his way to and from Mr. Garrison's, older and bigger than himself, and, still worse, they were strangers to him with one or two exceptions. Of course, since Frank was to go with him, he would not mind that so much, but it counted for a good deal, notwithstanding.

Then he had heard startling stories of Dr. Johnston's severity; of his keeping boys in after school for a whole afternoon; of the tremendous whippings he gave with that terrible strap of his, the tails of which had, according to popular rumour, been first soaked in vinegar, and then studded with small shot; of the rigorous care with which the lessons were heard, every boy in the class having to show that he was well prepared, or to take the consequences. These, and other stories which had reached Bert's ears, now perturbed him greatly.

At the same time, he had no idea of drawing back, and pleading with his father to send him somewhere else. He saw clearly enough that both his father and mother had quite made up their minds that it would be the best thing for him, and he knew better than to trouble them with vain protests. He found his sister an inexpressible comfort at this time. He confided in her unreservedly, and her sweet, serene, trustful way of looking at things cleared away many a difficulty for him. It was easy to look at the bright side of affairs with Mary as an adviser, and the more Bert talked with her, the more encouraged he became. It was a happy coincidence, that on the Sunday preceding Bert's entrance into Dr. Johnston's school, the lesson for the Sabbath school should contain these ringing words: "Quit you like men; be strong." Mr. Silver had much to say about them to his class:

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"Only six simple words of one syllable each, boys," said he, as he gathered his scholars close about his chair, "but they mean a great deal. And yet, we do not need to look into some wise old commentator to tell us just what they do mean, for we can all understand them ourselves. They are not intended solely for grown-up people, either. They are for boys just like you. Now, let us look into them a bit. 'Quit you like men.' What kind of men, Bert? Any kind at all, or some particular kind?"

"Like good men, of course," replied Bert, promptly.

"Yes, Bert, that's right. And what does it mean to quit yourself like a good man?" asked Mr. Silver, again.

"To be always manly, and not be a baby," answered Walter Thomson, with a vigour that brought a smile to Mr. Silver's face.

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"Right you are, Walter; but is that all?"

"No," said Will Murray, "it means to do only what is right."

"That's it, Will. To be always manly, and to do only what is right. Now, boys, do you know that you are very apt to confuse these two things, and by forming mistaken notions as to what constitutes the first, you fail to do the second? Many boys think that it is manly to swear, to use tobacco, to be out late at night hanging round the street corners, and so they do all these things, although they are not right things to do. Have they the right ideas of manliness, boys?"

"No, sir; no, sir," answered the thoroughly interested class, in full chorus.

"No, indeed, boys, they have not," continued Mr. Silver. "There is over a hundred times more manliness in refusing to form those bad habits than in yielding to them. And that is just the kind of manliness I want all the boys of my class to have. 'Quit you like men,' boys, and then, 'be strong.' What does that mean?"

"To keep up your muscle," spoke out Frank, much to the surprise of everybody, for, although he listened attentively enough, he very rarely opened his mouth in the class.

Mr. Silver smiled. It was not just the answer he wanted, but he would not discourage Frank by saying so.

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"That's part of the answer, but not quite the whole of it," he said, after a pause. "It's a good thing for boys to keep up their muscle. God wants what is best in this world, and we can often serve Him with our muscle as well as with our minds. If Samson and Gideon and David had not been men of muscle, they could not have done such grand work for God as they did. I like to see a boy with legs and arms 'as hard as nails,' as they say. But the words 'be strong' here mean more than that, don't they, Bert?"

"They mean to be strong in resisting temptation, don't they, Mr. Silver?" replied Bert.

"Yes; that's just it. Quit you like men—be manly, and be strong to resist temptation. Now, boys, some people think that young chaps like you don't have many temptations. That you have to wait until you grow up for that. But it's a tremendous mistake, isn't it? You all have your temptations, and lots of them, too. And they are not all alike, by any means, either. Every boy has his own peculiar difficulties, and finds his own obstacles in the way of right doing. But the cure is the same in all cases. It is to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. That is the best way of all in which to be strong, boys. When the Philistines were hard pressed by the Israelites, they said one to another, 'Be strong and quit yourselves like men ... quit yourselves like men, and fight.' And they fought so well that Israel was smitten before them, and the ark of God was taken. And so, boys, whenever, at home, at school, or at play, you feel tempted to do what is wrong, I

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ask you to remember these words, 'Quit yourselves like men, be strong, and fight.' If you do, so sure as there is a God in heaven who loves you all, you will come off conquerors."

Mr. Silver's words made a deep impression upon Bert. The great ambition of his boyish heart was to be esteemed manly. Nor was he entirely free from the mistaken notions about manliness to which his teacher had referred. He had more than once been sneered at, by some of the boys at Mr. Garrison's, for refusing to do what seemed to him wrong. They had called him "Softy," and hinted at his being tied to his mother's apron-strings. Then, big, coarse Bob Brandon, always on the look-out to vent his spite, had nicknamed him "Sugar-mouth" one day, because he had exclaimed to one of the boys who was pouring out oaths:

"Oh, Tom! how can you swear so? Don't you know how wicked it is to take God's name in vain?"

These and other incidents like them had troubled Bert a good deal. He dreaded being thought a "softy," and had even at times felt a kind of envy of the boys whose consciences did not trouble them if they swore, or indulged in sly smokes, or defiled their mouths with filthy quids. Mr. Silver's words now came in good time to give a changed current to these thoughts. They presented to his mind a very different idea of manliness from the confused conception which had been his hitherto.

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"That's a good motto for a fellow, Shorty," said he, as the two friends walked home together from the school. "Mother asked me the other day to take a text for a motto. I think I'll take 'Quit you like men, be strong.'"

"I think I will, too, Bert," said Frank. "It's no harm if we have the same one, is it?"

"Why no, of course not," answered Bert. "We'll both have the same, and then we'll help one another all we can to do what it says."

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRST DAYS AT DR. JOHNSTON'S.

It was a fine, bright September morning when Mr. Lloyd, with Bert on one side of him and Frank on the other—for Frank had come down, so that he might go with Bert—made his way to Dr. Johnston's school. The school occupied a historic old building, whose weather-beaten front faced one of the principal streets of the city. This building had in times long past been the abode of the governor of the province, and sadly as it had degenerated in appearance, it still retained a certain dignity, and air of faded grandeur, that strongly suggested its having once been applied to a more exalted use than the housing of a hundred boys for certain hours of the day. So spacious was it, that Dr. Johnston found ample room for his family in one half, while the other half was devoted to the purposes of the school. At the rear, a cluster of shabby outbuildings led to a long narrow yard where tufts of rank, coarse grass, and bunches of burdocks struggled hard to maintain their existence in spite of fearful odds.

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The boys' hearts were throbbing violently as Mr. Lloyd rang the bell. The door was opened readily by a boy, who was glad of the excuse to leave his seat, and he entered the schoolroom, followed by his charges. The room was long, narrow, and low-ceilinged, and was divided into two unequal portions by a great chimney, on either side of which a passage had been left. At the farther end, occupying the central space between two windows, was the doctor's desk, or throne it might more properly be called; for never did autocrat wield more unquestioned authority over his subjects than did Dr. Johnston over the hundred and odd scholars who composed his school. In front of him, running down the centre of the room, and on either hand, following the walls, were long lines of desks, at which sat boys of all sorts, and of all ages, from ten to eighteen. As Mr. Lloyd entered, those nearest the door looked up, and seeing the new-comers, proceeded to stare at them with a frank curiosity that made Bert feel as though he would like to hide in one of his father's coat-tail pockets.

They turned away pretty quickly, however, when Dr. Johnston, leaving his desk, came down to meet Mr. Lloyd, and as he passed between the lines, every head was bent as busily over the book or slate before it, as though its attention had never been distracted.

Considering that Dr. Johnston was really a small, slight man, it was surprising what an idea of stately dignity his appearance conveyed. He could hardly have impressed Bert with a deeper feeling of respect from the outset, if he had been seven feet high, instead of only a little more than five. He was a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, and wore at all times a long black gown, reaching nearly to his ankles, which set off to the best advantage the spare, straight figure, and strong dark face. The habitual expression of that face when in repose was of thoughtful severity, and yet if one did but scan it closely enough, the stern mouth was seen to have a downward turn at its corners that hinted at a vein of humour lying hid somewhere. The hint was well-sustained, for underneath all his sternness and severity the doctor concealed a playful humour, that at times came to the surface, and gratefully relieved his ordinary grimness.

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As he walked down from his desk to meet Mr. Lloyd, he looked very pleasant indeed; and Bert felt his nervousness a little calmed as, holding out his thin, white and yet muscular hand, Dr.

Johnston said, cordially:

"Good-morning, Mr. Lloyd. I presume these are the two boys you spoke to me about."

"They are, Dr. Johnston," Mr. Lloyd replied. "I brought them in good time so that they might learn as much as possible about the ways of the school the first day."

"You did well, Mr. Lloyd. It is important to have a good beginning in everything that is worth doing," said the doctor; then, turning to Bert, he slipped his hand under his chin, and lifting his head so that he might look him full in the face, added, with a smile, "I need hardly ask which of these boys is yours, for this one betrays his paternity in every feature."

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"You have hit the mark, doctor," said Mr. Lloyd, smiling in his turn. "This is my son Cuthbert, at your service, and this is Frank Bowser, his inseparable companion."

"Quite a case of Damon and Pythias, eh?" said the doctor, whose devotion to the classics was such that his one great regret was that he had not lived in the time of Horace.

"Yes, something of the kind," rejoined Mr. Lloyd; "and I would be very glad if you could manage to let them sit together so long as they behave themselves."

"We'll see, we'll see," was the doctor's non-committal response.

"Very well, then, doctor," said Mr. Lloyd, turning to leave. "I'll hand them over to you now. I am sure you will make the best of them, and that I am leaving them in very good hands. Good-bye, boys." And then, bending down, he whispered in Bert's ear, "Remember—quit you like men—be strong," and then left them.

As Mr. Lloyd disappeared through the door, the air of geniality the doctor had been wearing during the brief interview vanished from his countenance, and it relapsed into its wonted look of resigned severity.

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"Lloyd and Bowser, come with me to my desk," said he, turning his back upon them, and walking down the room. The boys followed very meekly, and on arriving at the desk the doctor entered their names in a huge book that lay open before him, using an old-fashioned quill pen that scratched so harshly as to send a shudder through Bert, who was very sensitive to such things.

"We will now see about seats for you both," continued the doctor. Then, raising his voice, he called out, "Mr. Snelling, will you please come here," and from the far end of the room a respectful voice responded "Yes, sir."

Looking in the direction whence the voice came, Bert saw an odd-looking man approaching, who, of course, was Mr. Snelling. He was of medium height, but quite as slight as the doctor himself. Many years at the schoolmaster's desk had given a stoop to his shoulders and a pallor to his face, that were in marked contrast to his chief's erect figure and swarthy countenance. But if his face was pale, his hair made a brave attempt to atone for this lack of colour, for it was the richest, most uncompromising red; and as though he delighted in its warm tints, Mr. Snelling allowed it to grow in uncropped abundance, and his favourite gesture was to thrust his fingers through its tangled mass. Beneath a white and narrow forehead were two small sharp eyes, that peered out keenly through a pair of gold-bowed spectacles, and were ever on the watch to detect the slightest misbehaviour among the urchins gathered around him.

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Bert's first impression of Mr. Snelling was not a favourable one, and as he stood by and heard Dr. Johnston say: "Mr. Snelling, here are two more pupils. This is Lloyd, and this is Bowser. They will go into your room for the present. Will you please see that desks are assigned them?"—he thought to himself that in spite of the doctor's grim appearance he would rather stay in his room than be handed over to Mr. Snelling.

However, he was not to be consulted in the matter, so he followed in the wake of Mr. Snelling, who, by the way, it should be explained, was the assistant master, having special charge of all the younger scholars, and the drilling of them in the English branches of learning. The classics and mathematics the doctor reserved for himself, and a better teacher of the former particularly there was not in all Halifax.

Mr. Snelling's portion of the room differed from the doctor's only in that it was not so well lighted and the seats were not quite so comfortable. The school being pretty full at the time, the securing of seats for the two new-comers required some rearranging, in the course of which changes had to be made that evidently did not by any means meet with the approbation of those who were immediately concerned; and Bert's spirits, already at a low ebb, were not much elevated by sundry scowling looks directed at him, and by one red-faced, irritable-looking chap seizing the opportunity when Mr. Snelling's back was turned to shake his fist at Bert and Frank, and mutter loudly enough for them to hear:

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"I'll punch the heads of you both at recess, see if I don't."

At length, with some little difficulty, Mr. Snelling got matters arranged, and the two boys were placed in the farthest corner of the room, and, to their profound delight, side by side. Their accommodations were the reverse of luxurious. A wooden bench, destitute of back, and shiny from the friction of dear knows how many restless sitters; a sloping desk, cut and carved by careless knives, and having underneath an open shelf upon which the books, slate, cap, and lunch might be put—that was the sum total. Yet, after all, what more do schoolboys really need, or can

be safely intrusted with?

Feeling very strange and nervous, Bert and Frank took their seats, and slipping their caps under the desk—they were both wearing that serviceable form of headgear known as the Glengarry—they did their best to seem composed, and to take in their surroundings. The gaunt, unlovely room was soon inspected, and from it they turned their attention to its occupants. Mr. Snelling has already been described. To the left of his desk, and extending row upon row, one behind the other, were desks filled with boys of different ages and sizes. In front of him was an open space, in which the classes stood when reciting lessons to him, and across this space was another line of desks placed close to the wall, which were assigned to the oldest boys in the room.

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Not a familiar or friendly face could the new-comers find, but instead, they saw many that seemed to take pleasure in making them feel, if possible, still more ill at ease, by fixing upon them a cold, indifferent stare, or even an ugly grimace. The only ray of light was that which came from the sweet countenance of a blue-eyed, fair-haired boy, who, catching Bert's eye, nodded pleasantly at him, as though to say, "I'm glad you've come; make yourself at home." And Bert resolved that he would make his acquaintance at the very first opportunity.

Having nothing to do but watch the other boys as they studied and recited, the morning dragged along very slowly for Bert and Frank, and they were immensely relieved when the noon recess was announced, and the whole school poured tumultuously out into either the yard or the street, according to their preference. The majority of the boys went into the street, and the two friends followed them, feeling not a little anxious as to what sort of treatment they might expect at the hands of their new companions. As it proved, however, they had nothing to fear, for it was an unwritten law of the Johnston school, that new boys should be left in peace for the first day; and accordingly Frank and Bert were permitted to stand about and watch the others enjoying themselves without interruption. No one asked them to join in the games, although, no doubt, had they done so of their own accord, no one would have objected. After they had been there a few minutes, Bert heard a soft voice behind him saying:

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"It's horrid to be a new boy, isn't it? When I was a new boy I felt so frightened. Do you feel frightened?" And turning round he saw beside him the blue-eyed, fair-haired boy whose pleasant face had attracted his attention in the school.

"I don't think I feel just frightened," he answered, with a smile. "But I can't say I feel very much at home yet."

"Oh, my! But it will be very much worse to-morrow," said the new acquaintance.

"And why will it be worse?" inquired Bert, eagerly.

"Because they'll hoist you," said the other, with a nervous glance around, as though he feared being overheard.

"Does it hurt dreadfully to be hoisted?" asked Bert, while Frank drew near, awaiting the reply with intense interest.

"Oh, yes; it does hurt dreadfully! But"—with a more cheerful air—"you get over it after a little while, you know."

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"Well, then, I guess I can stand it. If you got over it all right, so can I," spoke up Bert, manfully; then, turning to Frank, "And you can, too, can't you, Shorty?"

Frank shook his head doubtfully. "I *can* all right enough, but I don't know that I *will*. I've a mind to give them a fight for it, anyhow."

"Not a bit of use," said the blue-eyed boy, whose name, by the way, as he presently told the others, was Ernest Linton. "Not a bit of use. They'll only beat you the harder if you fight."

"We'll see," said Frank, with a determined air. "We'll see when the time comes."

Bert and Frank found Ernest a very bright and useful friend, and they had so many questions to ask him that they were very sorry when the ringing of a bell summoned them back to their seats, where they were kept until three o'clock in the afternoon, when school was over for the day.

At home that evening Bert recounted his experiences to three very attentive listeners, and his face grew very grave when he came to tell what Ernest had said about the "hoisting." Having never witnessed a performance of this peculiar rite by which for many years it had been the custom of the school to initiate new members, Bert had no very clear ideas about it, and, of course, thought it all the more dreadful on that account. But his father cheered him a great deal by the view he took of it.

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"See, now, Bert," said he. "It's just this way. Every boy in Dr. Johnston's school has been hoisted, and none of them, I suppose, are any the worse for it. Neither will you be. Take my advice and don't resist. Let the boys have it all their own way, and they'll like you all the better, and let you off all the easier."

"Very well, father, I'll do just as you say," responded Bert. "And when I come home to-morrow afternoon I'll tell you all about it." And feeling in much better spirits than he had been in all day, Bert went off to bed, and to sleep, as only a tired schoolboy in sturdy health can sleep.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOISTING.

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Mrs. Lloyd gave Bert a more than usually affectionate kiss as he started off for school next morning, and his father called after him:

"Remember, Bert, quit you like a man."

Yet who could blame the little fellow if his heart throbbed with unwonted vigour all that morning, and that he watched the clock's hands anxiously as they crept slowly, but steadily, round the dial, yellow with age and service.

Frank had adopted an unconcerned, if not defiant air, which told plainly enough that he had no idea of submitting quietly to the inevitable ordeal. He was a born fighter. Strength, endurance, courage were expressed in every line of his body. Indeed, as was seen in the matter of the rows between the Garrison and the National boys, he thought a good lively tussle to be fine fun, and never missed a chance of having one.

The two boys were carefully examined by both Dr. Johnston and Mr. Snelling as to the extent of their learning in the course of the morning, and assigned to classes accordingly. They were given the same work: English grammar and history, arithmetic, geography, Latin grammar, &c., and a list given them of the books they would need to procure. They were glad to find themselves in the same classes with Ernest Linton, who had been only half-a-year at the school before them, for he seemed such a kind, willing, obliging little chap that they both became fond of him at once.

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When recess came he slipped up to Bert and whispered in his ear:

"Stay in school, and then they can't get at you. Mr. Snelling always stays, and they daren't come in for you."

"Not a bit of it," said Bert, emphatically. "The sooner it's over the better. Come along, Shorty." And they marched bravely out, with Ernest following closely behind.

As they stepped into the street, they found fifty or more of the boys gathered about the door, evidently awaiting them. Instantly the cry was raised, "The new boys—hoist them! hoist them!" And half-a-dozen hands were laid upon Bert, who led the van, while others seized Frank to prevent his running away. Bert made no resistance. Neither did Frank, when he saw that his time had not yet come, as they were going to hoist Bert first. Clinching his fists, and hunching his shoulders in readiness for a struggle, he stood in silence watching Bert's fate.

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What that would be was not long a matter of uncertainty. In the midst of a noisy rabble of boys, many of whom were larger, and all older than himself, he was borne along to the foot of the high fence that shut in the yard which, as already described, was at the back of the school building. Perched on top of this fence, and leaning down with outstretched arms, were four of the largest lads, shouting at the top of their voices, "Bring him along; hoist him up, hoist him!" The unresisting Bert was brought underneath this quartette, and then his hands were lifted up until they could grasp them in their own. So soon as this was done, a pull all together on their part hoisted him up from the ground, three feet at least, and then his legs were seized, lest he should be tempted to kick. The next moment, as perfectly helpless, and looking not unlike a hawk nailed to a barn-door by way of warning to kindred robbers, Bert hung there, doing his best to keep a smile on his face, but in reality half frightened to death. The whole crowd then precipitated themselves upon him, and with tight-shut fists proceeded to pummel any part of his body they could reach. Their blows were dealt in good earnest, and not merely for fun, and they hurt just as much as one might expect. Poor Bert winced, and quivered, and squirmed, but not a cry escaped from his close-set lips. The one thought in his mind was, "Quit you like men," and so buoyed up by it was he, that had the blows been as hard again as they were, it is doubtful if his resolution to bear them in silence would have faltered.

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He did not know how long he hung there. It seemed to him like hours. It probably was not longer than a minute. But, oh! the glad relief with which he heard one of the leaders call out:

"That's enough, fellows; let him down. He stood it like a brick."

The blows ceased at once; those holding his hands swung him a couple of times along the fence after the manner of a pendulum, and then dropped him to the ground, where he was surrounded by his late persecutors, who now, looking pleasant enough, proceeded to clap him on the back, and tell him very emphatically that he was "a plucky little chap"; "one of the right sort"; "true grit," and so forth.

Feeling sore and strained, from his neck to his heels, Bert would have been glad to slip away into some corner and have a good cry, just to relieve his suppressed emotions; but as he tried to separate himself from the throng about him, he heard the shout of "Hoist him! Hoist him!" again raised, and saw the leaders in this strange sport bear down upon Frank Bowser, who, still in the hands of his first captors had looked on at Bert's ordeal with rapidly rising anger.

The instant Frank heard the shout, he broke loose from those who held him, and springing up a

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flight of steps near by, stood facing his pursuers with an expression upon his countenance that looked ill for the first that should attempt to touch him. A little daunted by his unexpected action, the boys paused for a moment, and then swarmed about the steps. One of the largest rushed forward to seize Frank, but with a quick movement the latter dodged him, and then by a sudden charge sent him tumbling down the steps into the arms of the others. But the advantage was only momentary. In another minute he was surrounded and borne down the steps despite his resistance.

The struggle that ensued was really heroic—on Frank's part, at all events. Although so absurdly outnumbered, he fought desperately, not with blows, but with sheer strength of arm and leg, straining to the utmost every muscle in his sturdy frame. Indeed, so tremendous were his efforts, that for a time it seemed as if they would succeed in freeing him. But the might of numbers prevailed at length, and, after some minutes' further struggling, he was hoisted in due form, and pounded until the boys were fairly weary.

When they let him go, Frank adjusted his clothes, which had been much disordered in the conflict, took his cap from the hands of a little chap, by whom it had thoughtfully been picked up for him, and with furious flaming face went over to Bert, who had been a spectator of his friend's gallant struggle with mingled feelings of admiration for his courage and regret at his obstinacy.

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"They beat me, but I made them sweat for it," said he. "I wasn't going to let them have their own way with me, even if you did."

"You might just as well have given in first as last," replied Bert.

"But I didn't give in," asserted Frank. "That's just the point. They were too many for me, of course, and I couldn't help myself at last, but I held out as long as I could."

"Anyway, it's over now," said Bert, "and it won't bother us any more. But there's one thing I've made up my mind to: I'm not going to have anything to do with hoisting other new boys. I don't like it, and I won't do it."

"No more will I, Bert," said Frank. "It's a mean business; a whole crowd of fellows turning on one and beating him like that."

Just then the bell rang, and all the boys poured back into the schoolroom for the afternoon session.

Each in his own way, Bert and Frank had made a decidedly favourable impression upon their schoolmates. No one mistook Bert's passive endurance for cowardice. His bearing had been too brave and bright for that. Neither did Frank's vigorous resistance arouse any ill-feeling against him. Boys are odd creatures. They heartily admire and applaud the fiery, reckless fellow, who takes no thought for the consequences, and yet they thoroughly appreciate the quiet, cool self-command of the one who does not move until he knows just what he is going to do. And so they were well pleased with both the friends, and quite ready to admit them into the full fellowship of the school.

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The Lloyds were greatly interested by Bert's account of the hoisting. They praised him for his self-control, and Frank for his plucky fight against such odds, and they fully agreed with Bert that hoisting was a poor business at best, and that he would be doing right to have nothing to do with it.

"Perhaps some day or other you'll be able to have it put a stop to, Bert," said his mother, patting his head fondly. "It would make me very proud if my boy were to become a reformer before he leaves school."

"I'm afraid there's not much chance of that, mother," answered Bert. "The boys have been hoisting the new chaps for ever so many years, and Dr. Johnston has never stopped them."

That was true. Although he feigned to know nothing about it, the doctor was well aware of the existence of this practice peculiar to his school, but he never thought of interfering with the boys. It was a cardinal principle with him that the boys should be left pretty much to themselves at recess. So long as they did their duty during the school hours, they could do as they pleased during the play hour. Moreover, he was a great admirer of manliness in his boys. He would have been glad to find in everyone of them the stoical indifference to pain of the traditional Indian. Consequently, fair stand-up fights were winked at, and anything like tattling or tale-bearing sternly discouraged. He had an original method of expressing his disapprobation of the latter, which will be illustrated further on. Holding those views, therefore, he was not likely to put his veto upon "hoisting."

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As the days went by, Bert rapidly mastered the ways of the school, and made many friends among his schoolmates. He found the lessons a good deal harder than they had been at Mr. Garrison's. And not only so, but the method of hearing them was so thorough that it was next to impossible for a boy who had come ill-prepared to escape detection. Dr. Johnston did not simply hear the lesson; he examined his scholars upon it, and nothing short of full acquaintance with it would content him. He had an original system of keeping the school record, which puzzled Bert very much, and took him a good while to understand.

On the doctor's desk lay a large book, something like a business ledger. One page was devoted to each day. At the left side of the page was the column containing the boys' names, arranged in

order of seniority, the boy who had been longest in the school being at the head, and the last new boy at the foot. Each boy had a line to himself, running out to the end of the page, and these parallel lines were crossed by vertical ones, ruled from the top to the bottom of the page, and having at the top the names of all the different classes; so that the page when ready for its entries resembled very much a checker board, only that the squares were very small, and exceedingly numerous. Just how these squares, thus standing opposite each name, should be filled, depended upon the behaviour of the owner of that name, and his knowledge of his lessons.

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If Bert, for instance, recited his grammar lesson without a slip, the letter B—standing for *bene*, well—was put in the grammar column. If he made one mistake, the entry was V B, *vix bene*—scarcely well; if two mistakes, Med, *mediocriter*—middling; and if three, M, *male*—badly, equivalent to not knowing it at all. The same system prevailed for all the lessons, and in a modified form for the behaviour or deportment also. As regards behaviour, the arrangement was one bad mark for each offence, the first constituting a V B, the second a Med, the third an M, and the fourth a P, the most ominous letter of all, standing, as it did, for *pessime*—as bad as possible—and one might also say for punishment also; as whoever got a P thereby earned a whipping with that long strap, concerning which Bert had heard such alarming stories.

It will be seen that, by following out the line upon which each boy's name stood, his complete record as a scholar could be seen, and upon this record the doctor based the award of prizes at the close of the term. For he was a firm believer in the benefits of prize-giving, and every half-year, on the day before the holidays, a bookcase full of fine books, each duly inscribed, was distributed among those who had come out at the head in the different classes, or distinguished themselves by constant good behaviour.

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Once that Bert fully understood the purpose of this daily record, and the principle upon which the prize-giving was based, he determined to be among the prize winners at the end of the term. His ambition was fired by what the older boys told him of the beautiful books awarded, and the honour it was to get one of them. He knew that he could not please his father or mother better than by being on the prize list, and so he applied himself to his lessons with a vigour and fidelity that soon brought him to the notice of the observant doctor.

"I am glad to see you taking so much interest in your work," said he one morning, pausing, in his round of inspection, to lay his hand kindly upon Bert's shoulder as the latter bent over his slate, working out a problem in proportion. "A good beginning is a very important thing."

Bert blushed to the roots of his hair at this unexpected and, indeed, unusual compliment from the grim master, who, before the boy could frame any reply, passed out of hearing.

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"We'll do our best, won't we, Shorty?" said Bert, turning to his friend beside him.

"I suppose so," answered Frank, in rather a doubtful tone. "But your best will be a good deal better than mine. The lessons are just awful hard; it's no use talking."

"They are hard, Shorty, and no mistake. But you'll get used to them all right," rejoined Bert, cheerfully.

"I guess I'll get used to being kept in and getting whipped, first," grumbled Frank.

"Not a bit of it," Bert insisted. "You just stick at them and you'll come out all right."

The fact of the matter was, that poor Frank did find the lessons a little more than he could manage, and there were a good many more "V B's" and "Med's" opposite his name than "B's." He was a restless sort of a chap, moreover, and noisy in his movements, thus often causing Mr. Snelling to look at him, and call out sharply:

"Bowser, what are you doing there?" And Frank would instantly reply, in a tone of indignant innocence:

"Nothing, sir."

Whereupon Mr. Snelling would turn to Dr. Johnston, with the request:

"Will you please put a mark to Bowser for doing nothing, sir?" And down would go the black mark against poor Bowser, who, often as this happened, seemed unable ever to learn to avoid that fatal reply: "Nothing, sir."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES.

By the time autumn had made way for winter, Bert felt thoroughly at home at Dr. Johnston's, and was just about as happy a boy as attended this renowned institution. In spite of the profound awe the doctor inspired, he ventured to cherish toward him a feeling of love as well as of respect; and although Mr. Snelling did not exactly inspire awe, nor even much respect, he managed to like him not a little also. As for the boys—well, there were all sorts and conditions of them; good, bad, and indifferent; boys who thought it very fine and manly to smoke, and swear, and swap improper

stories, and boys who seemed as if they would have been more appropriately dressed in girls' clothes, so lacking were they in true manly qualities; while between these two extremes came in the great majority, among whom Bert easily found plenty of bright, wholesome companions.

There were some odd chaps at the school, with whose peculiarities Bert would amuse the home circle very much, as he described them in his own graphic way. There was Bob Mackasey, called by his companions, "Taffy the Welshman," because he applied the money given him by his mother every morning to get some lunch with, to the purchase of taffy; which toothsome product he easily bartered off for more sandwiches and cakes than could have been bought for ten cents, thus filling his own stomach at a very slight cost to his far-seeing mother.

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A big fat fellow in knickerbockers, by name Harry Rawdon, the son of an officer in the English army, had attained a peculiar kind of notoriety in the school, by catching flies and bottling them.

Then there was Larry Saunders, the dandy of the school, although undoubtedly one of the very plainest boys in it, who kept a tiny square of looking-glass in his desk, and would carefully arrange his toilet before leaving the school in the afternoon, to saunter up and down the principal street of the city, doing his best to be captivating.

Two hot-tempered, pugnacious chaps, by name Bob Morley and Fred Short, afforded great amusement by the ease with which they could be set at punching one another. It was only necessary for some one to take Bob Morley aside and whisper meaningly that Fred Short had been calling him names behind his back, or something of that sort equally aggravating, to put him in fighting humour. Forthwith, he would challenge Master Fred in the orthodox way—that is, he would take up a chip, spit on it, and toss it over his shoulder. Without a moment's hesitation, Fred would accept the challenge, and then the two would be at it, hammer and tongs, fighting vigorously until they were separated by the originators of the mischief, when they thought they had had enough of it. They were very evenly matched, and as a matter of fact did not do one another much harm; but the joke of the thing was that they never seemed to suspect how they were being made tools of by the other boys, who always enjoyed these duels immensely.

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Another character, and a very lovable one this time, was a nephew of the doctor's, Will Johnston by name, but universally called "Teter," an odd nickname, the reason of which he did not seem to understand himself. This Teter was one of those good-natured, obliging, reckless, happy-go-lucky individuals who never fail to win the love of boys. His generosity was equalled only by his improvidence, and both were surpassed by his good luck.

Bert conceived a great admiration for Teter Johnston. His undaunted courage, as exhibited in snowball fights, when, with only a handful of followers he would charge upon the rest of the school, and generally put them to flight; his reckless enterprise and amazing luck at marbles and other games; his constant championing of the small boys when tormented by the larger ones, more than one bully having had a tremendous thrashing at his hands;—these were very shining qualities in Bert's eyes, and they fascinated him so, that if "fagging" had been permitted at Dr. Johnston's, Bert would have deemed it not a hardship, but an honour, to have been Teter's "fag."

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In strong contrast to his admiration for Teter Johnston was his antipathy to Rod Graham. Rod was both a sneak and a bully. It was in his character as a sneak that he showed himself to Bert first, making profuse demonstrations of goodwill, and doing his best to ingratiate himself with him, because from his well-to-do appearance he judged that he would be a good subject from whom to beg lunch, or borrow marbles, and so on. But Bert instinctively disliked Rod, and avoided him to the best of his ability. Then Rod revealed the other side of his nature. From a sneak he turned into a bully, and lost no opportunity of teasing and tormenting Bert, who, being much smaller than he, felt compelled to submit, although there were times when he was driven almost to desperation. It was not so much by open violence as by underhanded trickery that Rod vented his spite, and this made it all the harder for Bert, who, although he was never in any doubt as to the identity of the person that stole his lunch, poured ink over his copy-book, scratched his slate with a bit of jagged glass, tore the tails off his glengarry, and filled the pockets of his overcoat with snow, still saw no way of putting a stop to this tormenting other than by thrashing Rod, and this he did not feel equal to doing. Upon this last point, however, he changed his mind subsequently, thanks to the influence of his friend Teter Johnston, and the result was altogether satisfactory as will be shown in due time.

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Bert's feelings toward Dr. Johnston himself were, as has been already stated, of a mixed nature. At first, he was simply afraid of him, but little by little a gentler feeling crept into his heart. Yet, there was no doubt, the doctor was far more likely to inspire fear than love. He wielded his authority with an impartial, unsparing hand. No allowance was ever made for hesitancy or nervousness on the part of the scholar when reciting his lesson, nor for ebullitions of boyish spirits when sitting at the desk. "Everything must be done correctly, and in order," was the motto of his rule. The whippings he administered were about as impressive a mode of school punishment as could be desired. The unhappy boy who had behaved so ill, or missed so many lessons as to deserve one, heard the awful words, "Stand upon the floor for punishment," uttered in the doctor's sternest tones. Trembling in every limb, and feeling cold shivers running up and down his back, while his face flushed fiery red, or paled to ashy white by turns, the culprit would reluctantly leave his seat, and take his stand in the centre aisle, with the eyes of the whole school upon him variously expressing pity, compassion, or perhaps unsympathetic ridicule.

After he had stood there some time, for he it known this exposure was an essential part of the punishment, he would see the doctor slowly rise from his seat, draw forth from its hiding-place

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the long black strap that had for so many years been his sceptre, and then come down toward him with slow, stately steps. Stopping just in front of him, the order would be issued: "Hold out your hand." Quivering with apprehension, the boy would extend his hand but half way, keeping his elbow fast at his side. But the doctor would not be thus partially obeyed. "Hold *out* your hand, sir!" he would thunder; and out would go the arm to its fullest length, and with a sharp swish through the air, down would come the strap, covering the hand from the wrist to finger tip, and sending a thrill of agony through every nerve in the body. Ten, twenty, thirty, or in extreme cases, even forty such stripes would be administered, some boys taking them as fast as the doctor could strike, so that the torture might soon be over, and others pausing between each blow, to rub their stinging palms together, and bedew them with their tears.

It was a terrible ordeal, no doubt, and one that would hardly be approved of to-day, the publicity uniting with the severity to make it a cruel strain upon a boy's nervous system. In all the years that Bert spent at Dr. Johnston's school he was called upon to endure it only once, but that once sufficed. The way it came about was this:

Bert one morning happened to be in a more than usually frolicsome mood, and was making pellets out of the soft part of the rolls he had brought for lunch, and throwing them about. In trying to hit a boy who sat between him and Mr. Snelling's desk, he somehow or other miscalculated his aim, and to his horror, the sticky pellet flew straight at the bald spot on top of Mr. Snelling's head, as the latter bent his shortsighted eyes over a book before him, hitting it in the centre, and staying there in token of its success. [Pg 181]

With angry face, Mr. Snelling sprang to his feet, and brushing the unlucky pellet from his shiny pate, called out so fiercely as to attract the doctor's attention:

"Who threw that at me?"

The few boys who were in the secret looked very hard at their books, while those who were not glanced up in surprise, and tried to discover the cause of Mr. Snelling's excitement.

"Who threw that at me?" demanded Mr. Snelling, again.

Bert, who had at first been so appalled by what he had done that his tongue refused to act, was about to call out "It was I, sir," when Rod Graham was seen to hold up his hand, and on Mr. Snelling turning inquiringly toward him, Rod, in a low, sneaking voice, said:

"It was Lloyd, sir; I saw him do it."

Mr. Snelling immediately called out, "Lloyd, come to my desk;" and Bert, feeling hot and cold by turns, went up to the desk, and stood before it, the picture of penitence. [Pg 182]

"Did you throw that pellet?" asked Mr. Snelling, in indignant tones.

"Yes, sir; but I didn't mean to hit you, sir," answered Bert, meekly.

"I know nothing about that," answered Mr. Snelling, too much excited to listen to any defence. "Follow me to Dr. Johnston."

Hastening into the presence of the stern headmaster, Mr. Snelling stated what had happened, and pointed to the trembling Bert as the culprit.

"How do you know he is the offender, Mr. Snelling?" inquired the doctor, gravely.

"Graham said he saw him do it, sir, and Lloyd confesses it himself," replied Mr. Snelling.

"Oh! indeed—that is sufficient. Leave Lloyd with me." And thus dismissed, Mr. Snelling returned to his desk.

"Lloyd, I am sorry about this. You must stand upon the floor for punishment," said the doctor, turning to Bert; and Bert, chilled to the heart, took his place upon the spot where he had so often pitied other boys for being.

Presently, drawing out his strap, the doctor came toward him:

"Hold out your hand, sir."

Bert promptly extended his right hand to the full. Swish! and down came the cruel strap upon it, inflicting a burning smart, as though it were a red-hot iron, and sending a thrill of agony through every nerve. Swish! And the left hand was set on fire. Swish! Swish! right and left; right and left, until twenty stripes had been administered; and then, turning on his heel, the doctor walked solemnly back to his desk. [Pg 183]

During all this torture not a sound had escaped Bert. He felt that the doctor could not do otherwise than punish him, and he determined to bear the punishment bravely; so closing his lips tightly, and summoning all his resolution, he held out one hand after the other, taking the blows as fast as the doctor could give them. But when the ordeal was over he hurried to his seat, and burying his head in his burning hands, burst into a passion of tears—for he could control himself no longer.

A few minutes later his attention was aroused by hearing the doctor call out, in a loud, stern voice:

"Graham, come forward."

Graham got out of his seat, and in a half-frightened way, slunk up to the doctor's desk.

"I understand, Graham," said the doctor, with his grimmest expression, "that you volunteered to tell Mr. Snelling who it was that threw that pellet. You know, or ought to know, the rule of this school as to informers. You will receive the same punishment that I have just given Lloyd. Stand upon the floor."

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Completely taken aback at this unexpected turn in affairs, Rod Graham mechanically took up his position, looking the very picture of abject misery. The doctor kept him there for full half-an-hour, and then administered twenty stripes, with an unction that showed, clearly enough, his profound contempt for that most contemptible of beings, an informer.

Now, Bert was not an angel, but simply a boy—a very good boy, in many respects, no doubt, but a boy, notwithstanding. It would, therefore, be doing him an injustice to deny that he took a certain delight in seeing his tormentor receive so sound a whipping, and that it brought, at least, a temporary balm to his own wounded feelings. But the wound was altogether too deep to be cured by this, or by Frank Bowser's heartfelt sympathy, or even by the praise of his schoolmates, many of whom came up to him at recess and told him he was "a brick," "a daisy," and so forth, because he had taken a whipping without crying.

All this could not hide from him what he felt to be the disgrace of the thing. So ashamed was he of himself that he could hardly find courage to tell them about it at home; and although, easily appreciating the whole situation, Mr. Lloyd had only words of cheer for him, and none of condemnation, Bert still took it so much to heart that the following Sunday he pleaded hard to be allowed to remain away from the Sunday school, as he did not want to face Mr. Silver and his classmates so soon. But his father wisely would not suffer this, and so, much against his will, he went to school as usual, where, however, he felt very ill at ease until the session was over, when he had a long talk with Mr. Silver, and told him the whole story.

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This relieved his mind very much. He felt as if he were square with the world again, and he went back to Dr. Johnston's far lighter in heart on Monday morning than he had left it on Friday afternoon. He had learned a lesson, too, that needed no reteaching throughout the remainder of his school days. That was the first and last time Bert Lloyd stood upon the floor for punishment.

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CHAPTER XIX.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT.

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As may be easily imagined, Dr. Johnston's severe punishment of Rod Graham for having taken upon himself the part of an informer did not tend to make that young gentleman any more pleasant in his bearing toward Bert. By some process of reasoning, intelligible only to himself, he held Bert accountable for the whipping he had received, and lost no opportunity of wreaking his vengeance upon him. Every now and then during that winter Bert had bitter proof of his enemy's unrelenting hate. It seemed as though there were no limit to Rod's ingenuity in devising ways of annoying him, and many a hot tear did he succeed in wringing from him.

As spring drew near, this persecution grew more and more intolerable, and, without Bert himself being fully conscious of it, a crisis was inevitable. This crisis came sooner, perhaps, than either Bert or Rod anticipated. One bright spring morning, as Bert, with satchel strapped upon his back, approached the school, feeling in high spirits, and looking the very picture of a sturdy schoolboy, Rod, who had been in hiding behind a porch, sprang out upon him suddenly, snatched the cap off his head, and, with a shout of, "Fetch it, doggy; go, fetch it," flung it into the middle of the street, that was now little better than a river of mud.

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This proved to be the last straw upon the back of Bert's endurance, and it broke it. With a quickness that gave his tormentor no chance to dodge or defend himself, he doubled up his fist, shut his eyes tight, and, rushing at him, struck out with all his might. The blow could hardly have been more effective if Bert had been an expert in boxing, for his fist landed full on Rod's left eye, sending him staggering backward several paces, with his hands clapped over the injured optic. But he soon recovered himself, and, with clenched fists, was rushing upon Bert, to pummel him fiercely, when Teter Johnston, who had just come up, sprang in between, and, catching Rod's uplifted arm, cried out, sternly:

"Stop, now! none of that! This must be a fair fight, and you shan't begin until Lloyd is ready."

Then turning to Bert, while Rod, who had too much respect for Teter's prowess not to obey him, gave way with a malignant scowl, Teter said, encouragingly:

"You must fight him, Bert. It's the only way to settle him. You'll thrash him all right enough. I'll see you through."

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Bert had a good many doubts about his thrashing "him all right enough," but he was still too angry to think calmly, and, moreover, he was not a little elated at the surprising success of his first blow, which, although struck at a venture, had gone so straight to the mark, and so he

nodded his head in assent.

"Very well, then, it's a fight," said Teter to Rod. "In the yard at the noon recess. You bring your second, Graham; I'll look after Bert myself."

The words were hardly uttered when the bell rung, and the boys had all to hurry to their places in the schoolroom.

That morning was one of the most miserable poor Bert had ever spent. He was a prey to the most diverse feelings, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could bring his mind to bear sufficiently upon his lessons to keep his place in the classes. In the first place, he really dreaded the fight with Rod Graham. Graham was older, taller, and much more experienced in such affairs, and Bert could see no reason why he should hope for a victory over him. It was all well enough for dear old Frank to say from time to time, as he noticed Bert's depression:

"Keep up your spirit, Bert; you'll thrash him sure. And if you don't, I will, as sure as I'm alive."

But that did not make the matter any clearer, for Bert would rather not get a thrashing at Rod's hands, even though Rod should get one at Frank's hands shortly after.

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Then, again, he did not feel at all certain that his father and mother would approve of his having a fight with one of his schoolmates. They disliked anything of the kind, he knew well enough, and perhaps they would not be willing to make an exception in this case. He wished very much he could ask their permission, but that, of course, was out of the question. The mere mention of such a thing would assuredly raise a howl of derision from the other boys, and even Teter Johnston would no doubt ask contemptuously if "he was going to back out of it in that way."

No, no; he must take the chances of his parents' approval, and likewise—and here came in the third difficulty—of Dr. Johnston's also, for he could not help wondering what the doctor would think when he heard of it, as he was certain to do.

Thus perplexed and bewildered, the morning dragged slowly along for Bert, who would one moment be wishing that recess time could be postponed indefinitely, and the next, impatient for its arrival.

At length twelve o'clock struck, and the boys, who were by this time all fully aware of what was in the wind, crowded out into the yard and quickly formed a ring in the corner farthest away from the schoolroom. Into this ring presently stepped Rod Graham, looking very jaunty and defiant, supported by Harry Rawdon, the fly catcher, the one friend he had in the school. A moment later came Bert Lloyd, pale but determined, with Teter and Frank on either side of him, Frank wearing an expression that said as plainly as possible:

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"Whip my friend Bert, if you dare."

It is neither necessary nor expedient to go into the details of the fight, which did not last very long. Acting on Teter's sage advice, Bert made no attempt to defend himself, but rushing into close quarters at once, sent in swinging blows with right and left hands alternately, striking Rod upon the face and chest, while the latter's blows fell principally upon his forehead; until finally, in the fourth round, Graham, whose face had suffered severely, gave up the contest, and covering his head, with his hands, ran away from Bert, who was too tired to pursue him.

Great was the cheering at this conclusive result; and Bert, panting, perspiring, and exhausted, found himself the centre of a noisy throng of his schoolmates, who wrung his hand, clapped him upon the back, called him all sorts of names that were complimentary, and, in fact, gave him a regular ovation. After he had gone to the tap and bathed his hot face, Bert was very much pleased to find that the brunt of the battle had fallen upon his forehead, and that, consequently, he would hardly be marked at all. To be sure, when he tried to put his cap on, he discovered that it would be necessary to wear it very much on the back of his head, but he felt like doing that, anyway, so it didn't matter.

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He would have liked to shake hands with Rod, and make it all up, but Rod was not to be found. After fleeing from his opponent, he had snatched up his coat, and, deserted even by Rawdon; who was disgusted at his running away, he had gone out into the street, and did not appear again for the rest of the day.

His victory worked a great change in Bert's feelings. He was no longer troubled about what his parents would think of the fight. He felt sure they would applaud him, now that he had come out of it with banners flying, so to speak. And he was not far from right, either. Mrs. Lloyd, it is true, was a good deal shocked at first, and Mr. Lloyd questioned him very closely; but when they heard the whole story, much of which, indeed, was already familiar to them, they both agreed that under the circumstances Bert could not have acted otherwise, without placing himself in a false position.

"At the same time, Bert, dear," said his father, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "as it is your first, so I hope it will be your last fight. You have established your reputation for courage now. You can sustain it in other ways than by your fists."

Dr. Johnston's method of showing that he was fully cognisant of the event was highly characteristic. The next morning when Bert, with swollen forehead, and Rod, with blackened eyes, came before him in the same class, he said, with one of his sardonic smiles:

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"Ah, Graham, I see Lloyd has been writing his autograph on you. Well, let that be an end of it. Shake hands with one another."

Bert immediately put out his hand and grasped Rod's, which was but half extended.

"Very good," said the doctor. "We will now proceed with the lesson."

One of the most interested and excited spectators of the fight had been Dick Wilding, a boy who will require a few words of description. He was the son of one of the merchant princes of the city, and was accustomed to everything that the highest social station and abundant wealth could procure. He was a handsome young fellow, and although thoroughly spoiled and selfish, was not without his good points, a lavish generosity being the most noteworthy. This, of course, supplemented by his reckless daring as regards all schoolboy feats, and natural aptitude for schoolboy sports, made him very popular at the school, and he had a large following. Previous to Bert's decisive victory over Rod Graham, he had not shown any particular interest in him, beyond committing himself to the opinion that he was a "regular brick" on the occasion of the hoisting, and again, when Bert bore his whipping so manfully. But since the fight, he had exhibited a strong desire to have Bert join the circle of his companions, and to this end cultivated his society in a very marked way. [Pg 194]

Now, this same Dick Wilding had been in Mrs. Lloyd's mind when she had hesitated about Bert's going to Dr. Johnston's. She knew well what his bringing up had been, and had heard several stories about him, which made her dread his being a companion for Bert. She had accordingly spoken to Bert about Dick, and while taking care not to be too pointed, had made it clear that she did not want them to be intimate. This was when Bert first went to the school, and as there had seemed no prospect of anything more than a mere acquaintance springing up between the two boys, nothing had been said on the subject for some time, so that it was not fresh in his mind when Dick, somewhat to his surprise, showed such a desire for his society.

Dick's latest enterprise was the organisation of a cricket club, into which he was putting a great deal of energy. As the bats and balls and other necessary articles were to be paid for out of his own pocket, he found no difficulty in getting recruits, and the list of members was fast filling up. Bert had heard a good deal about this club, and would have liked very much to belong to it, but as nobody belonged except those who had been invited by Dick, his prospects did not seem very bright. Great then was his delight when one day at recess, Dick came up to him and said in his most winning way: [Pg 195]

"Say, Bert, don't you want to join my cricket club? I'd like to have you in."

Bert did not take long to answer.

"And I'd like to join ever so much," he replied, in great glee.

"All right, then; consider yourself a member, and come round to the field behind our house this afternoon. We practise there every day."

Bert was fairly dancing with joy. Yet he did not forget his friend Frank. If Frank were not a member of the club, too, half the pleasure of it would be gone. So before Dick went off, he ventured to say:

"Frank Bowser would like to belong, too, I know. Won't you ask him?"

"Certainly. No objection at all," replied Dick, in an off-hand way. "Bring him along with you this afternoon."

With beaming face, Bert rushed over to where Frank was busy playing marbles, and drawing him aside, shouted rather than whispered in his ear:

"I've got something splendid to tell you. Dick Wilding has asked us both to join his cricket club, and we're to go to his field this very afternoon."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Frank, his face now beaming as brightly as Bert's. "Isn't that just splendid! I wanted to belong to that club ever so much, but was afraid Dick wouldn't ask me."

They had a capital game of cricket that afternoon in the Wilding field, which made a very good ground indeed, and not only that afternoon, but for many afternoons as spring passed into summer and the days grew longer and warmer. Bert told them at home about the club, but somehow omitted to mention the prominent part Dick Wilding played in it. In fact, he never mentioned his name at all, nor that it was his father's field in which the club met. This was the first step in a path of wrong, the taking of which was soon to lead to serious consequences. [Pg 196]

His reason for suppressing Dick Wilding's name was plain enough. He knew that in all probability it would put an end to his connection with the club. Now this club had every attraction for a boy like Bert that such an organisation could possibly possess. It was select and exclusive, for none could belong except those who were invited by Dick. The field was a lovely place to play in, and they had it all to themselves. The balls and bats and stumps were first-class, a fine set of cricket gear having been one of Dick's Christmas presents; and, finally, Dick was always bringing out to the players iced lemonade, or ginger beer, or spruce beer, or something of the kind, which was wonderfully welcome to them when hot and tired and thirsty.

With such strong arguments as these, Bert did not find it difficult to quiet his conscience when it

troubled him, as it did now and then, and he continued to be a great deal in Dick Wilding's society until something happened which caused him to bitterly regret that he had not heeded the inward monitor, and kept away from the associations his wise mother wished him to avoid.

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Mrs. Lloyd had good reason for dreading Dick Wilding's companionship for her boy, as Dick could hardly fail to do Bert harm, while the chances of Bert doing him any good were very small, since he was quite a year older and well set in his own ways. Dick's parents were thorough people of the world. Their religion consisted in occupying a velvet-cushioned pew in a fashionable church on Sunday morning, and doing as they pleased the rest of the day. They made no attempt to teach their son anything more than good manners, taking it quite for granted that the other virtues would spring up of themselves. Dick was not much to be blamed, therefore, if he had rather hazy views about right and wrong. He had not really an evil nature, but he had a very easy conscience, and the motto by which he shaped his conduct might well have been: "Get your own way. Get it honestly, if you can. But—get it."

Now, this cricket club had taken a great hold upon his fancy, and his whole heart was wrapped up in it. He was captain, of course, and all the other boys obeyed him implicitly. Their docility ministered to his pride, and he showed his appreciation by fairly showering his bounty upon them. There positively seemed no end to his pocket money. All sorts of expenses were indulged in. A fine tent was set up for the boys to put their hats and coats in and sit under when not playing, the ginger-beer man had orders to call round every afternoon and leave a dozen bottles of his refreshing beverage, and more than once the club, instead of playing, adjourned, at Dick's invitation, to an ice-cream saloon, and had a regular feast of ice-cream. When some indiscreet companion would express his astonishment at the length of Dick's purse, the latter would answer, carelessly:

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"Plenty of funds. Father, and mother, and uncle all give me money. There's lots more where this came from," jingling a handful of silver as he spoke. So, indeed, there was; but had it any business to be in Master Dick's pocket?

This delightful state of affairs went on for some weeks, no one enjoying it more than Bert, and then came a revelation that broke upon the boys like a thunder-clap out of a clear sky.

One evening, Mr. Wilding came over to see Mr. Lloyd, looking very grave and troubled. They had a long talk together in Mr. Lloyd's study, and when he went away Mr. Lloyd looked as grave and troubled as his visitor. After showing Mr. Wilding out, he called his wife into the library, and communicated to her what he had just heard, and it must have been sorrowful news, for Mrs. Lloyd's face bore unmistakable signs of tears, when presently she went out for Bert, who was hard at work upon his lessons in the dining-room.

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The moment Bert entered the room he saw that something was the matter. The faces of his father and mother were very sorrowful, and an indefinable feeling of apprehension took hold of him. He was not long left in uncertainty as to the cause of the trouble.

"Bert," said his father, gravely, "have you seen much of Dick Wilding lately?"

Bert blushed, and hesitated a moment, and then answered:

"Yes, father; a good deal. He's the captain of our cricket club, you know."

"I did not know until now that you have told me, Bert," said Mr. Lloyd, looking meaningly at him. "You never told me before, did you?"

The colour deepened on Bert's face.

"No, father; I don't think I did," he murmured.

"Had you any reason for saying nothing about him, Bert? Were you afraid we would not let you belong to the club if we knew that Dick Wilding was its captain?" asked Mr. Lloyd.

Bert made no reply, but his head drooped low upon his breast, and his hands playing nervously with the buttons of his coat told the whole story more plainly than words could have done. Mr. Lloyd sighed deeply and looked at his wife as though to say: "There's no doubt about it; our boy has been deceiving us," while Mrs. Lloyd's eyes once more filled with tears, which she turned away to hide.

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After a pause, during which Bert seemed to hear the beating of his own heart as distinctly as the ticking of the big clock upon the mantel, Mr. Lloyd said, in tones that showed deep feeling:

"We would have been sorry enough to find out that our boy had been deceiving us, but what shall we say at finding out that he has been a sharer in pleasures purchased with stolen money?"

Bert looked up in surprise. Stolen money! What could his father mean? Mr. Lloyd understood the movement, and anticipated the unasked question.

"Yes, Bert; stolen money. The beer, the candy, and the ice cream, which Dick Wilding lavished upon you so freely, were paid for with money stolen from his mother's money drawer. He found a key which fitted the lock, and has taken out, no one knows just how much money; and you have been sharing in what that stolen money purchased."

Bert was fairly stunned. Dick Wilding a thief! And he a sharer in the proceeds of his guilt! He felt as though he must run and hide himself. That Dick should do wrong was not entirely a surprise to

him, but that his sin in being a companion of Dick's on the sly should be found out in this way, this it was which cut him to the heart. Without a word of excuse to offer, he sat there, self-condemned and speechless. The silence of the room was appalling. He could not bear it any longer. Springing from his chair, he rushed across the room, threw himself on his knees before his mother, and putting his head in her lap, burst into a paroxysm of tears, sobbing as though his heart would break.

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"Poor Bert, poor Bert!" murmured his mother, tenderly, passing her hand softly over the curly head in her lap.

Mr. Lloyd was deeply moved, and put his hand up to his eyes to conceal the tears fast welling from them. For some minutes the quiet of the room was broken only by Bert's sobs, and the steady ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece.

Mr. Lloyd was the first to speak.

"You had better get up and go to your room, Bert. We both know how sorry you are, and we forgive you for having so disobeyed us. But we are not the only ones of whom you must ask forgiveness. Go to your knees, Bert, and ask God to forgive you."

Bert rose slowly to his feet, and, not venturing to look either his father or mother in the face, was going out of the door, when his father called him back.

"Just one word more, Bert. It is not long since you won a brave fight, and now you have been sadly defeated by a far worse enemy than Rod Graham. You can, in your own strength, overcome human foes, but only by Divine strength can you overcome the tempter that has led you astray this time. Pray for this strength, Bert, for it is the kind the Bible means when it says, 'Quit you like men, be strong.'"

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And with a look of deep affection, Mr. Lloyd let Bert go from him.

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CHAPTER XX.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

So keenly did Bert feel his disgrace, that it was some time before he regained his wonted spirits; and his continued depression gave his mother no little concern, so that she took every way of showing to him that her confidence in him was unimpaired, and that she asked no further proof of his penitence than he had already given. But Bert's sensitive nature had received a shock from which it did not readily recover. From his earliest days he had been peculiarly free from the desire to take what did not belong to him; and as he grew older, this had developed into a positive aversion to anything that savoured of stealing in the slightest degree. He never could see any fun in "hooking" another boy's lunch, as so many others did, and nothing could induce him to join in one of the numerous expeditions organised to raid sundry unguarded orchards in the outskirts of the city.

His firmness upon this point led to a curious scene one afternoon. School was just out, and a group of the boys, among whom were Bert, and, of course, Frank Bowser, was discussing what they should do with themselves, when Ned Ross proposed that they should go out to the Hosterman orchard, and see if they could not get some apples. A chorus of approval came from all but Bert, who immediately turned away and made as though he would go home.

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"Hallo! Bert," cried Ned Ross, "aren't you coming?"

"No," replied Bert, very decidedly. "I'm not."

"Why not?" inquired Ned. "What's the matter?"

"Those are not our apples, Ned, and we've got no right to touch 'em," answered Bert.

"Bosh and nonsense!" exclaimed Ned. "All the boys take them, and nobody ever hinders them. Come along."

"No," said Bert, "I can't."

"Can't? Why can't you?" persisted Ned, who was rapidly losing his temper.

Bert hesitated a moment, and the colour mounted high in his cheeks. Then he spoke out his reason bravely:

"Because I'm a Christian, Ned; and it would not be right for me to do it."

"A Christian?" sneered Ned. "You'd be nearer the truth if you said a coward."

The words had hardly left his lips before Frank Bowser was standing before him, shaking in his face a fist that was not to be regarded lightly.

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"Say that again," cried Frank, wrathfully, "and I'll knock you down!"

Ned looked at Frank's face, and then at his fist. There was no mistaking the purpose of either, and as Frank was fully his match, if not more, he thought it prudent to say nothing more than: "Bah! Come on, fellows. We can get along without him."

The group moved off; but Bert was not the only one who stayed behind. Frank stayed too; and so did Ernest Linton. And these three sought their amusement in another direction.

That scene very vividly impressed Bert, and over and over again he thought to himself: "What will the boys who heard me refuse to go to the orchard, because I am a Christian, think of me when they hear that I have been helping to spend stolen money?"

This was the thought that troubled him most, but it was not the only one. He felt that he could not be at ease with his beloved Sunday-school teacher again, until he had made a full confession to him. But, oh! this did seem so hard to do! Several Sundays passed without his being able to make up his mind to do it. At length he determined to put it off no longer, and one Sunday afternoon, lingering behind after the school had been dismissed, he poured the whole story into Mr. Silver's sympathetic ear.

Mr. Silver was evidently moved to the heart, as Bert, without sparing himself, told of his disobedience, his concealment, and the consequences that followed; and he had many a wise and tender word for the boy, whose confidence in him made him proud. From that day a peculiar fondness existed between the two, and Mr. Silver was inspired to increased fidelity and effort in his work because of the knowledge that one at least of his boys looked upon him with such affection and confidence.

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Once that summer had fairly come to stay, the wharves of the city became full of fascination for the boys, and every afternoon they trooped thither to fish for perch and tommy cods; to board the vessels lying in their berths, and out-do one another in feats of rigging climbing; to play glorious games of "hide-and-seek," and "I spy," in the great cavernous warehouses, and when tired to gather around some idle sailor, and have him stir their imagination with marvellous stories of the sea.

For none had the wharves more attraction than for Bert and Frank, and although Mrs. Lloyd would not allow the former to go down Water Street, where he would be far from home, she did not object to his spending an afternoon now and then on a wharf not far from their own house. So thither the two friends repaired at every opportunity, and fine fun they had, dropping their well-baited hooks into the clear green water, to catch eager perch, or watching the hardworking sailors dragging huge casks of molasses out of dark and grimy holds, and rolling them up the wharf to be stored in the vast cool warehouses, or running risks of being pickled themselves, as they followed the fish-curiers in their work of preparing the salt herring or mackerel for their journey to the hot West Indies. There never was any lack of employment, for eyes, or hands, or feet, on that busy wharf, and the boys felt very proud when they were permitted to join the workers sometimes and do their little best, which was all the more enjoyable because they could stop whenever they liked, and hadn't to work all day as the others did.

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Nor were these the only attractions. The principal business done at this wharf was with the West Indies, and no vessel thought of coming back from that region of fruits without a goodly store of oranges, bananas, and pine-apples, some of which, if the boys were not too troublesome, and the captain had made a good voyage, were sure to find their way into very appreciative mouths. Bert's frank, bright manner, and plucky spirit, made him a great favourite with the captains, and many a time was he sent home with a big juicy pine, or an armful of great golden oranges.

One day, when Bert and Frank went down to the wharf, they found a strange-looking vessel made fast to the piles that filled them with curiosity. She was a barquentine, and was sparred, and rigged, and painted in a rather unusual way, the explanation of it all being that she was a Spanish vessel, of an old-fashioned type. Quite in keeping with the appearance of the vessel was the appearance of the crew. They were nearly all Lascars, and with their tawny skins, flashing eyes, jet black hair, and gold-ringed ears, seemed to fit very well the description of the pirates, whose dreadful deeds, as graphically described in sundry books, had given the boys many a delicious thrill of horror. This resemblance caused them to look upon the foreigners with some little fear at first, but their curiosity soon overcame all considerations of prudence, and after hanging about for a while, they bashfully accepted the invitation extended them by a swarthy sailor, whose words were unintelligible, but whose meaning was unmistakable.

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On board the *Santa Maria*—for that was the vessel's name—they found much to interest them, and the sailors treated them very kindly, in spite of their piratical appearance. What delighted them most was a monkey that belonged to the cook. He was one of the cutest, cleverest little creatures that ever parodied humanity. His owner had taught him a good many tricks, and he had taught himself even more; and both the boys felt that in all their lives they had never seen so entertaining a pet. He completely captivated them, and they would have given all they possessed to make him their own. But the cook had no idea of parting with him, even had it been in their power to buy him; so they had to content themselves with going down to see him as often as they could.

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Of course, they told their schoolmates about him, and of course the schoolmates were set wild with curiosity to see this marvellous monkey, and they flocked down to the *Santa Maria* in such numbers, and so often, that at last the sailors got tired of them. A mob of schoolboys invading the deck every afternoon, and paying uproarious homage to the cleverness of a monkey, was more or

less of a nuisance. Accordingly, by way of a gentle hint, the rope ladder, by which easy access was had to the vessel, was removed, and a single rope put in its place.

It happened that the first afternoon after this had been done, the crowd of visitors was larger than ever; and when they arrived at the *Santa Maria's* side, and found the ladder gone, they were, as may be easily imagined, very much disgusted. A rope might be good enough for a sailor, but the boys very much preferred a ladder, and they felt disposed to resent the action of the sailors in thus cutting off their means of ascent. The fact that it was high tide at the time, and the tall sides of the ship towered above the wharf, constituted a further grievance in the boys' minds. They held an impromptu indignation meeting forthwith. But, although they were unanimous in condemning the conduct of the foreigners, who evidently did not know any better, they were still no nearer the monkey.

"Why not try to shin up the rope?" asked Frank Bowser, after a while.

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"All right, if you'll give us a lead," replied one of the others.

"Very well—here goes!" returned Frank. And without more ado he grasped the rope, planted his feet firmly against the vessel's side, and began to ascend. It was evidently not the easiest thing in the world to do, but his pluck, determination, and muscle conquered; and presently, somewhat out of breath, he sat upon the bulwark, and, waving his cap to the boys below, gasped out:

"Come along, boys! It's as easy as winking."

Not to be outdone, several others made the attempt and succeeded also. Then came Bert's turn. Although so many had got up all right, he somehow felt a little nervous, and made one or two false starts, climbing up a little way and then dropping back again. This caused those who were waiting to become impatient, and while Bert was about making another start, one of them who stood behind him gave him a sharp push, saying:

"Hurry up there, slow coach."

As it happened, Bert was just at that moment changing his grip upon the rope, and balancing himself upon the extreme edge of the stringer, which formed the edge of the wharf. The ill-timed push caught him unawares. He threw out his arms to steady himself, and the rope slipped altogether from his grasp. The next instant, with a cry of fear that was taken up by the boys standing helplessly about, he fell over into the dark, swirling water, between the vessel's side and the wharf.

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Down, down, down he went, while the water roared in his ears with the thunders of Niagara, and filled his mouth with its sickening brine, as instinctively he opened it to cry for help. He could not swim a stroke, but he had a good idea of what the motions were, and so now, in a desperate effort to save his life, he struck out vigorously with his hands. It must have helped him, too; for out of the darkness into which he had been plunged at first, he emerged into a lighter place, where, through the green water, he could see his hands looking very white, as they moved before his face.

But this did not bring him to the surface; so he tried another plan. Doubling his sturdy legs beneath him, he shot them out as he had seen other boys do when "treading water." A thrill of joy inspired him as the effort succeeded, and, his head rising above the surface, he got one good breath before sinking again. But the pitiless water engulfed him once more, and, though he struggled hard, he seemed unable to keep himself from sinking deeper still. Then the desire to struggle began to leave him. Life seemed no longer a thing to be fiercely striven for. A strange peace stole over his mind, and was followed by a still stranger thing; for while he floated there, an unresisting prey to the deep, it appeared as though all the events of his past life were crowding before him like some wonderful panorama. From right to left they followed one another in orderly procession, each as clear and distinct as a painted picture, and he was watching them with absorbed, painless interest, when something dark came across his vision; he felt himself grasped firmly and drawn swiftly through the water, and the next thing he knew, he was in the light and air again, and was being handed up to the top of the wharf by men who passed him carefully from one to the other. In the very nick of time rescue had come, and Bert was brought back to life.

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Now, who was his rescuer, and what took place while Bert was struggling for his life in the cold, dark water? The instant he disappeared the boys shouted and shrieked in such a way as to bring the whole crew of the *Santa Maria* to the bulwarks, over which they eagerly peered, not understanding what was the matter. Frank, who was in a frenzy of anxiety and alarm, tried hard to explain to them; but his efforts were unavailing until the reappearance of Bert's head made the matter plain at once, and then he thought they would, of course, spring to the rescue. But they did not. They looked at one another, and jabbered something unintelligible, but not one of them moved, though Frank seized the liveliest of them by the arm, and, pointing to the place where Bert vanished, again indicated, by unmistakable gestures, what he wanted him to do. The man simply shook his head and moved away. He either could not swim, or did not think it worth while to risk his precious life in trying to rescue one of the foreign urchins that had been bothering the *Santa Maria* of late. Had Bert's life depended upon these men, it might have been given up at once.

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But there was other help at hand. John Connors, the good-natured Irish storekeeper, by whose sufferance the boys were permitted to make a playground of the wharf, had heard their frantic

cries, although he was away up in one of the highest flats of the farthest store. Without stopping to see what could be the matter, Connors leaped down the long flights of stairs at a reckless rate, and ran toward the shrieking boys.

"Bert's overboard—save him!" they cried, as he burst into their midst.

"Where?" he asked, breathlessly, while he flung off his boots.

"There—just there," they replied, pointing to where Bert had last been seen.

Balancing himself for an instant on the end of the stringer, Connors, with the spring of a practised swimmer, dived into the depths and disappeared; while the boys, in the silence of intense anxiety, crowded as close as they dared to the edge of the wharf, and the Lascars looked down from their bulwarks in stolid admiration. There were some moments of harrowing uncertainty, and then a shout arose from the boys, which even the swarthy sailors imitated, after a fashion; for cleaving the bubbled surface came the head of brave John Connors, and, close beside it, the dripping curls of Bert Lloyd, the faces of both showing great exhaustion. [Pg 214]

The sailors were all alert now. Ropes were hastily flung over the side, and swarming down these with the agility of monkeys, they took Bert out of his rescuer's hands and passed him up to the wharf; Connors followed unassisted, so soon as he had recovered his breath.

Once upon the wharf, they were surrounded by a noisy group of boys, overjoyed at their playmate's happy escape from death, and overflowing with admiration for his gallant rescuer. Bert very quickly came to himself—for he had not indeed entirely lost consciousness—and then Connors told him just how he had got hold of him:

"When I dived down first I couldn't see anything of you at all, my boy, and I went hunting about with my eyes wide open and looking for you. At last, just as I was about giving you up, I saw something dark below me that I thought might, p'r'aps, be yourself. So I just stuck out my foot, and by the powers if it didn't take you right under the chin. As quick as a wink I drew you toward me, and once I had a good grip of you, I put for the top as hard as I could go; and here we are now, safe and sound. And, faith, I hope you won't be trying it again in a hurry."



BERT RESCUED.—Page 214.

Bert was very much in earnest when he assured him he would not, and still more in earnest when he tried to express his gratitude. But Connors would none of it. [Pg 215]

"Not at all, not at all, my boy," said he, with a laugh. "A fine young chap like you is well worth saving any day, and it's not in John Connors to stand by and see you drown, even if those black-faced furriners don't know any better." [Pg 216]

CHAPTER XXI.

LEARNING TO SWIM.

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Bert's appearance, when he made his way home with dripping clothes, and face still pale from what he had undergone, created no small consternation. His sister was particularly alarmed, and it took some time to convince her that, once having got out of the grasp of the greedy water, he was really in no more danger. Had she been permitted to have her own way, she would have bundled him off to bed forthwith, and filled up any little corners inside of him that the sea water had left unoccupied, with warm raspberry vinegar. But Bert would none of it, and Mrs. Lloyd, although a good deal startled at first, soon recovered her self-possession sufficiently to agree with him, when he insisted that all he wanted was some dry clothes and a rest.

The dry clothes were quickly furnished, and having put them on, he returned to the sitting-room to tell them all about his rescue, Frank being at hand to fill in any details that he missed in the recital. The tears stood in his mother's eyes, as he related what he had felt and thought during those eventful moments when his life hung in the balance; tears of distress, of sympathy, of joy, and finally of gratitude, as in glowing words he described how noble John Connors had dived away down into the dark green depths to rescue him just in the nick of time.

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"Oh, Bert, darling," she exclaimed, when he had finished, folding him to her breast, "how good God was to send dear, brave Connors to your help! We cannot praise Him enough, and, dearest, don't you think He must intend you to be something good and great for Him, when He thus spared your life? And that dear man Connors!—I feel as though I could kiss the hands that drew you from the water. Your father must go to-night, and tell him how grateful we are; and he must do more than that—he must reward him well for running such a risk to save our boy."

When Mr. Lloyd came home and learned what had happened, he made no pretence of concealing his emotion. The very thought of losing in that dreadful way the boy who was the joy and pride of his life filled him with horror, and no words could express his fervent gratitude to Connors, and to God, for sending so courageous a rescuer. So soon as dinner was over he set off in search of him, taking Bert with him. Connors's home was easily found, and Connors himself sat smoking his evening pipe upon the door-step, as unconcernedly as though he had done nothing out of the way that afternoon.

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The object of Mr. Lloyd's visit was soon made known, but he found more difficulty than he expected in giving such expression as he desired to the gratitude he felt. Connors was quite willing to be thanked, and accepted Mr. Lloyd's fervent words with a respectful acquiescence that well became him, but when Mr. Lloyd broached the subject of a more tangible reward, Connors quite as respectfully, but very firmly, refused.

"I want no reward for saving your boy, sir. It's proud I am of pulling so fine a boy as that out of the water. I did no more than you'd do for my boy, sir, if he were in the same scrape," said he, in reply to Mr. Lloyd's delicately worded offer.

"That may be, Connors. I'm sure I would do as you say, but all the same I would feel much more comfortable if you would accept this purse as some expression of my gratitude," urged Mr. Lloyd.

"And, thanking you kindly, sir, I'd feel much more comfortable if I didn't take it," returned Connors, in a tone there was no mistaking. So Mr. Lloyd, resolving in his mind that he would find out some other way of rewarding the worthy fellow, said no more then, and shortly after took his leave.

As Bert and his father walked home together they were still talking about the event of the afternoon.

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"If you had been drowned, Bert, it would to some extent have been my fault," said Mr. Lloyd; "for I should not have so long neglected teaching you to swim. A boy of your age ought to be well able to take care of himself in the water, and I should have seen that you were. However, now that this escape of yours has waked me up, I will attend to the matter at once. So we will begin to-morrow morning, Bert, and have a swimming lesson every day before breakfast."

"Oh, father; I'm so glad," exclaimed Bert, skipping about joyfully. "I want to know how to swim ever so much, and I'll soon learn if you'll teach me."

"All right, my boy. You see to waking me in good time, and I'll see that you learn to swim," replied Mr. Lloyd, clapping Bert affectionately on the back.

The next morning at six o'clock Bert was rapping loudly on his father's door, and calling upon him to get up, and a quarter of an hour later the pair with towels on their arms were off in the direction of a secluded, deserted wharf that would just suit their purpose.

On arriving at this place, Mr. Lloyd showed Bert how he proposed to teach him to swim, and it certainly was about as excellent a way as could well have been devised. He had brought with him two things besides the towels: a piece of rope about the thickness of a clothes line, and ten yards or more in length, and a strong linen band, two yards in length. The linen band he put round Bert's shoulders in such a way that there was no possibility of its slipping, or interfering with the action of his arms; and then the rope was so fastened to the band that when Bert was in the water his father, standing on the wharf above him, could hold him in just the right position for

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swimming.

The preparations having been completed, Bert was bidden descend the steps and plunge into the water. He started off bravely enough, but when he reached the bottom step he hesitated. The water was at least ten feet in depth beneath him, and he had never been "over his head," as they say, before, except when he came so near being drowned. Naturally, therefore, he shrank from committing himself to the deep in this fashion.

"Well, Bert, what's the matter? Are you afraid the water is too cold?" asked his father, as he noticed his hesitation.

"No, father; not exactly," answered Bert, feeling half ashamed of himself.

"You're afraid it's too deep, then?" suggested Mr. Lloyd. And Bert looked up with a smile that showed he had hit the mark.

"Never mind, my boy," said Mr. Lloyd, cheeringly. "You're all right. I won't let go of you. Jump in like a man."

Bert hung back a moment; then, shutting his mouth tightly and closing his eyes, he sprang boldly into the cool, green water. He went under a little at first, but a slight tug on the rope brought him quickly to the top, and recovering his breath and his self-possession at the same time, he struck out with his arms and kicked with his legs, according to the best of his ability. His motions were sadly unskilful, as may be easily imagined, and although they used up his strength pretty rapidly, they would not have kept his head above water for a minute; but a gentle pressure on the rope in Mr. Lloyd's hand made that all right, and, feeling quite at his ease, Bert struggled away until he was tired out, and then his father, who had all the time been cheering and directing him, drew him back to the steps, and the lesson was over.

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"You did very well, Bert; very well, indeed," said he, in tones of warm approval, as Bert proceeded to rub off the salt water and get into his clothes again. "I don't think it will take a great many lessons to make a swimmer of you."

And Mr. Lloyd's confidence was well founded; for so earnestly did Bert give himself to the business of learning to swim that by the end of a fortnight he could go ten yards out and back without any help from the rope at all. Another fortnight and the rope was no longer needed. Mr. Lloyd now went into the water with Bert, and swimming out to the middle of the dock, would have the boy come to him, and after resting upon his broad shoulders a moment, make his way back to the steps again.

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Thus, in little more than a month, Bert became quite able to take care of himself in the water under ordinary circumstances; and his father, feeling well satisfied with his proficiency, gave him liberty to go to the wharves as often as he pleased—a boon Bert highly appreciated.

A pleasure unshared by his faithful Frank was but half a pleasure to Bert. Next in importance to his being able to swim himself was Frank's acquiring the same invaluable accomplishment. Invaluable? Yes, one might indeed rightly use a stronger term, and say indispensable; for the education of no boy is complete until he has mastered the art of swimming. And if the boys knew their own interests as thoroughly as their parents and guardians ought to know them, they would agitate all over the land for the provision of swimming baths in connection with their schools, or in some other way that would ensure them the opportunity of learning what to do with themselves in the water, as well as upon the land.

Frank could swim a stroke or two before Bert took him in hand, and consequently was soon able to dispense with the rope; but timid little Ernest Linton, who was the next pupil, took a lot of teaching, and there seemed small prospect of his conquering his timidity sufficiently to "go it alone" before the swimming season would be over.

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The fame of Bert's swimming school spread among his playmates to an extent that threatened to be embarrassing. By the time they were half way through the mid-summer holidays, a crowd of boisterous youngsters gathered every morning at the old wharf, and struggled for the use of band and rope, until at last there had to be several of these provided. Then they had fine fun. A dozen boys would be in the water at the same time—some of them expert swimmers, the others in all stages of learning—and there would be races, splashing matches, unexpected duckings, sly tricks upon the nervous learners, and all sorts of capers, such as might be expected from boys of their age and enterprise.

By way of deepening the interest in this healthful amusement, they organised a competition, the prizes being supplied by their parents, who were duly waited upon by a properly-authorized committee; and one fine August afternoon, the sleepy old wharf was made to fairly tremble with excitement, as race followed race in quick succession, amid the cheering and shouting of some two-score vigorous boys. Much to his delight, Frank succeeded in carrying off the first prize. He was a persistent, painstaking fellow when his interest was thoroughly aroused, and while other chaps were skylarking about in the water, he had been practising long swims, the consequence of which was that at the competition—when, of course, the best prize was given for the longest race; the course, in this instance, being out to the head of the wharf, and back—Frank left all the other contestants behind, and came in an easy winner.

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Bert was exceedingly pleased. He had not won any prizes himself, except an unimportant little second one; but Frank's success more than consoled him, and he bore him off home with him in

high glee, that the family might share in the joy of the occasion.

Nearly two years now had passed since the two friends first made one another's acquaintance, and the course of events had fully confirmed the expectation of Bert's parents, that he would be far more likely to influence Frank for good than Frank would be to influence him for evil. There had been unmistakable improvement in Frank, both in manners and morals. Constant association with a playmate brought up under home influences so different from his own; the wise and kindly words that Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd lost no opportunity of speaking to him; the refinement and brightness of their home; the atmosphere of sunny religion that pervaded it; and all these supplemented by an ever-interesting presentation of common-sense Christianity at the hands of Mr. Silver every Sunday afternoon, had worked deep into Frank's strong, steadfast nature, and without being distinctly conscious of it himself, he was growing refined, pure, and religious in thought and desire, like those with whom it was the joy of his life to associate. The current of his being had been turned Godward, and in him, though he knew it not, Bert had won the first star for his crown.

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CHAPTER XXII.

HOW HOISTING WAS ABOLISHED.

The month of September was close at hand, and Bert would soon begin his second year with Dr. Johnston. Mr. Lloyd, though well content with the progress his son had been making in his studies, thought it would be a wise thing to hold out some extra inducement that might incite him to still greater diligence, and so one evening, while the family were sitting together, he broached the subject:

"Dr. Johnston gives a lot of prizes at the end of the term, doesn't he, Bert?"

"Yes, father, a good many; always books, you know," answered Bert.

"Why didn't you get a prize of some kind last term?" asked Mr. Lloyd, with a smile.

"Oh, I don't know, father. Didn't try hard enough, I suppose," replied Bert, smiling in his turn.

"Well, do you intend to try this term, Bert?"

"Indeed I do; and Frank's going to try, too. My best chance is in the arithmetic, so I'm going to try for that; and he's going in for grammar."

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"Very well, then, Bert, do your best; and if you win a prize I will give you what you have wanted so long—a pony."

The expression of Bert's countenance at this quite unexpected announcement was a study. His eyes and mouth, the former with surprise, the latter with a smile, opened to their fullest extent, and for a moment he stood motionless. Then, springing across the floor, he leaped into his father's lap, put both arms around his neck, and burying his happy face in the brown whiskers, ejaculated, fervently:

"You dear, dear father, you dear, dear father, how I do love you!"

Mr. Lloyd returned the affectionate hug with interest, and then, holding Bert out on his knee, said, in a playful tone:

"Aren't you in too much of a hurry about thanking me, Bert? You haven't won your pony yet, you know."

"That's all right, father," returned Bert. "I mean to win it, and what's more, I'm going to."

It need hardly be said that the first item of news Bert had for his friend Frank next morning was his father's offer.

"Won't it be splendid to have a pony of my very own!" he exclaimed, his eyes dancing with delight at the prospect. "Perhaps your father will give you a pony, too, if you win a prize; hey, Frank?"

Frank shook his head dubiously:

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"Not much chance of that, Bert. That's not his way of doing things."

"Oh, well, never mind. You can ride turn about with me on mine, and we'll have just splendid fun."

As the boys were talking together, little Ernest Linton approached, looking as if he had something on his mind. Getting close to Bert, he touched him gently on the arm to attract his attention, and, turning a very earnest, appealing face to his, said:

"Bert, I want to ask a favour."

"Hallo, Ernie, what's up?" asked Bert, in his kindest tones.

Ernest then proceeded to tell him that his younger brother, Paul, was to come to the school in a few days, and that he was a very timid, delicate little chap that would be sure to be half frightened out of his life if they hoisted him; and what Ernest wanted was that Bert and Frank should see if they could not, in some way or other, save Paul from being hoisted.

The two boys were filled with the idea at once. It was good enough fun to hoist sturdy fellows like themselves, who were none the worse for it; but if Paul were the sort of chap his brother said he was, it would be a real shame to give him such a scare, and they would do their best to prevent its being done. Accordingly, they promised Ernest they would protect his brother if they could, and Ernest felt very much relieved at their promise.

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But how were they going to carry it out? No exceptions had been made as to the hoisting since they had come to Dr. Johnston's, but all new boys were hoisted with perfect impartiality. They would be powerless by themselves, that was certain. Their only plan was to persuade a lot of the boys to join them, and they did not feel entirely sure about being able to do this. However, the first thing to be done was to ask Teter Johnston. If they could enlist his sympathies, their task would be a good deal easier. Accordingly, at recess, they made directly for Teter, and laid the whole matter before him. Like themselves, he took hold of it at once. It was just the sort of thing that would appeal to his big, warm, manly heart, and without hesitation he promised the boys he would give them all the help in his power.

The next step was to secure recruits for their party. In this Teter helped them greatly, and Frank was very active too, because big Rod Graham, whom he disliked none the less, though Bert had thrashed him so soundly, always headed the hoisting party, and Frank looked forward with keen delight to balking this tormenting bully by means of the anti-hoisting party they were now organising.

Of course, the movement could not be kept a secret. It soon leaked out, and then Rod Graham and Dick Wilding—who, by the way, since the stolen money episode, had been as cool in his relations with Bert as he had previously been cordial, evidently resenting very much Bert's withdrawal from his companionship—these two, with their associates, began to organise in their turn, so that it was not long before the school was divided into two parties, both of which were looking forward eagerly to the event which should decide which would have their own way.

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On the Monday following the opening of the school Ernest Linton brought his brother with him, a slight, pale, delicate little fellow, not more than eight years old, who clung close to his brother's side, and looked about with a frightened air that was sufficient in itself to arouse one's sympathies. Bert and Frank had known him before, but Teter had never seen him, and his kind heart prompted him to go up and slap the little fellow kindly on the back, saying:

"So you're Linton's brother Paul, eh? Cheer up, little chap; we'll see they're not too hard upon you."

Paul's pale face brightened, and looking up with a grateful glance, he said, softly:

"Thank you, sir."

Teter laughed at being "sirred," and went off, feeling quite pleased with himself.

According to the custom of the school, Paul would be hoisted at the mid-day recess of the following day, and the boys looked forward eagerly to the struggle for which they had been preparing. During the morning their thoughts clearly were not upon the lessons, and so many mistakes were made that the shrewd doctor suspected there must be something brewing, but preferred to let it reveal itself rather than to interfere by premature questions. He was a profound student of human nature, and especially of boy nature. He knew his boys as thoroughly as an Eastern shepherd ever knew his sheep. They were like open books before him, and in this perhaps more than in anything else lay the secret of his rare success as a teacher.

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When the eagerly expected recess came, all the boys, with the exception of a small group, poured out tumultuously into the street, and ranged themselves in two bands in close proximity to the door. The group that remained consisted of the two Lintons, Bert, Frank, and Teter, the latter three constituting a sort of body-guard for poor timorous little Paul, who shrank in terror from the ordeal, the nature of which in truth he did not fully understand. Having consulted together for a minute or two, the body-guard then moved out through the door, taking care to keep Paul in the middle. As they emerged into the street, a kind of hum of suppressed excitement rose from the crowd awaiting them, followed immediately by cries of "Hoist him! hoist him!" uttered first by Graham and Wilding, and quickly taken up by their supporters.

Pale with fright, Paul cowered close to Teter, while Bert and Frank stood in front of him, and their supporters quickly encircled them. Then came the struggle. Graham and Wilding and their party bore down upon Paul's defenders, and sought to break their way through them to reach their intended victim. Of course, no blows were struck. The boys all knew better than to do that; but pushing, hauling, wrestling, very much after the fashion of football players in a maul, the one party strove to seize Paul, who indeed offered no more resistance than an ordinary football, and the other to prevent his being carried off. For some minutes the issue was uncertain, although the hoisting party considerably outnumbered the anti-hoisting party. More than once did Graham and Wilding force their way into the centre of Paul's defenders, and almost have him in their grasp, only to be thrust away again by the faithful trio that stood about him like the three of whom Macaulay's ringing ballad tells:

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"How well Horatius kept the bridge,
In the brave days of old."

Shouting, struggling, swaying to and fro, the contest went on, much to the amusement of a crowd of spectators, among which the tall, blue-coated form of a policeman loomed up prominently, although he deigned not to interfere. At length the weight of superior numbers began to tell, and despite all their efforts the anti-hoisting party were borne slowly but surely toward the fence, upon which some of the boys had already taken their positions, ready to have Paul handed up to them. The case was looking desperate, and Teter, heated and wearied with his exertions, had just said, in his deepest tones, to Bert and Frank, "Come, boys, all together, try it once more," when suddenly a silence fell upon the noisy mob, and their arms, a moment before locked in tense struggling, fell limply to their sides; for there, standing between them and the fence, his keen, dark face lighted with a curious smile, and holding his hand above his head by way of a shield from the hot sun, stood Dr. Johnston!

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A genuine ghost at midnight could hardly have startled the boys more. Absorbed in their struggle, they had not seen the doctor until they were fairly upon him. For aught they knew he had been a spectator of the proceedings from the outset. What would he think of them? Rod Graham and Dick Wilding, slaves to a guilty conscience, slunk into the rear of their party, while Bert, and Frank, and Teter, glad of the unexpected relief, wiped their brows and arranged their disordered clothing, as they awaited the doctor's utterance. It soon came.

"I desire an explanation of this unseemly disturbance. The school will follow me immediately into the schoolroom," said he, somewhat sternly; and turning upon his heel went back to his desk, the boys following at a respectful distance.

When all had been seated, and the room was quiet, Dr. Johnston asked:

"Will the leaders in the proceedings outside come to my desk?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Teter rose from his seat, Bert immediately imitating him, and the two walked slowly down to the open space before the master's desk.

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Having waited a minute, and no one else appearing, the doctor leaned forward and said to his nephew:

"You and Lloyd were on the same side, were you not?"

"Yes, sir," replied Teter.

"Well, who were the leaders of the other side? I wish to know."

"Graham and Wilding, sir," answered Teter.

"Graham and Wilding, come forward," called the doctor, sternly; and the two boys, looking very conscious and shamefaced, reluctantly left their seats and took their places before the throne.

"Now, then, I wish to be informed of the whole matter," said the doctor.

Bert looked at Teter, and Teter looked at Bert.

"You tell him," he whispered; "you know most about it."

Thereupon, with the utmost frankness, Bert proceeded to tell his story, beginning at his first talk with Ernest Linton.

The doctor listened intently, his inscrutable face revealing nothing as to how the story impressed him. When Bert had finished, he turned to Graham and Wilding, and asked them:

"Is Lloyd's statement correct? or have you anything to add?"

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They hung their heads, and were silent.

The doctor looked very hard at them for a moment, during which the silence was so intense that the fall of a pin upon the floor would have been heard; then, turning to the school, he spoke as follows:

"The events that have just transpired have hastened a decision that has been forming in my mind for some time past. I was not unaware of this practice of which Lloyd has just spoken, but deemed it well not to interfere until my interference should seem necessary. That time, in my judgment, has arrived, and I have determined that there shall be no more of this hoisting. Be it, therefore, distinctly understood by the pupils of this school, that any future attempts at the hoisting of new boys will incur punishment, and possibly even expulsion from the school. You will now resume work."

A subdued murmur of applause arose from the anti-hoisting party at the conclusion of the doctor's announcement. They had more than carried their point; for, intending only to protect Paul Linton, they had obtained the complete abolition of the practice. Bert was greatly elated, and could talk of nothing else when he got home. Father, and mother, and sister, had to listen to the fullest details of the struggle and its surprising issue, and Bert fairly outdid himself in the vigour and minuteness of his description. When the fountain of his eloquence at last ran dry, Mr. Lloyd had a chance to say, with one of his expressive smiles:

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"And so my boy has come out as a reformer. Well, Bert, dear, you have taken the first step in the most thankless and trying of all careers, and yet I would not discourage you for the world. I would a thousand times rather have you a reformer than an opposer of reforms. I wonder what work God has in store for you."

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CHAPTER XXIII.

PRIZE WINNING AND LOSING.

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There were many ways in which the methods employed at Dr. Johnston's school were unique. The system of registering attendance, proficiency, and conduct has been already fully explained. It was hardly possible that this could have been more perfect. No boy could be absent without being missed, and an explanation or excuse of a thoroughly satisfactory nature was required the next day. No mistake could occur as to the standing of the pupils in the different classes. The record of each day was all comprehensive. It constituted a photograph, so to speak, of each pupil's doings, in so far as they related to his school, and the doctor was exceedingly proud of the journals, which he kept with scrupulous care and neatness.

Another feature of the school, peculiar to itself, was the system by which a knowledge of arithmetic was fostered, and the faculty of using it quickly was developed. The whole of one morning each week was devoted to this. The scholars were grouped in classes according to their varying proficiency, care being taken to give each one a fair chance by associating him with those who were about as far advanced as himself. These classes were then arranged upon seats very much after the fashion of a Sunday school, save that instead of a teacher being in their centre, they were placed around a backless chair, in such a manner that it was equally convenient of access to all. Each boy had his slate and pencil in readiness.

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The school having been called to order, the doctor then proceeded to read out to the senior class a problem in proportion or compound interest, or whatever it might be, and this they hurriedly scribbled down on their slates. If they did not understand it fully at first, he would read it again, but of course never gave any explanations. So soon as a scholar had clearly grasped the problem to be solved he set to work at its solution with all his might, and it was a most interesting spectacle to watch when the whole class, with heads bent close to the slates, made their squeaking, scratching pencils fly over them. Every possible shade of mental condition, from confident knowledge to foreboding bewilderment, would be expressed in their faces. The instant one of them had completed his work, he banged his slate down upon the backless chair, with the writing turned under. The others followed as best they could, and all the slates being down, they awaited the doctor's coming around to their class again.

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When Dr. Johnston had completed the round of the classes, and given each a problem, he would, after a pause, call upon each in turn to read the answers as set down upon the slate. The boy whose slate was first on the chair, and therefore at the bottom of the pile, would read his answer first. If it were correct, he scored a point, and none of the others were called upon. If incorrect, the next to him would read his answer, and so on until a correct answer was given, and a point scored by somebody. Only one point could be made each round, and so the unsuccessful ones had to console themselves with the hope of having better luck next time. Not more than four or five rounds would be had each day, and it rarely happened that the same boy would be successful in all of them. Three points were considered a very good day's work, and if a boy made four points he was apt to feel that the prize in that class was as good as his, until some other boy made four points also, and thereby lessened his chances.

It did not always happen that being first down with his slate assured the scholar of scoring a point. A slight mistake in his addition, subtraction, or division might have thrown him off the track, and then number two, or maybe number three, would come in with a correct answer and triumphantly score the point, success being all the sweeter, because of being somewhat unexpected.

Now this kind of competition suited Bert thoroughly. He was as quick as any of his companions, cooler than many of them, and had by this time acquired a very good understanding of the chief principles of arithmetic. He greatly enjoyed the working against time, which was the distinctive feature of the contest. It brought out his mental powers to their utmost, and he looked forward to "arithmetic day," with an eagerness that was not caused entirely by what his father had promised him in the event of his being successful in carrying off a prize.

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In the same class with him were Frank Bowser, Ernest Linton, and a half-dozen other boys of similar age and standing in the school. He had no fear of Frank or Ernest. They were no match for him either as to knowledge, or rapidity of work; but there was a boy in the class who seemed fully his equal in both respects. This was Levi Cohen, a dark-skinned, black-haired chap, whose Jewish features were in entire harmony with his Jewish name. He was indeed a Jew, and, young though he was, had all the depth, self-control, and steadfastness of purpose of that strange race. He also had, as the sequel will show their indifference as to the rightness of the means employed so long as the end in view was gained.

The school had been in session for more than a month, and those who were particularly

interested in the arithmetic competitions were already calculating their chances of success. In Bert's class it was clear beyond a doubt that the contest lay between him and Levi Cohen. It rarely happened that they did not monopolise the points between them, and so far, they had divided them pretty evenly. One day Bert would score three and Levi two, and then the next week Levi would have three, and Bert two, and so it went on from week to week.

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As the second month drew to a close, Bert began to gain upon his rival. He nearly always made the majority of the points, and was now at least six ahead. Then suddenly the tide turned and Levi seemed to have it all his own way. The quickness with which he got the answers was bewildering. Nay, more, it was even suspicious. One familiar with the details of the problems given, and the amount of work a full working out would require, could not help being struck by the fact that Cohen seemed to arrive at his answer after a remarkably small expenditure of slate-pencil. Time and again he would have his slate down at least half-a-minute before Bert did his, although previous to this sudden change in his fortunes, the difference in time between them had been rarely more than a few seconds. Then again it was noticeable that he took the utmost care that none of the others should see what was on his slate. He did his work in a corner, hunched up over it so that it was well concealed, and he snatched his slate away from the pile at the very first opportunity.

Bert noticed all these things, and they perplexed him quite as much as Cohen's rapid gain alarmed him. He soon became convinced that there was something wrong, that Cohen was doing crooked work; but, puzzle his brains as he might, he could not get at the bottom of the mystery. Frank and Ernest fully shared his suspicions, and they had many a talk over the matter. Frank thought that Cohen must have the answers written on a piece of paper which he managed to peep at somehow while all the other boys were absorbed in working out the problems; but although he on several occasions purposely refrained from doing anything himself in order to watch Cohen the more closely, he failed to find the slightest ground for his suspicions in that direction. Then Bert put forward his theory.

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"I'll tell what it is Frank: Cohen must learn the answers off by heart, and then he sets them down without working out the whole sum."

"Shouldn't wonder a bit," said Frank. "He's got a great memory, I know, and we always can tell from what part of the arithmetic Dr. Johnston is going to get the sums."

"But how can we make sure of it, Frank?" inquired Bert, anxiously.

"The only way is to get hold of his slate, and see how he works his sums out," replied Frank.

"Yes; but he takes precious good care not to let anybody see how he does them."

"So he does; but we've got to find out some way, and I'm going to do it, so sure as my name's Frank Bowser."

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"How'll you manage it, Frank?" asked Bert, brightening up; for he really was a good deal troubled over Cohen's continued success, particularly as he felt so strongly that there was something wrong at the bottom of it.

"I don't know yet, Bert; but I'll find out a way somehow. See if you can't think of a plan yourself."

"I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll ask father about it," said Bert, in a tone that implied perfect confidence in Mr. Lloyd's ability to furnish a solution for any difficulty.

Accordingly, that evening, Bert laid the whole case before his father, who listened with judicial gravity, and then proceeded to ask a question or two:

"You feel quite sure that Cohen does not take the time to work out the sums properly?"

"Yes, father; perfectly sure."

"Then why don't you inform Dr. Johnston of your suspicions, and he will make an examination into the matter?"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Bert, with a look of profound surprise. "You wouldn't have me turn tattletale, would you?"

"No, Bert, dear; indeed, I would not, although you should lose a dozen prizes. I said that simply to see what you would think of it, and I am glad you answered me as I expected you would. But, Bert, you have asked my advice in this matter. Did you think of asking somebody else who is infinitely wiser than I am?"

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Bert understood his father at once.

"No, father; I did not. I never thought of it," he answered, frankly.

"Then had you not better do so when you are saying your prayers to-night?"

"I will, father. I'm so glad you reminded me." And with that Bert dropped the subject for the time.

That night, ere he went to bed, Bert laid the matter before his Father in heaven, just as he had done before his father upon earth. He had imbibed his ideas of prayer from what he heard from his own father at family worship. Mr. Lloyd's conception of prayer was that it could not be too simple, too straightforward. It often seemed as though God were present in the room, and he was

talking with him, so natural, so sincere, so direct were his petitions. And Bert had learned to pray in the same manner. A listener might at times be tempted to smile at the frankness, the naïvete of Bert's requests; but they were uttered not more in boyish earnest than in truest reverence by the petitioner.

The next morning, when Bert came down to the breakfast-room, he was evidently in the best of spirits.

"It's all right, father," said he. "I asked God to show me what's the best thing to do, and I'm sure He will."

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"That's it, Bert; that's the way to look at it," replied Mr. Lloyd, with a smile of warm approval.

On reaching the school Bert found Frank awaiting him.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he shouted, so soon as Bert appeared. "I know how Levi manages it now."

"How is it?" asked Bert, eagerly.

"Why, he learns all the answers off by heart, and then doesn't work out the sums at all, but just pretends to, and slaps down the answer before the rest of us fellows are half through," explained Frank.

"To be sure, Frank; you know I thought of that before. But how are we going to stop him?"

"That's just what I'm coming to. When the time comes to read the answers I'm going to take up the slates, just as if mine was down first; and then, if Levi's been playing sharp on us, I'll expose him."

"What a brick you are!" exclaimed Bert, admiringly, patting Frank on the back. "That's a grand plan of yours, and I do believe it's the way God is going to answer my prayer."

"Answer your prayer, Bert? Why, what do you mean?" inquired Frank.

"Why, you know, Frank, last night when I was saying my prayers, I told God all about it, and now I believe He's going to make it all right. You just see if He doesn't."

Frank was evidently very much struck with the idea of his being chosen by God to answer Bert's prayer. It was quite a new thought, and made a deep impression upon him. He was a clear and strong, if not very rapid, reasoner, and his reasoning in this case led him to the conclusion that if God thought that much of him he certainly ought to think more of God. He did not talk about it to anyone, but for many days his mind was occupied with thoughts of this nature, and their direct result was to lead him nearer to the kingdom.

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At the very first opportunity Frank put his plan into execution. Arithmetic day came round, the class gathered in its place, the first sum was read out to them, and before Bert was half through working it out, Levi Cohen placed his slate softly upon the chair, and leaned back in his seat with a sly smile lurking in the corners of his mouth. Frank glanced up from his work, gave Bert a meaning look, and then dropped his slate upon Cohen's with a loud bang. The others followed more slowly, and presently the time came for the answers to be read.

Before Cohen could leave his corner, Frank rose up, seized the pile of slates, turned them over, and examined the first intently, while Bert watched him with breathless expectancy, and Cohen, at first too surprised to act, sprang forward to wrest it from his hands. But Frank moved out of his reach, and at the same time, with a triumphant smile, exhibited the face of the slate to the rest of the class, saying, in a loud whisper:

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"Look, boys, that's the way he works them out."

Dr. Johnston noticed the slight commotion this created, but he was too far away to see clearly what it meant, so he called out:

"Why does not class six read their answers?"

Cohen stood up, and held up his hand.

"Well, Cohen, what is it?" asked the doctor.

"Please, sir, Bowser has taken my slate, and won't give it to me," answered Cohen, in a whining voice.

"Bowser, what's the meaning of this? What are you doing with Cohen's slate?" demanded the doctor, frowning darkly.

Frank did not look a bit frightened, but still holding on to the slate, which Cohen was making ineffectual efforts to regain, replied, in respectful tones:

"May I hand you the slate first, sir?"

At these words Cohen turned ashy pale, and Dr. Johnston, realising that there must be something going on that required explanation, ordered Frank to bring all the slates up to him.

With radiant face Frank proceeded to obey, giving Bert a triumphant look as he passed by him, while Cohen shrank back into his corner, and bit his nails as though he would devour his finger

tips. Taking up Cohen's slate, the doctor scrutinised it carefully. One glance was sufficient. A deep flush spread over his dark face, his eyes lighted up threateningly, and in his sternest tones he called out:

"Cohen, come here!"

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Amid the expectant hush of the school, none but class six knowing what was the matter, Cohen, looking as though he would give his right hand to be able to sink through the floor, walked slowly up into the dreadful presence of the angered master. Holding up the slate before him, Dr. Johnston asked:

"Is this your slate, sir?"

Cohen gave it a cowering glance, and said, faintly:

"Yes, sir."

"How long has this been going on?" thundered the doctor.

Cohen made no reply.

"Answer me, sir, at once. How long has this been going on?" repeated the doctor.

"I don't quite know, sir; but not very long," faltered out Cohen.

With an exclamation of disgust, Dr. Johnston turned from him, and, holding the slate up high so that all the school might see it, relieved the curiosity of the scholars, now at fever pitch, by addressing them thus:

"Cohen has just been detected in one of the most contemptible tricks that has come under my observation since I have been master of this school. He has evidently been committing to memory the answers to the problems that would be given out, and instead of doing the work properly has been scratching down a few figures, then writing the answers, and so finishing long before any of the other scholars. I need hardly say that this is not only a most contemptible trick, as I have already said, but a serious blow at the principles of fair play and justice which should regulate the winning of prizes in this school. I therefore feel bound to express my indignation at Cohen's offence in the most decided manner."

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Turning to Cohen: "You, sir, shall stand upon the floor for punishment. All the points scored by you already this term will be taken from you, and you will not be permitted to compete for any prize until I shall so determine."

A kind of subdued whistle rose from the boys when they heard the doctor's severe, and yet not too severe, sentence. Cohen was no favourite with them; and yet they could not help some pity for him, as thoroughly cowed and crushed he stood before them all, the very picture of misery. Bert's tender heart was so touched by his abject appearance, that he half relented at his exposure. But Frank was troubled by no such second thoughts. The unexpectedly complete success of his scheme filled him with delight. It had accomplished two objects, both of which gave him keen pleasure. Bert's most dangerous rival for the prize had been put out of the way, and Cohen, whom he cordially disliked, had been well punished for his knavery.

With Cohen disqualified, Bert had a comparatively easy time of it for the rest of the term. He usually managed to secure four out of the five points obtainable, and steadily added to his score until at last there was no chance of anyone beating him, and he could look forward with comfortable confidence to the prize that meant so much in his case. A few days before Christmas the results were declared, and the prizes awarded, and although Bert gained only the one upon which his heart had been set, while other boys carried off two, and even three, he envied none of them. Their prizes meant nothing more perhaps than the brightly-bound books which the doctor selected with special reference to boyish preferences. But *his* prize meant more than a book. It meant a pony. And so if he was the happiest boy in all the land of Acadia it was not without good reason. Frank was hardly less jubilant, for he had gained his prize, and there was a hope taking strong hold upon his heart, that if fortune was kind to him, there might be a pony for him as well as for Bert.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

A CHAPTER ON PONIES.

It was a proud day for Bert when he came home from school, bearing a handsome volume of Captain Gordon Cumming's Adventures in Africa, and he felt as though he could scarcely wait for his father's return from the office, so eager was he to show him his prize. As it was, he watched impatiently for him, and so soon as he came in sight rushed toward him, holding the book above his head, and shouting:

"I've won it. I've won the prize."

The Lloyds were all quite as proud as Bert himself over his success, and they made a very merry

quartette as they sat around the dinner-table that evening.

"Dear me! I suppose I'll have to keep my promise now, though it takes my last cent to pay for it," said Mr. Lloyd, with a pretence of looking rueful.

"Indeed you will, father. I'm not going to let you off, of that you may be sure," exclaimed Bert, gleefully, knowing very well that his father was only in fun, and that it would take the cost of a good many ponies to reach his last cent.

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"Well, then, sir, since you insist upon it, may I venture to inquire what sort of a pony you would like."

"Oh, I don't know, father."

"I suppose you're not very particular, Bert, so long as he'll let you stay on his back," said Mr. Lloyd, smiling.

"That's about it, father," assented Bert.

"Be sure and get a nice, quiet pony that won't run away with Bert, or give him a nasty kick some time," interposed Mrs. Lloyd, with an anxious look, as she contemplated the possibility of some accident happening to her darling.

"Never fear, mother, I'll make sure of that," answered Mr. Lloyd, with a reassuring smile. "And for that very reason," he continued, addressing himself to Bert, "I may be some time in finding one just to suit. So you must be patient, my little man, and be willing to wait, so that when your pony does come, he may be a good one."

As it turned out, Bert had to wait several months, and the chill winter had given way to the warm sunshine of spring, and the boy's patience had almost given way altogether, when at last his father, on coming home one evening, announced, to his immense joy, that after much searching he had secured a pony that thoroughly suited him, and that this equine treasure would be brought to the house the next morning early.

If Bert was too much excited to sleep for more than half-an-hour at a time that night, who cannot sympathise with him? And if, when he did fall into a troubled doze, he had nightmare visions which soon woke him up again, who would dare laugh at him? In all his young life he had never been in such a fever of expectation, and long before dawn he was wide awake, with no hope of again closing his eyes, and tossed and tumbled about until it was light enough to get up and dress himself.

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As soon as he had dressed he went down to the barn to assure himself for the twentieth time that the little stall was in perfect readiness; that there was no lack of oats in the bin or hay in the loft; that the brand-new halter was hanging in its place, waiting to be clasped upon the head of the coming pony, and thus he managed to while away the time until the breakfast bell rang.

The pony was to arrive shortly after breakfast, and, hungry as he was, Bert could scarcely be persuaded to taste his porridge, toast, or coffee, and he made the others laugh by jumping up to run to the door at the slightest suspicion of a sound in the street. At length, just when he had settled down again after one of these excursions, the door bell rang vigorously. Bert rushed through the hall, opened the door, and immediately there was a glad shout of "Hurrah! Here he is! Isn't he a beauty?" which brought the whole family to the door, and there they beheld the overjoyed boy with his arms clasped tightly round the neck of a brown pony that seemed to quite appreciate this little demonstration, while the groom looked on with a superior smile at Bert's enthusiasm.

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The pony was indeed a beauty. He was of a rich brown colour, without a white spot upon him, just high enough for Bert to see comfortably over his back, and as round and plump as the best master could wish. His head was small and perfectly shaped, his neck beautifully arched, and he had large brown eyes that looked out upon the world with an intelligence almost human. He had the highest testimonials as to soundness of wind and limb, and sweetness of temper, and was altogether just the very kind of a pony to make a boy happy.

And yet all of his good points have not been recounted. He had a list of accomplishments quite as long as his list of virtues, for at some previous stage of his life he had, on account of his beauty and great docility, been put in training for the circus; and although for some reason or other he had never got so far as to make his appearance in the saw-dust arena, he had been taught a great many tricks, and these he was generally willing to perform, provided an apple or lump of sugar were held out as a reward.

All this the groom explained while they were standing at the door, and then the pony, having been sufficiently introduced, was led round to the yard, and duly installed in his corner of the stable, Bert clinging as close to him as if he feared he had wings like the fabled Pegasus, and might fly away if not carefully watched.

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"The pony was a beauty, just high enough for Bert to see comfortably over his back."—Page 256.

The days that followed were days of unalloyed happiness to Bert. He, of course, had to learn to ride "Brownie," as the pony was christened by Mary, to whom was referred the question of a name. But it was an easy matter learning to ride so gentle and graceful a creature. First at a walk, then at a trot, then at a canter, and finally at full gallop, Bert ere long made the circuit of the neighbouring squares; and as he became more thoroughly at home he extended his rides to the Point, where there were long stretches of tree-shaded road that seemed just intended for being ridden over.

The best of it was that, as Bert prophesied, the wish being in his case father to the thought, Mr. Bowser did follow Mr. Lloyd's example.

"I reckon I can stand a pony for my boy about as well as Lawyer Lloyd can for his," said he to himself, pressing his hand upon a fat wallet in his pocket, after Frank had been earnestly petitioning him, without eliciting any favourable response. "There's no point in Frank's going on foot while Bert's on horseback. I must see about it."

He gave poor disappointed Frank, however, no hint of what he had in mind; and then one day he made him fairly wild with delight, by sending home a pretty bay pony with a star in his forehead, which, although he was not quite as handsome or accomplished as "Brownie," was an excellent little animal, nevertheless. Oh, what proud, happy boys the two friends were, the first day they rode out together! It was a lovely afternoon, not too warm to make it hard upon the ponies, and they rode right round the Point, and along the road skirting the arm of the sea, going much farther than Bert had ever been before; now pattering along the smooth dry road at a rattling pace, and now jogging on quietly with the reins hanging loosely on the ponies' necks. If Bert's pony knew the more tricks, Frank's showed the greater speed, so they both had something to be especially proud of, and were content accordingly.

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Brownie's performances were very amusing indeed, and after he and his young master had become thoroughly acquainted, he would go through them whenever called upon to do so. Often when the Lloyds had guests, they would entertain them by having Bert put Brownie through his programme. Then the cute little fellow would be at his best, for he evidently enjoyed an appreciative audience quite as much as they did his feats. He would begin by making a very respectful bow to the spectators, lifting his pretty head as high as he could, and bringing it down until his nose touched his breast. He would then, as commanded, "say his prayers," which he did by kneeling with his forefeet, and dropping his head upon his knees; "knock at the door," which meant going up to the nearest door, and knocking at it with his hoof until some one opened it; "walk like a gentleman"—that is, rear up on his hind legs, and walk up and down the yard; "go to sleep," by lying down and shutting his big brown eyes tight; shake hands by gracefully extending his right hoof; allow a cap to be placed on his head, and then sidle up and down the yard in the most roguish way; and other little tricks no less amusing, which never failed to elicit rounds of

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applause from the delighted spectators.

There were many ways in which Brownie endeared himself to every member of the Lloyd family. If Mrs. Lloyd or Mary happened to come into the yard when, as often happened, he was roaming about loose, he would go up to them and rub his nose gently against their shoulder, thus saying as plainly as could be, "Haven't you got a crust for me?" and the moment Mr. Lloyd showed himself, Brownie's nose would be snuffing at his coat pockets for the bit of apple or lump of sugar that rarely failed to be there. As for his bearing toward Bert, it showed such affection, obedience, and intelligence, that it is not to be wondered at, if the boy sometimes asked himself if the "Houyhnhnms" of Gulliver's Travels had not their counterpart in nature, after all.

Great, then, was the concern and sorrow when, after he had been just a year with them, Brownie fell sick, and the veterinary surgeon said that he must be sent away to the country to see if that would make him well again. Bert sobbed bitterly when the little invalid was led away. He would have dearly loved to accompany Brownie, but that could not be managed, so there was nothing for it but to wait patiently at home for the news from the sick pony.

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Unhappily, the reports were not cheering. Each time they were less hopeful, and at last one dull rainy day that Bert was long in forgetting, the farmer came himself to say that despite his utmost care dear little Brownie had died, and was now buried beneath a willow tree in a corner of the pasture. Poor Bert! This was the first great grief of his life. Had Brownie been a human companion, he could hardly have felt his loss more keenly or sorrowed more sincerely. The little, empty stall, the brass-mounted bridle, and steel-stirruped saddle hanging up beside it, brought out his tears afresh every time he looked upon them. Frank did his best to console him by offering him the use of his pony whenever he liked; but, ah! though "Charlie" was a nice enough pony, he could not fill the blank made by Brownie's loss.

In the meantime Mr. Lloyd had been making diligent inquiry about a successor to Brownie, and had come to the conclusion to await the annual shipment from Sable Island, and see if a suitable pony could not be picked out from the number. The announcement of this did much to arouse Bert from his low spirits, and as Mr. Lloyd told him about those Sable Island ponies he grew more and more interested. They certainly have a curious history. To begin with, nobody knows just how they got on that strange, wild, desolate, sand bank that rises from the ocean about a hundred miles to the east of Nova Scotia. Had they the power of speech, and were they asked to give an account of themselves, they would probably reply with Topsy that "they didn't know—they 'spects they grow'd." There they are, however, to the number of several hundred, and there they have been ever since anybody knew anything about Sable Island. And such a place for ponies to be! It is nothing but a bank of sand, not twenty-five miles long, by about one and a-half wide, covered here and there with patches of dense coarse grass, wild pea vine, and cranberry swamps. There are no trees, no brooks, no daisied meadows, and through all seasons of the year the ponies are out exposed to the weather, whether it be the furious snow storms of winter, the burning heat of summer, or the mad gales of the autumn.

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Once a year the Government officials who live upon the island, having charge of the lighthouses and relief stations, for it is a terrible place for wrecks, have what the Western ranchmen would call a "round-up" of the ponies. They are all driven into a big "corral" at one end of the island, and the best of the younger ones carefully culled out, the rest being set free again. Those selected are then at the first opportunity put on board a ship and carried off to Halifax, where rough, shaggy, ungroomed, and untamed, they are sold at auction to the highest bidders.

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It was one of these ponies that Mr. Lloyd proposed to purchase for Bert. The latter was an expert rider now, and could be intrusted with a much more spirited animal than dear, little Brownie. The arrival of the annual shipment was accordingly looked forward to by both Bert and his father with a good deal of interest, Bert wondering if on the whole shipload there would be anything to compare with Brownie, and Mr. Lloyd hoping that he would be able to obtain a pony big enough to carry him if he felt in the humour for a ride on a bright summer morning.

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CHAPTER XXV.

ABOUT TWO KINDS OF PONIES.

In due time the Sable Island ponies arrived, and were announced to be sold by auction, at the Government Wharf. Taking Bert with him, Mr. Lloyd went down in time to have a good look at the shipment before the sale commenced, so that he might have his mind made up before beginning to bid. They certainly were a queer lot of little creatures. Not a curry-comb had touched their hides since they were born, nor had the shears ever been near their manes or tails. Their coats were long, thick, and filled with dirt; their manes and tails of prodigious length, and matted together in inextricable knots. They were of all colours, and within certain limits of all sizes. Brown, bay, black, piebald, grey, and sorrel. There was no lack of variety; and Mr. Lloyd and Bert wandered up and down the long line as they stood tethered to the wall, scrutinising them closely, and sorely puzzled as to which to decide upon.

It was, of course, quite impossible to tell anything as to disposition, for all the ponies seemed equally wild and terrified at their novel situation; but, after going over them carefully, Mr. Lloyd

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decided upon a very promising-looking black pony that stood near the middle of the row. He was of a good size, seemed to be in better condition than many of those around him, had a well-shaped head, and altogether presented about as attractive an appearance as any in the lot.

There were numerous bidders at the auction, and Bert grew deeply interested in the selling, as pony after pony was put up, and after a more or less spirited contest, according to his looks, was knocked down to the person that bid the highest for him. By the time the pony his father had selected was reached, he was fairly trembling with excitement. He was full of apprehension lest somebody else should take him away from them, and when the bidding began, he watched every movement and word of the auctioneer with breathless anxiety, raising quite a laugh at one time, by answering his oft-repeated question "Will anybody give me five? I have thirty—will anybody give me five?" with an eager "I will!" that was easily heard by everybody in the crowd. It was an immense relief to him, when, at length, after what seemed to him most unnecessary persistence in trying to get more, the auctioneer called out "Going, going, going, at thirty-five dollars. Will you give me any more? Going at thirty-five—going, going, *gone*; and sold to Mr. Lloyd."

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Thirty-five dollars does not seem very much to give for a pony; but considering that this pony had everything to learn, and nobody to guarantee his good behaviour, it was a fair enough price for him. The getting him home proved to be quite a serious undertaking. The strange sights and sounds of the city streets did not merely frighten him—they positively crazed him for the time; and it took two strong men, one on either side of his head, to guide him in safety to the stable. Once securely fastened in the stall, he quieted down in time, but not one bite of food would he touch that day, nor the next, although Bert tried to tempt him with everything of which Brownie had been fond. This troubled Bert very much. He began to fear his new pony would starve to death. But his father reassured him.

"Don't be alarmed, my boy. The pony will find his appetite all right so soon as he gets used to his new quarters," said Mr. Lloyd.

And sure enough on the third morning, Bert, to his great relief, found the oat box licked clean, and the pony looking round wistfully for something more to eat. After that, the difficulty lay rather in satisfying than in tempting his appetite. He proved an insatiable eater. But then nobody thought of stinting him, especially as his bones were none too well covered.

It was with great difficulty that he could be persuaded to allow himself to be groomed. He would start at the touch of the curry-comb, as though it gave him an electric shock, and Michael, who combined in himself the offices of groom and gardener, declared that "of all the pesky, fidgety critters that ever stood on four legs, he never did see the like of this 'ere Sable Islander." Michael's opinion was not improved when he came to break the little Sable Islander in, for he led him such a dance day after day that his stout heart was well-nigh broken before the pony's will showed any signs of being broken. However, patience and kindness, combined with firmness, eventually won the day; and Michael, with considerable pride announced that "Sable," as it had been decided to call him, was ready for use.

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Mr. Lloyd thought it best to ride Sable for a week or two before Bert should mount him, and to this arrangement Bert was nothing loath, for the pony's actions while in process of being broken in had rather subdued his eagerness to trust himself upon him. As it chanced, Mr. Lloyd came very near paying a severe penalty for his thoughtfulness. He had been out several mornings on Sable, and had got along very well. One morning while he was in the act of mounting, the gate suddenly slammed behind him with a loud bang. The pony at once started off at full gallop. Mr. Lloyd succeeded in throwing himself into the saddle, but could not get his feet into the stirrups, and when the frightened creature upon which he had so insecure a hold swerved sharply round at the end of the street, he was hurled from his seat like a stone from a catapult, and fell headlong, striking his right temple upon the hard ground.

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A few minutes later Mrs. Lloyd was startled by a hasty rap at the door, and on opening it beheld her husband supported between two men, his face ghastly pale, and stained with blood from a wound on his forehead. She was a brave woman, and although her heart almost stood still with agonised apprehension, she did not lose control of herself for an instant. Directing Mr. Lloyd to be carried into the parlour and laid gently upon the sofa, Mrs. Lloyd bathed his head and face while Mary chafed his hands; and presently, to their unspeakable joy, he recovered consciousness. Fortunately, his injuries proved to be comparatively slight. Beyond a cut on his forehead, a bad headache, and a general shaking up, he had suffered no material injury, and he would not listen to Mrs. Lloyd's finding any fault with Sable for the accident.

"Tut! tut! Kate," said he; "the pony was not to blame at all. Any horse might have been frightened by a gate banging to at his heels. The fault was mine in not seeing that the gate was shut before I mounted. No; no, you must not blame poor, little Sable."

Curiously enough, Bert had a somewhat similar experience shortly after he began to ride Sable. At a little distance from the house was a hill up which the street led, and then down the other side out into the country. The ascent was pretty steep, the descent not so much so, and Bert liked to walk his pony up to the top, and then canter down the other side. One afternoon, just as he reached the summit, a little street boy, probably by way of expressing the envy he felt for those who could afford to ride, threw a stone at Sable, which struck him a stinging blow on the hindquarters. Like an arrow from the bow, the pony was off. Taking the bit in his teeth, and straightening his head out, he went at full speed down the hill, Bert holding on for dear life with his heart in his mouth, and his hat from his head.

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In some way or other, he himself never knew exactly how, he got both his feet out of the stirrups, and it was well for him he did, for just at the bottom of the hill, when he was going like a greyhound, Sable stopped short, lowered his head, flung up his heels, and, without the slightest protest or delay, Bert went flying from the saddle, and landed in the middle of the dusty road in a sitting posture with his legs stretched out before him. The saucy pony paused just long enough to make sure that his rider was disposed of beyond a doubt, and then galloped away, apparently in high glee.

Bert was not hurt in the least. He had never sat down quite so unexpectedly before, but the thick dust of the road made an excellent cushion, and he was soon upon his feet, and in full cry after the runaway. Thanks to a gentleman on horseback who had witnessed the whole scene, and went immediately in chase of Sable, the latter was soon recaptured, and Bert, having thanked his friend in need, and brushed some of the dust from his clothes, remounted his mischievous steed, and rode him for the rest of the afternoon.

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After those two somewhat unpromising performances, Sable settled down into very good habits, and during all the rest of the time that he was in Bert's possession did not again disgrace himself by running away or pitching anyone off his back. He never became the pet that Brownie had been, but he was, upon the whole, a more useful animal, so that Bert came to feel himself well compensated for his loss.

About this time Bert made the acquaintance of a pony of a very different sort. How, indeed, it came to have this name does not seem to be very clear, for what natural connection can be established between a diminutive horse, and a discreditable method of reducing the difficulties of a lesson in Latin or Greek? It would appear to be a very unjust slur upon a very worthy little animal, to say the least.

Bert's first knowledge of the other kind of pony was when in the course of his study of Latin he came to read Sallust. Cæsar he had found comparatively easy, and with no other aid than the grammar and lexicon he could, in the course of an hour or so, get out a fair translation of the passage to be mastered. But Sallust gave him no end of trouble. There was something in the involved obscure style of this old historian that puzzled him greatly, and he was constantly being humiliated by finding that when, after much labour, he had succeeded in making some sort of sense out of a sentence, Dr. Johnston would pronounce his translation altogether wrong, and proceed to read it in quite another way.

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As it happened, just when Bert was in the middle of those difficulties, Mr. Lloyd was called away from home on important business which entailed an absence for many weeks, and consequently Bert was deprived of his assistance, which was always so willingly given.

He had been struggling with Sallust for some time, and was making but very unsatisfactory headway, when one day, chancing to express to Regie Selwyn his envy of the seeming ease with which the latter got along, Regie looked at him with a knowing smile, and asked:

"Don't you know how I get my translation so pat?"

"No," replied Bert; "tell me, won't you?"

"Why, I use a pony, of course," responded Regie.

"A pony!" exclaimed Bert, in a tone of surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, come now," said Regie, with an incredulous smile. "Do you mean to say that you don't know what a pony is?"

"I do, really," returned Bert. "Please tell me, like a good fellow."

"Come along home with me after school, and I'll show you," said Regie.

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"All right," assented Bert; "I will."

Accordingly, that afternoon when school had been dismissed, Bert accompanied Regie home, and there the latter took him to his room, and produced a book which contained the whole of Sallust turned into clear, simple English.

"There," said he, placing the volume in Bert's hands; "that's what I mean by a pony."

Bert opened the book, glanced at a page or two, took in the character of its contents, and then, with a feeling as though he had touched a serpent, laid it down again, saying:

"But do you think it's right to use this book in getting up your Sallust, Regie?"

Regie laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Where's the harm, my boy. If you can't translate old Sallust by yourself, you can't, that's all, and you've got to wait for Dr. Johnston to do it for you. Now, mightn't you just as well get it out of this book at once, and save all the trouble," he argued, glibly.

This was very fallacious reasoning, but somehow or other it impressed Bert as having a good deal of force in it. The simple truth was that he was willing to be convinced. But he did not feel quite satisfied yet.

"Then, of course, you never look at it until you have done your best to get the lesson out without

it?" he asked.

"That depends. Sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't," answered Regie, in a tone that implied very plainly that the latter "sometimes" occurred much more frequently than the former. [Pg 272]

Bert took up the book again and fingered it thoughtfully.

"Could I get one if I wanted to?" he asked, presently.

"Why, of course," answered Regie. "There are many more at Gossip's where I got this, I guess."

Bert said no more; and the two boys soon began talking about something else.

For some days thereafter Bert was in a very perplexed state of mind. It seemed as though "the stars in their courses" were fighting not against, but in favour of his getting a "pony" for himself. His father's absence was indefinitely prolonged, the Sallust grew more and more difficult, and demanded so much time, that Bert's chance of winning one of the prizes for general proficiency was seriously jeopardised.

Instead of dismissing the subject from his mind altogether, he fell to reasoning about it, and then his danger really began, for the more he reasoned, the weaker his defences grew. There seemed so much to be said in favour of the pony; and, after all, if he did not resort to it until he had done his best to work out the translation unaided, what would be the harm?

Clearly Bert was in a perilous position. Right and wrong were strongly contending for the victory, and much would depend upon the issue of the conflict. [Pg 273]

CHAPTER XXVI.

VICTORY WON FROM DEFEAT.

Bert had reached an age and stage of development when the raising of a decided issue between right and wrong was a matter of vital consequence. Although he had little more than rounded out a dozen years of life, his natural bent of mind and the influences surrounding him had been such as to make him seem at least two years older when compared with his contemporaries. He thought much, and, considering his age, deeply. His parents had always admitted him into full fellowship with themselves, and he had thus acquired their way of thinking upon many subjects. Then his religious training had been more than ordinarily thorough. The influences and inspiration of a Christian home had been supplemented and strengthened by the teaching at Sunday school of one who possessed a rare gift in the management of boys. Mr. Silver not only understood his boys: he was in hearty and complete sympathy with them; and the truth came from him with peculiar force, as he met them Sunday after Sunday. [Pg 274]

Bert therefore would appear to have everything in his favour when set upon by the tempter, and it might seem strange that in this case he should dally so long with the danger. But the fact is there were unusual elements in this temptation, such as have been already set forth, and Bert's course of action from the time when he first saw the translation of Sallust in Regie Selwyn's room, until when at length after days of indecision, of halting between two opinions, of now listening to, and again spurning the suggestions of the tempter, he had a copy of the same book hidden away in his own room, was but another illustration of the familiar experience, that he who stops to argue with the tempter, has as good as lost his case.

He tried hard to persuade himself that it was all right, and that it would be all right, but nevertheless it was with none too easy a conscience that he slipped into Gossip's one afternoon, and timidly inquired for the Sallust translation. The clerk did not understand at first, and when he asked Bert to repeat his question a cold shiver went down the boy's back, for he felt sure the man must have divined his purpose in procuring the book. But, of course, it was only an unnecessary alarm, and soon with the volume under his arm, and breathing much more freely, he was hastening homeward.

At first he kept very faithfully to the programme he had laid down of not resorting to the "pony" until he had done his best without it. Then little by little he fell into the way of referring to it whenever he was at a loss regarding a word, until at last he came to depend upon it altogether, and the fluent translations that won Dr. Johnston's approbation day after day were really nothing better than stolen matter. [Pg 275]

Yet all this time he was far from having peace of mind. That troublesome conscience of his acted as though it would never become reconciled to this method of studying the classics. On the contrary, it seemed to grow increasingly sensitive upon the point. Finally the matter was brought to a head in a very unsuspected manner.

No mention has been made in these pages of one who occupied a very large place in Bert's affection and admiration—namely, the Rev. Dr. Chrystal, the pastor of Calvary Church. Dr. Chrystal was a man of middle age and medium height, with a countenance so winning and manners so attractive, that Mr. Lloyd was wont to call him St. John, the beloved disciple, because his name was John, and everybody who knew him loved him. It was not merely by the elders of

his congregation, who could fully appreciate the breadth and soundness of his scholarship, the richness of his rhetoric, and the warmth of his eloquence, but by the younger members also, who loved his sunny smile, and hearty laugh, that Dr. Chrystal was little short of worshipped.

Bert had been his warm admirer ever since the time when on his pastoral visits he would take the little fellow up on his knee, and draw him out about his own amusements and ambitions, giving such interested attention to his childish prattle that Bert could not fail to feel he had in him a real friend. As he grew older, his liking for the minister deepened. He never had that foolish fear of "the cloth" which is so apt to be found in boys of his age. Dr. Chrystal was a frequent visitor at Bert's home. Mr. Lloyd was one of the main supporters of his church, and the two men had much to consult about. Besides that, the preacher loved to discuss the subjects of the day with the keen-witted, far-seeing lawyer, who helped him to many a telling point for the sermon in preparation.

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This, of course, was quite beyond Bert, but what he could and did fully appreciate was the skill and strength with which Dr. Chrystal, having laid aside his clerical coat, would handle a pair of sculls when he went out boating with them, in the fine summer evenings.

"I tell you what it is, Frank," said he, enthusiastically to his friend one day. "There's nothing soft about our minister. He can pull just as well as any man in the harbour. That's the sort of minister I like. Don't you?"

One Sunday evening, after Bert had been using his "pony" some little time—for although his father had returned, he had come so to depend upon it, that he continued to resort to it in secret—Dr. Chrystal preached a sermon of more than usual power from the text, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." It was a frank, faithful address, in which he sought to speak the truth in tenderness, and yet with direct application to his hearers. If any among them were disbelievers in the doctrine that honesty is the best policy, and acted accordingly, they could hardly hope to dodge the arrows of argument and appeal shot forth from the pulpit that evening.

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Bert was one of the first to be transfixed. When the text was announced he wriggled a bit, as though it pricked him somewhere; but when, further on, Dr. Chrystal spoke in plain terms of the dishonesty of false pretences, of claiming to be what you really are not, of seeking credit for what is not actually your own work, Bert's head sank lower and lower, his cheeks burned with shame, and, feeling that the speaker must in some mysterious way have divined his guilty secret, and be preaching directly at him, he sank back in his seat, and wished with wild longing that he could run away from those flashing eyes that seemed to be looking right through him, and from the sound of that clear, strong voice, whose every tone went straight to his heart.

But, of course, there was no escape, and he had to listen to the sermon to the end, although, had it been possible, he would gladly have thrust his fingers in his ears that he might hear no more. He felt immensely relieved when the service was over, and he could go out into the cool, dark evening air. He was very silent as he walked home with his parents, and so soon as prayers were over went off to his room, saying that he was tired.

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For the next few days there was not a more miserable boy in Halifax than Cuthbert Lloyd. He was a prey to contending feelings that gave him not one moment's peace. His better nature said, "Be manly, and confess." The tempter whispered, "Be wise, and keep it to yourself." As for the cause of all this trouble, it lay untouched in the bottom drawer of his bureau. He could not bear to look at it, and he worked out his Sallust as best he could, causing Dr. Johnston much surprise by the unexpected mistakes he made in translating. He became so quiet and sober that his mother grew quite concerned, and asked him more than once if he felt ill, to which, with a pretence of a laugh, he replied:

"Not a bit of it. I'm all right."

But he wasn't all right, by any means, as his father's keen eyes soon discovered. Mr. Lloyd, like his wife, thought at first that Bert's queer ways must be due to ill health; but after watching him awhile he came to the conclusion that the boy's trouble was mental, rather than physical, and he determined to take the first opportunity of probing the matter. The opportunity soon came. Mrs. Lloyd and Mary were out for the evening, leaving Bert and his father at home. Bert was studying his lessons at the table, while his father sat in the arm-chair near by, reading the paper. Every now and then, as he bent over his books, Bert gave a deep sigh that seemed to well up from the very bottom of his heart. Mr. Lloyd noted this, and presently, laying his paper down, said, pleasantly:

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"Bert, dear, put your lessons aside for a few minutes, and come over here. I want to have a talk with you."

Bert started and flushed slightly, but obeyed at once, drawing his chair close up beside his father's. Laying his hand upon Bert's knee, and looking him full in the face, Mr. Lloyd asked:

"Now, Bert, tell me what's the matter with you? There's something on your mind, I know; and it has not been your way to keep any secrets from me. Won't you tell me what is troubling you?"

Bert fidgeted in his chair, the flush deepened in his face, his eyes dropped before his father's searching gaze, and his hands worked nervously. At last, with an apparent effort, he replied, in a low tone:

"There's nothing the matter with me, father."

Mr. Lloyd sighed, and looked troubled.

"Yes, there is, Bert. You know there is. Now, don't conceal it from me, but speak right out. Remember your motto, Bert: 'Quit you like men.'"

The working of Bert's countenance showed clearly the struggle that was going on within, and there was silence for a moment, while Mr. Lloyd awaited his answer, praying earnestly the while that his boy might be helped to do the right. Then, suddenly, Bert sprang up, darted toward the door, and heeding not his father's surprised exclamation of—"Bert, Bert, aren't you going to answer me?" ran up the stairs to his own room. An instant more and he returned, bearing a volume which he placed in Mr. Lloyd's hands; and then, throwing himself on the sofa, he buried his head in the cushions, and burst into a passion of tears.

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Bewildered by this unexpected action, Mr. Lloyd's first impulse was to take his boy in his arms and try to soothe him. Then he bethought himself of the book lying in his lap, and turned to it for an explanation of the mystery. It was an innocent-enough looking volume, and seemed at first glance to make matters no clearer, but as he held it in his hands there came back to him the recollection of his own schoolboy days, and like a flash the thing was plain to him. Bert had been using a "pony," and in some way had come to realise the extent of his wrong-doing.

With feelings divided between sorrow that his boy should fall a victim to this temptation, and gladness that he should have the courage to confess it, Mr. Lloyd went over to the sofa, lifted Bert up gently, and placed him on the chair beside him.

"Come, now, Bert, dear," said he, in his tenderest tones, "don't be afraid, but just tell me all about it."

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In a voice much broken by sobs, Bert then told the whole story, beginning with the first conversation with Regie Selwyn, and leaving out nothing. His father listened intently, and it was clear the recital moved him deeply. When it ended, he silently lifted up his heart in praise to God that his darling boy had been delivered from so great a danger, and he determined that Dr. Chrystal should not fail to hear how effective his faithful preaching had been.

"I need not tell you, Bert, how sad this makes my heart, but I will not add my reproaches to the remorse you already feel," said he, gravely. "You have done very, very wrong, dear, and it is now your duty to make that wrong right again, so far as is in your power. What do you think yourself you ought to do?"

"I must ask God to forgive me, father," answered Bert, almost in a whisper.

"But is that all? Is there no one else of whom you should ask forgiveness?"

"Yes, of you."

"I have forgiven you already, Bert, for I know that you are sincerely sorry. But I think there is some one else still. Ought you not to ask Dr. Johnston's forgiveness?"

"Why, father," exclaimed Bert, looking up with an expression of surprise, "Dr. Johnston does not know anything about it."

"Ah, yes, Bert, true enough; but remember that ever since you've been using the translation you've been getting credit from him for work you had not really done. Was that providing things honest in the sight of all men, do you think?"

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Bert flushed and looked down again. He was silent for a little while, and then said:

"But, father, I could never tell Dr. Johnston. He is so stern and severe."

"Do you think God will ever fully forgive you while you are concealing from Dr. Johnston what you ought in common honesty to tell him?"

This question evidently staggered him, and Mr. Lloyd, seeing what a struggle was going on within him, put his hand upon his shoulder, and said, with tender emphasis:

"Remember, Bert: 'Quit you like men, be strong.'"

For a moment longer Bert seemed irresolute. Then suddenly his countenance brightened, his features settled into an expression of firm determination, and rising to his feet, with hands clenched and eyes flashing, he stood before his father, and almost shouted:

"Yes, father, I will; I'll tell him. I don't care what he does to me."

"God bless you, my brave boy!" exclaimed Mr. Lloyd, as, almost over-mastered by his emotions, he threw his arms around his neck, and hugged him to his heart, the big tears pouring down his happy face.

Just at that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Lloyd and Mary entered. Great was their surprise at the scene they witnessed. But they soon understood it all, and when the whole story was known to them they were no less thankful than Mr. Lloyd that Bert had come off conqueror in this sharp struggle with the enemy of souls.

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It was a hard task that lay before Bert, and he would have been something more than mortal if his resolution did not falter as he thought about it. But he strengthened himself by repeating the

words "Quit you like men, be strong," laying much emphasis on the latter clause. His father thought it best for him to go very early the next morning, taking the book with him, and to seek an interview with Dr. Johnston before he went into the school.

Accordingly, in the morning, with throbbing heart and feverish pulse, Bert knocked at the doctor's private entrance. On asking for the master he was at once shown into the study, where the dread doctor was glancing over the morning paper before he took up the work of the day.

"Well, Lloyd, what brings you here so early?" he asked, in some surprise.

With much difficulty, and in broken sentences, Bert explained the object of his visit, the doctor listening with an impassive countenance that gave no hint of how the story affected him. When he had ended, Dr. Johnston remained silent a moment as if lost in reflection, then placing his hand upon the boy's shoulder, and looking at him with an expression of deep tenderness such as Bert had never seen in his countenance before, he said, in tones whose kindness there could be no mistaking:

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"You have done well, Lloyd, to tell me this. I honour you for your confession, and I feel confident that never so long as you are a pupil in this school will you fall into like wrong-doing. You may tell your father what I have said. Good-morning." And he turned away, perhaps to hide something that made his eyes moist.

Feeling much as Christian must have felt when the burden broke from his back and rolled into the sepulchre gaping to receive it, Bert went to his seat in the schoolroom. The ordeal was over, and his penance complete.

His frank penitence was destined to exert a far wider influence than he ever imagined, and that immediately. The volume he placed in Dr. Johnston's hands set the master thinking. "If," he reasoned, "Bert Lloyd, one of the best boys in my school, has fallen into this wrong-doing, it must be more common than I supposed. Perhaps were I to tell the school what Lloyd has just told me, it might do good. The experiment is worth trying, at all events."

Acting upon this thought, Dr. Johnston, shortly after the school had settled down for the day's work, rapped upon his desk as a signal that he had something to say to the scholars, and then, when the attention of all had been secured, he proceeded to tell, in clear, concise language, the incident of the morning. Many eyes were turned upon Bert while the doctor was speaking, but he kept his fixed closely upon his desk, for he knew that his cheeks were burning, and he wondered what the other boys were thinking of him. In concluding, Dr. Johnston made the following appeal, which was indeed his chief purpose in mentioning the matter at all:

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"Now, scholars," said he, in tones of mingled kindness and firmness, "I feel very sure that Lloyd is not the only boy in this school who has been using a translation to assist him in his classical work, and my object in telling you what he told me is that it may perhaps inspire those who have been doing as he did to confess it in the manly, honest way that he has done, and for which we must all honour him. Boys, I appeal to your honour," he continued, raising his voice until it rang through the room, startling his hearers by its unaccustomed volume. "Who among you, like Bert Lloyd, will confess that you have been using a translation?"

There was a thrilling silence, during which one might almost have heard the boys' hearts beat as the doctor paused, and with his piercing eyes glanced up and down the long rows of awe-stricken boys. For a moment no one moved. Then there was a stir, a shuffling of feet, and Regie Selwyn, with cheeks aflame, rose slowly in his seat, and said in a low but distinct voice:

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"I have, sir."

A gleam of joy flashed in the doctor's dark eyes as he looked toward the speaker, but he said nothing. Then another and another rose and made a like confession, until some six in all had thus acknowledged their fault. There was no mistaking the pleasure that shone in the master's face at this answer to his appeal. When it became clear that, however many more might be no less guilty, no more were going to confess it, he spoke again:

"While it grieves me to know that the use of translations has been so extensive, I am also glad to find that so many of my boys possess the true spirit of manliness. I ask them to promise me that they will never look at those books again, and if there be others in the school who might have admitted the same impropriety, but have not, I appeal to you to show by your contempt of such helps your determination that nothing but what is honest, fair, and manly shall characterise the actions of the scholars of this school."

And with this the doctor resumed his seat.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

ABOUT LITERATURE AND LAW.

Five years had passed since Cuthbert Lloyd's name was first inscribed in the big register on Dr. Johnston's desk, and he had been surely, steadily rising to the proud position of being the first

boy in the school, the "*dux*," as the doctor with his love for the classics preferred to call it.

And yet there were some branches of study that he still seemed unable to get a good hold upon, or make satisfactory progress with. One of these was algebra. For some reason or other, the hidden principles of this puzzling science eluded his grasp, as though a and x had been eels of phenomenal activity. He tried again and again to pierce the obscurity that enshrouded them, but at best with imperfect success; and it was a striking fact that he should, term after term, carry off the arithmetic prize by splendid scores, and yet be ingloriously beaten at algebra.

Another subject that became a great bugbear to him was what was known as composition. On Fridays the senior boys were required to bring an original composition, covering at least two pages of letter paper, upon any subject they saw fit. This requirement made that day "black Friday" for Bert and many others besides. The writing of a letter or composition is probably the hardest task that can be set before a schoolboy. It was safe to say that in many cases a whipping would be gratefully preferred. But for the disgrace of the thing, Bert would certainly rather at any time have taken a mild whipping than sit down and write an essay.

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At the first, taking pity upon his evident helplessness, Mr. Lloyd gave him a good deal of assistance, or allowed Mary—the ever-willing and ever-helpful Mary—to do so. But after a while he thought Bert should run alone, and prohibited further aid. Thus thrown upon his own resources, the poor fellow struggled hard, to very little purpose. Even when his father gave him a lift to the extent of suggesting a good theme, he found it almost impossible to write anything about it.

One Friday he went without having prepared a composition. He hoped that Dr. Johnston would just keep him in after school for a while, or give him an "imposition" of fifty lines of Virgil to copy as a penalty, and that that would be an end of the matter. But, as it turned out, the doctor thought otherwise. When Bert presented no composition he inquired if he had any excuse, meaning a note from his father asking that he be excused this time. Bert answered that he had not.

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"Then," said Dr. Johnston, sternly, "you must remain in after school until your composition is written."

Bert was a good deal troubled by this unexpected penalty, but there was of course no appeal from the master's decision. The school hours passed, three o'clock came, and all the scholars save those who were kept in for various shortcomings went joyfully off to their play, leaving the big, bare, dreary room to the doctor and his prisoners. Then one by one, as they met the conditions of their sentence, or made up their deficiencies in work, they slipped quietly away, and ere the old yellow-faced clock solemnly struck the hour of four, Bert was alone with the grim and silent master.

He had not been idle during that hour. He had made more than one attempt to prepare some sort of a composition, but both ideas and words utterly failed him. He could not even think of a subject, much less cover two pages of letter paper with comments upon it. By four o'clock despair had settled down upon him, and he sat at his desk doing nothing, and waiting he hardly knew for what.

Another hour passed, and still Bert had made no start, and still the doctor sat at his desk absorbed in his book and apparently quite oblivious of the boy before him. Six o'clock drew near, and with it the early dusk of an autumn evening. Bert was growing faint with hunger, and, oh! so weary of his confinement. Not until it was too dark to read any longer did Dr. Johnston move; and then, without noticing Bert, he went down the room, and disappeared through the door that led into his own apartments.

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"My gracious!" exclaimed Bert, in alarm. "Surely he is not going to leave me here all alone in the dark. I'll jump out of the window if he does."

But that was not the master's idea, for shortly he returned with two candles, placed one on either side of Bert's desk, then went to his desk, drew forth the long, black strap, whose cruel sting Bert had not felt for years, and standing in front of the quaking boy, looking the very type of unrelenting sternness, said:

"You shall not leave your seat until your composition is finished, and if you have not made a beginning inside of five minutes you may expect punishment."

So saying, he strode off into the darkness, and up and down the long room, now filled with strange shadows, swishing the strap against the desks as he passed to and fro. Bert's feelings may be more easily imagined than described. Hungry, weary, frightened, he grasped his pen with trembling fingers, and bent over the paper.

For the first minute or two not a word was written. Then, as if struck by some happy thought, he scribbled down a title quickly and paused. In a moment more he wrote again, and soon one whole paragraph was done.

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The five minutes having elapsed, the doctor emerged from the gloom and came up to see what progress had been made. He looked over Bert's shoulder at the crooked lines that straggled over half the page, but he could not have read more than the title, when the shadows of the great empty room were startled by a peal of laughter that went echoing through the darkness, and clapping the boy graciously upon his back, the master said:

"That will do, Lloyd. The title is quite sufficient. You may go now;" for he had a keen sense of humour and a thorough relish of a joke, and the subject selected by Bert was peculiarly appropriate, being "Necessity is the Mother of Invention."

Mr. Lloyd was so delighted with Bert's ingenuity that thenceforth he gave him very effective assistance in the preparation of his weekly essays, and they were no longer the bugbear that they had been.

It was not long after this that Bert had an experience with the law not less memorable.

In an adjoining street, there lived a family by the name of Dodson, that possessed a very large, old, and cross Newfoundland dog, which had, by its frequent exhibitions of ill-temper, become quite a nuisance to the neighbourhood. They had often been spoken to about their dog's readiness to snap at people, but had refused to chain him up, or send him away, because they had a lively aversion to small boys, and old Lion was certainly successful in causing them to give the Dodson premises a wide berth.

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One afternoon Bert and Frank were going along the street playing catch with a ball the former had just purchased, when, as they passed the Dodson house, a wild throw from Frank sent the ball out of Bert's reach, and it rolled under the gate of the yard. Not thinking of the irascible Lion in his haste to recover the ball, Bert opened the gate, and the moment he did so, with a fierce growl the huge dog sprang at him and fastened his teeth in his left cheek.

Bert shrieked with fright and pain, and in an instant Frank was beside him, and had his strong hands tight round Lion's throat. Immediately the old dog let Bert go, and slunk off to his kennel, while Frank, seizing his handkerchief, pressed it to the ugly wound in Bert's cheek. Great though the pain was, Bert quickly regained his self-possession, and hastening home had his wounds covered with plaster. Fortunately, they were not in any wise serious. They bled a good deal, and they promised to spoil his beauty for a time at least, but, as there was no reason to suppose that the dog was mad, that was the worst of them.

Mr. Lloyd was very much incensed when he saw Bert's injuries, and heard from him and Frank the particulars of the affair. He determined to make one more appeal to the Dodsons to put the dog away, and if that were unsuccessful, to call upon the authorities to compel them to do so.

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"With a fierce growl the huge dog sprang at him, and fastened his teeth in his left cheek."—Page 292.

Another person who was not less exercised about it was Michael, the man of all work. He was very fond and proud of the young master, as he called Bert, and that a dog should dare to put his teeth into him filled him with righteous wrath. Furthermore, like many of his class, he firmly believed in the superstition that unless the dog was killed at once, Bert would certainly go mad. Mr. Lloyd laughed at him good-humouredly when he earnestly advocated the summary execution

of Lion, and refused to have anything to do with it. But the faithful affectionate fellow was not to be diverted from his purpose, and accordingly the next night after the attack, he stealthily approached the Dodson yard from the rear, got close to old Lion's kennel, and then threw down before his very nose a juicy bit of beefsteak, in which a strong dose of poison had been cunningly concealed. The unsuspecting dog took the tempting bait, and the next morning lay stiff and stark in death, before his kennel door.

When the Dodsons found their favourite dead, they were highly enraged; and taking it for granted that either Mr. Lloyd or some one in his interest or his employ was guilty of Lion's untimely demise, Mr. Dodson, without waiting to institute inquiries, rushed off to the City Police Court, and lodged a complaint against the one who he conceived was the guilty party.

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Mr. Lloyd was not a little surprised when, later in the morning, a blue-coated and silver-buttoned policeman presented himself at his office, and, in the most respectful manner possible, served upon him a summons to appear before the magistrate to answer to a complaint made by one Thomas Dodson, who alleged that he "had with malice prepense and aforethought killed or caused to be killed a certain Newfoundland dog, the same being the property of the said Thomas Dodson, and thereby caused damage to the complainant, to the amount of one hundred dollars."

So soon as Mr. Lloyd read the summons, which was the first intimation he had had of Lion's taking off, he at once suspected who was the real criminal. But of course he said nothing to the policeman beyond assuring him that he would duly appear to answer to the summons.

That evening he sent for Michael, and without any words of explanation placed the summons in his hand. The countenance of the honest fellow as he slowly read it through and took in its import was an amusing study. Bewilderment, surprise, indignation, and alarm were in turn expressed in his frank face, and when he had finished he stood before Mr. Lloyd speechless, but looking as though he wanted to say: "What will you be after doing to me now, that I've got you into such a scrape?"

Assuming a seriousness he did not really feel, Mr. Lloyd looked hard at Michael, as he asked:

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"Do you know anything about this?"

Michael reddened, and dropped his eyes to the ground, but answered, unhesitatingly:

"I do, sir. It was meself that gave the old brute the dose of medicine that fixed him."

"But, Michael," said Mr. Lloyd, with difficulty restraining a smile, "it was not right of you to take the law into your own hands in that way. You knew well enough that I could not approve of it."

"I did, indeed, sir," answered Michael, "but," lifting up his head as his warm Irish heart stirred within him, "I couldn't sleep at night for thinking of what might happen to the young master if the dog weren't killed; and, so unbeknownst to anybody, I just slipped over the fence, and dropped him a bit of steak that I knew he would take to kindly. I'm very sorry, sir, if I've got you into any trouble, but sure can't you just tell them that it was Michael that did the mischief, and then they won't bother you at all."

"No, no, Michael. I'm not going to do that. You meant for the best what you did, and you did it for the sake of my boy, so I will assume the responsibility; but I hope it will be a lesson to you not to take the law into your own hands again. You see it is apt to have awkward consequences."

"That's true, sir," assented Michael, looking much relieved at this conclusion. "I'll promise to be careful next time, but—" pausing a moment as he turned to leave the room—"it's glad I am that that cross old brute can't have another chance at Master Bert, all the same." And having uttered this note of triumph, he made a low bow and disappeared.

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Mr. Lloyd had a good laugh after the door closed upon him.

"He's a faithful creature," he said, kindly; "but I'm afraid his fidelity is going to cost me something this time. However, I won't make him unhappy by letting him know that."

The trial was fixed for the following Friday, and that day Bert was excused from school in order to be present as a witness. His scars were healing rapidly, but still presented an ugly enough appearance to make it clear that worthy Michael's indignation was not without cause.

Now, this was the first time that Bert had ever been inside a court-room; and, although his father was a lawyer, the fact that he made a rule never to carry his business home with him had caused Bert to grow up in entire ignorance of the real nature of court proceedings. The only trials that had ever interested him being those in which the life or liberty of the person most deeply concerned was at stake, he had naturally formed the idea that all trials were of this nature, and consequently regarded with very lively sympathy the defendants of a couple of cases that had the precedence of "Dodson v. Lloyd."

Feeling quite sure that the unhappy individuals who were called upon to defend themselves were in a very evil plight, he was surprised and shocked at the callous levity of the lawyers, and even of the magistrate, a small-sized man, to whom a full grey beard, a pair of gold-bowed spectacles, and a deep voice imparted an air of dignity he would not otherwise have possessed. That they should crack jokes with each other over such serious matters was something he could not understand, as with eyes and ears that missed nothing he observed all that went on around him.

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At length, after an hour or more of waiting, the case of "Dodson v. Lloyd" was called, and Bert, now to his deep concern, beheld his father in the same position as had been the persons whom he was just pitying; for the magistrate, looking, as Bert thought, very stern, called upon him to answer to the complaint of Thomas Dodson, who alleged, &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Lloyd pleaded his own cause, and it was not a very heavy undertaking, for the simple reason that he made no defence beyond stating that the dog had been poisoned by his servant without his knowledge or approval, and asking that Bert's injuries might be taken into account in mitigation of damages. The magistrate accordingly asked Bert to go into the witness-box, and the clerk administered the oath, Bert kissing the greasy, old Bible that had in its time been touched by many a perjured lip, with an unsophisticated fervour that brought out a smile upon the countenances of the spectators.

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He was then asked to give his version of the affair. Naturally enough, he hesitated a little at first, but encouraged by his father's smiles, he soon got over his nervousness, and told a very plain, straightforward story. Mr. Dodson's lawyer, a short, thick man with a nose like a parrot's, bushy, black whiskers, and a very obtrusive pair of spectacles, then proceeded, in a rough, hard voice, to try his best to draw Bert into admitting that he had been accustomed to tease the dog, and to throw stones at him. But although he asked a number of questions beginning with a "Now, sir, did you not?" or, "Now, sir, can you deny that?" &c., uttered in very awe-inspiring tones, he did not succeed in shaking Bert's testimony in the slightest degree, or in entrapping him into any disadvantageous admission.

At first Bert was somewhat disconcerted by the blustering, brow-beating manner of the lawyer, but after a few questions his spirits rose to the occasion, and he answered the questions in a prompt, frank, fearless fashion, that more than once evoked a round of applause from the lookers-on. He had nothing but the truth to tell and his cross-examiner ere long came to the conclusion that it was futile endeavouring to get him to tell anything else; and so, with rather bad grace, he gave it up, and said he might go.

Before leaving the witness-box Bert removed the bandages from his cheek, and exhibited the marks of the dog's teeth to the magistrate, the sight of which, together with the boy's testimony, made such an impression upon him that he gave as his decision that he would dismiss the case if Mr. Lloyd would pay the costs, which the latter very readily agreed to do; and so the matter ended—not quite to the satisfaction of Mr. Dodson, but upon the whole in pretty close accordance with the strict principles of right and justice.

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Michael was very greatly relieved when he heard the result, for he had been worrying a good deal over what he feared Mr. Lloyd might suffer in consequence of his excess of zeal.

"So they got nothing for their old dog, after all," he exclaimed, in high glee. "Well, they got as much as he was worth at all events, and"—sinking his voice to a whisper—"between you and me, Master Bert, if another dog iver puts his teeth into you, I'll be after givin' him the same medicine, so sure as my name's Michael Flynn."

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

WELL DONE, BOYS!

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There comes a time in the life of nearly every boy who attends Sunday school when, no matter how faithful to it he may have been, he finds gradually stealing in upon him the feeling that he is growing too old for it, and he becomes restive under its restraints. He sees other boys of the same age going off for a pleasant walk, or otherwise spending the afternoon as they please, and he envies them their freedom. He thinks himself already sufficiently familiar with Bible truth for all practical purposes, and the lessons lose their interest for him. He has perhaps no ambition for becoming a teacher, nor even of being promoted to a chair in the Bible class.

How best to meet the case of this boy, and save him to the Sunday school is one of the most difficult questions that present themselves to those engaged in that work. You must not scold him or you will infallibly drive him away at once and for ever. Neither is it wise to seek to bring into play influences that will compel him to attend *nolens volens* , for that will but deepen his dislike, and make him long the more eagerly for the time when he will be his own master in the matter.

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There seem to be but two possible solutions of the problem. You must either appeal to the boy's natural sense of independence, and desire for importance by making some special provision for him that will mark a distinction between him and the younger folk, or you must, by going far deeper, reach the spiritual side of his nature, and through it secure his fidelity to the school.

To Bert this temptation had not presented itself. He no more thought of tiring of the Sunday school than he did of his own home. He had attended regularly ever since his sister Mary would take him with her, and put him in the infant class, and it might be said to have become second nature with him.

With Frank, however, it was different. He had never gone to Sunday school until Bert invited him, and although for some years he was very fond of it, that fondness in time had fallen into an

indifference, and of late he had a decided disinclination to go at all. This was not due so much to any resistance to the claims of religion itself, but rather to a foolish idea that he was now too old and too big for Sunday school.

Bert took his friend's change of feeling very much to heart, and he pleaded with him so earnestly, that for some time Frank continued in his place just to please him. But this of course could not last, and he was in danger of drifting away altogether, when an event occurred which turned the current of his life and set it flowing once more in the right direction, this time with a volume it had never known before.

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It was a pleasant custom at Calvary Church to give the Sunday school a picnic every summer, and these picnics were most enjoyable affairs. A better place than Halifax Harbour for the holding of a picnic could hardly be conceived. You go, of course, by steamer, and then have the choice of some half-dozen different routes, each having its own attractions. You might go right up to the head of the big basin that stretched away eight miles or more beyond the north end of the city, and there land, amid the meadows that are bordered by the unbroken forest, or you might stop half-way, and invade the old estate that had once been proud to claim a prince as its possessor.

Steering in the opposite direction, you might go around the Point, and piercing the recesses of the ever-beautiful arm of the sea, find a perfect picnic ground at its farthest bend; or, crossing the harbour, there were lovely spots to be secured on the big, tree-clad island that well-nigh filled the harbour mouth.

This year it had been decided to hold the picnic at the head of the arm. The time was August, just when the cool sea-breeze and the balmy breath of the pines are most grateful to the dwellers in cities. To the number of four hundred or more, a happy crowd of Sunday-school scholars and teachers, and their friends gathered upon the broad deck of the clumsy old *Mic-mac*, an excursion steamer that had done duty on this line for a generation, at least. Each class had its own banner, as a sort of rallying point, and these, with the pretty dresses and bright ribbons of the girls, imparted plenty of colour to the scene, while the boys gave life to it by being incessantly on the move, and never in one spot for more than one minute at a time.

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Bert and Frank were in the midst of the merry crowd, and in the highest spirits. They were neither of them by any means indifferent to the fascination of feminine beauty and grace, and it was easy to secure the most delightful companionship on board the boat, which they did not fail to do. Then they had the games and sports to look forward to, after the picnic ground should be reached, and altogether their cup of happiness seemed well-nigh brimming over. They little dreamed how ere the day closed they would both be brought face to face with the deadliest peril of their lives.

Joyous with music and laughter, the big boat pushed her way onward over the white-capped waves, past the fort and the gas works, and the long stretch of the Point road; and then giving the point itself a wide berth—for the shallows extend far out—around it, and up the winding arm, with its line of stately homes on one side, and scattered clusters of white-washed cottages on the other, until almost at its very end, the landing-place was reached, and the gay passengers gladly deserted the steamer to seek the cool shelter of the woods.

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There was a wonderful amount of happiness crowded into that day. All who wanted to be useful found plenty of scope for their talents in the transporting of the provisions, the arranging of the tables, the hanging of the swings, and the other work that had to be done, while those who preferred play to work, could go boating, or swimming, or play ball, and so forth.

The two friends went in for both work and play. They gave very efficient help to the ladies in preparing for the dinner, but they did not miss a grand swim in the cool, clear water of a sequestered cove, nor an exciting game of baseball in the open field.

After dinner came the sports, consisting of competitions in running, jumping, and ball throwing, for which prizes in the shape of knives, balls, and bats were offered. Bert and Frank took part in several of them with satisfactory results, Frank winning a fine knife in the long distance race, and Bert a good ball for the best throw, so that there was nothing to mar their pleasure in this regard.

By sunset all were making for the boat again, and in the soft summer gloaming the old *Mic-Mac* steamed steadily down the arm on her homeward trip. Many of the children were weary now, and inclined to be cross and sleepy. Others were still full of life and spirits, and could not be restrained from chasing one another up and down the deck and among the benches. But their merriment was ere long suddenly ended by an event which came near casting a dark cloud over the whole day, that had hitherto been no less bright with happiness than with sunshine.

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Bert and Frank had joined a group of charming girls gathered at the stern of the steamer, and while pleasantly employed in making themselves agreeable were more than once disturbed by the noisy youngsters, who would persist in playing "chase."

"Some of you will be falling overboard if you don't take care," said Bert, warningly, to them. "Why don't you keep in the middle of the steamer?"

There was good ground for Bert's warning, as, across the stern of the old steamer, which had been a ferry boat in her early days, there was only a broad wooden bar placed so high that a child might almost walk under it without stooping.

But the careless children continued their play as the *Mic-Mac* ploughed her way back to the city.

Presently a troop of them came racing down to the stern in chase of a golden-haired sprite, that laughingly ran before them. She was closely pursued by a boy about her own age, and in her eagerness to escape him she dodged underneath the bar that marked the line of safety. As she did so, the steamer gave a sudden lurch; and, poised perilously near the edge as the girl already was, it proved too much for her balance. She uttered a terrified shriek, grasped vainly at the bar now quite out of her reach, and, to the horror of those looking helplessly on, toppled over into the frothing, foaming water of the steamer's wake.

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Instantly there was wild confusion on board the steamer. Scream after scream went up from the women, and all who could crowded madly toward the stern. If the girl was to be saved, immediate action was necessary. Bert did not stop to think. He could swim strongly and well. He would attempt her rescue.

"Frank, I'm after her," he cried, as he flung off his coat and hat.

"I'm with you," answered Frank, imitating his action; and before anyone else had thought of moving, the two boys, almost side by side, sprang into the heaving water with faces set toward the spot where a cloud of white showed them the little girl still floated. Putting forth all their speed, they reached her ere the buoyancy had left her clothing, and each seizing an arm of the poor child, who had just fainted through excess of fright, they prepared to battle for her life and their own.

They realised at once that it was to be no easy struggle. The steamer had been going at full speed, and although the engines were reversed at the first alarm, the impetus of her awkward bulk had carried her far away from the spot where the girl fell; and now the boys could just barely discern her through the deepening dusk. The harbour had been rough all day, and the waters still rolled uneasily. Fortunately, it was not very cold, or the swimmers' case had been well-nigh hopeless. As it was, the only chance of their deliverance hung upon their endurance. If their strength held out, they and the little one they had put themselves in peril to rescue would be saved.

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She continued to be unconscious, her pretty face, that was so bright and rosy a few minutes before, now looking strangely white and rigid, and her golden curls clinging darkly about her neck, her broad straw hat, all water-soaked and limp, hanging over on one side.

"Surely she can't be dead already?" exclaimed Bert, anxiously, to Frank, as the two boys kept her and themselves afloat by treading water, one at either arm.

"No," replied Frank, "only fainted. But if the steamer doesn't come soon, she will be; and so will we too."

"Never fear, Frank, the steamer will be back for us soon. I think I can hear her paddles now," said Bert, in cheering tones; and they listened intently for a moment, but heard nothing save the soft lapping of the waves all around them. Then Frank spoke:

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"Bert," he asked, "are you afraid to die?"

Bert started at the question. He had not thought of dying, and life was so precious to him.

"We're not going to die, Frank. God will take care of us," he answered, quickly.

"Yes, but if the steamer shouldn't get back to us in time, Bert," persisted Frank, who seemed to be already losing hope, "aren't you afraid to die?"

"I don't want to, but I'm not afraid to," Bert replied, after a pause; for it was not easy to talk when every exertion had to be put forth to keep above the water.

"But, Bert, I am afraid," said Frank, with a groan. "I've been so wicked."

"No, you haven't, Frank; and even if you have, God will forgive you now. Ask Him right away."

"Oh, I can't—it's too late; I cannot pray now," cried poor Frank, in a voice that sounded like a wail of despair.

"It's not too late. Come, Frank, dear, we'll both pray to God to have mercy upon us," urged Bert; and inspired by his earnestness, Frank obeyed. And there, in the midst of the waves, with their senseless burden between them, the two boys lifted up their souls in supplication to their Omnipotent Father—Bert with the confidence that came of past experience, Frank with the agonised entreaty of one praying in sore need, and, for the first time, with the whole heart. A strange place for a prayer meeting, indeed; but they were as near the great heart of God as though they had been in His grandest cathedral, and the answer to their earnest pleading was already on its way.

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When the two young heroes leaped into the water, there had at first been great confusion on board the *Mic-Mac*, but a minute or two later the captain's gruff voice was heard roaring out orders. The paddles that had been thrashing the waves so vigorously suddenly stopped, were silent for a moment, and then recommenced; but now they were bearing the steamer backward instead of forward.

"Get ready the boat for launching," thundered the captain. And half-a-dozen men sprang to obey.

"Light a couple of lanterns," he shouted again. And in an instant it was done.

"Reeve a long line round one of them life preservers, and stand ready for a throw," he cried to the mate. And almost before he had finished speaking the mate stood ready.

"Now, then, clear away there all of you," he growled at the excited crowd that pressed toward the stern, and they fell back, allowing him clear space, while he swung the lantern out before him, and peered into the dusk that obscured his view.

"Let her go easy now," he shouted, and the steamer moved slowly on, a profound silence falling upon the crowd of passengers as they watched with throbbing eagerness for the first sign of the imperiled ones being sighted. [Pg 311]

Gazing hard into the gloom, the keen-eyed captain caught sight of a gleam of white upon the water.

"Stop her!" he roared, with a voice like that of the north wind. "Hand me that life preserver!"—turning to the mate who stood near him. The mate obeyed, and coiling the long rope ready for a throw the captain waited, while the steamer drew nearer to the speck of white.

"Look out there!" he cried to the boys in the water. "Lay hold of this." And swinging the big life preserver around his head as though it had been a mere toy, he hurled it far out before him, where the beams of light from the lantern showed not one but three white objects scarce above the surface of the water.

"Look sharp now! lay hold there!" he cried again, and then: "All right. Keep your grip, and we'll have you in a minute." Then turning to those behind him: "Lower that boat—quick!"

The davits creaked and groaned as the ropes spun through the blocks; there was a big splash when the boat struck the water, a few fierce strokes of the oars, and then a glad shout of, "All right; we've got them," in response to which cheer upon cheer rang out from the throng above, now relieved from their intense anxiety. [Pg 312]

A few minutes later, three dripping forms were carefully handed up the side, and taken into the warm engine room, the little girl still unconscious, and the boys so exhausted as to be not far from the same condition.

Their rescue had been effected just in time. A little more, and utterly unable to keep themselves afloat any longer, they would have sunk beneath the pitiless waves.

"It seemed awful to have to die that way," said Bert, when telling his parents about it. "I was getting weaker and weaker all the time, and so, too, was Frank, and I thought we'd have to let the poor little girl go, and strike out for ourselves. But we kept praying hard to God to help us; and then all of a sudden I saw a light, and I said to Frank, 'There's the steamer—hold on a little longer;' and then I could hear the sound of the paddles, and the next thing the captain shouted to us and flung us a life preserver, and we got a good grip of that, and held on until the boat took us all in."

The heroic action of the two boys made them famous in Halifax. The newspapers printed columns in their praise, a handsome subscription was taken up in a day to present them each with a splendid gold medal commemorating the event; important personages, who had never noticed them before, stopped them on the street to shake hands with them, and what really pleased them most of all, Dr. Johnston gave the school a holiday in their honour, having just delivered an address, in which, with flashing eyes and quivering lips, he told the other scholars how proud he felt of Frank and Bert, and how he hoped their schoolmates would show the same noble courage if they ever had a like opportunity. [Pg 313]

The parents of the little one they rescued were plain people of limited means, but they could not deny themselves the luxury of manifesting their gratitude in some tangible form. Accordingly, they had two pictures of their daughter prepared, and placed in pretty frames, bearing the expressive inscription, "Rescued," with the date beneath; and the mother herself took them to the boys, the tears that bathed her cheeks as she presented them telling far better than any words could do, how fervent was her gratitude.

Deeply as Frank had been moved at being brought through his own generous impulse into such close quarters with death, the excitement and bustle of the days immediately following the event so filled his mind that the impression bade fair to pass away again, leaving him no better than he had been before. But it was not God's purpose that this should be the result. Before the good effects of that brief prayer meeting in the water were entirely dissipated, another influence came to their support. Although he knew it not, he was approaching the great crisis of his life, and by a way most unexpected; he was shortly to be led into that higher plane of existence, toward which he had been slowly tending through the years of his friendship with Bert. [Pg 314] [Pg 315]

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

A day or two after the rescue Bert began to show signs of what he took to be simply a slight cold

in the chest. At first there was only a little pain, and a rather troublesome feeling of oppression, which did not give him much concern, and having applied to his mother, and had her prescribe for him, he assumed that it was the natural consequence of his sudden plunge into the cold water, and would soon pass away. But instead of doing so the pain and oppression increased, and the family doctor had to be called in for his opinion. Having examined the young patient carefully, Dr. Brown decided that he was threatened with an attack of inflammation of the lungs, and that the best thing for him to do was to go right to bed, and stay there until the danger was over.

Here was a new experience for Bert. He had never spent a day in bed before, his only previous sickness having been a siege of the mumps, and they merely made him a prisoner in the house until his face regained its usual size. But now he was to really go upon the sick list, and submit to be treated accordingly until the doctor should pronounce him well again. He did not like the idea at all. To what boy, indeed, would it have been welcome in that glorious summer weather when there was bliss in merely being alive and well. But he had too much sense to rebel. He knew that Dr. Brown was no alarmist, and that the best thing to do was to obey his injunctions unquestioningly. Moreover, he now began to feel some slight anxiety himself. The trouble in his chest increased. So much so, indeed, that he found difficulty in speaking for any length of time. Symptoms of fever, too, appeared; and by the close of another day no doubt remained that the attack was of a serious nature, and that the utmost care would be necessary in order to insure his recovery.

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When Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd learned this, they were sorely distressed. Such perfect health had their sturdy boy enjoyed all through his life hitherto, that they could hardly realise his being laid upon a bed of sickness, and it seemed especially trying just after he had passed safely through so great a peril. But they did not murmur. They committed Bert to the Divine care, and with countenances full of cheer for his sake, and hearts strengthened from above, awaited the revealing of the Lord's will.

Day by day Bert grew worse, until each breath became an effort; and the fever burned all through his veins, as though it would consume him. Fortunately, no cloud came over his consciousness; and although he could not speak without a painful effort, and therefore said little, his grateful looks showed how fully he appreciated the unremitting care with which his father and mother and Mary watched over him. His bedside was never without one of them; and there was yet another who vied with them in their devotion—and that was Frank. Had Bert been his twin brother he could not have felt more concern. He was moved to the very depths of his heart, and with tears in his eyes begged of Mr. Lloyd permission to take turns with them in watching by the bedside through the long hours of the night. He was so affectionate, so thoughtful, so gentle, so trustworthy, and Bert seemed so glad to have him, that Mr. Lloyd willingly consented; and thus the four whom Bert loved best shared the burden of care and anxiety between them.

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Bert had never made much parade of his religion. It was the controlling force in his life, yet it had not been in any way obtrusive. It had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his expanding strength; and although there had of course been many slips and falls—for what was he but an impulsive boy?—there had been no decline, but steadfast progress as the years of his boyhood glided past. It stood him in good stead when death waited for him in the depths of Halifax harbour, and it was with him now, as hour by hour he drew nearer the dark valley of the shadow.

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It seemed strange for the Lloyd's home, which Bert and Mary had brightened with laughter and song, to be so silent now, and for big Dr. Brown, whose visits previously had been mainly of a social nature, to be calling every day, with a serious countenance that betokened his concern. Never were mother and sister more devoted and untiring than Bert's. Their loving care anticipated his simplest wants; and but for the dreadful feeling in his chest, and the fever that gave him no relief, the novelty of being thus assiduously tended was so great, that he would hardly have minded being their patient for a little while, at least.

It was an unspeakable comfort to them all that his reason continued perfectly clear, no matter how high the fever raged; and not only his reason, but his faith was clear also. He did not despair of his recovery, yet he shrank not from looking the darker alternative fairly in the face, and preparing to meet it. His father's strong, serene faith was a wonderful help to him. In the quiet evening, as the dusk drew on, Mr. Lloyd would sit beside him, and, taking his hot hand in his, talk with him tenderly, repeating Scripture passages of hope and comfort, or verses from the sacred songs they both loved.

One afternoon, Frank was alone with him, Mrs. Lloyd and Mary having gone off to take much needed rest, and Bert for the first time spoke to his friend of the possibility of his never getting well again.

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"I am very ill, Frank, dear," said he, reaching over to lay his burning hand upon Frank's knee, as the latter sat close beside his bed. "I may never be any better."

"Oh, yes, you will!" returned Frank, cheerfully. "You'll come round all right."

"I hope so, Frank, but sometimes as I lie here in the middle of the night, it seems as though it would soon be all over with me."

"Never fear, Bert, you'll live to be an old man yet, see if you don't."

Bert was silent for a while as if thinking just how he would say something that was on his mind.

Then turning to Frank, and, looking earnestly into his face, he asked:

"Frank, do you love Jesus?"

Frank started at the question, the blood mounted to his forehead, and his head dropped. He seemed reluctant to reply, and it was some time before he answered, almost in a whisper:

"I'm afraid I don't, Bert."

A look of sorrow came over Bert's countenance, but was quickly dissipated by one of hope, and despite the pain the utterance of every word gave him he took Frank's hand between both of his, and pressing it affectionately, said:

"Dear, dear Frank, you will love Him, won't you?"

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Frank's sturdy frame trembled with the emotion he strove hard to suppress; his lips quivered so that he could not have spoken if he would, and at length, unable to control himself any longer, he fell on his knees at the bedside, and burying his face in his hands burst into tears.

The ineffable glory of the sun setting into the golden haze of the west filled the room, and enfolded the figures of the two boys, the one kneeling at the bedside, and the other with eyes lifted heavenward, and lips moving in earnest prayer, touching softly the brown curls half buried in the bed beside him. For some minutes there was a solemn silence. Then Bert spoke:

"Frank, Frank," he called, gently.

Frank lifted his tear-stained face.

"Won't you begin to love Him now?" Bert asked. "If God should take me away, I could not be happy unless I felt sure that you would meet me above. We've been such friends, Frank, and you've been so good to me always."



"'Frank, Frank,' he called gently. Frank lifted his tear-stained face."—Page 320.

Frank's tears flowed afresh. It was not the first time that the question of surrender to Christ had presented itself to him. He had debated it with himself over and over again, and always with the same result, concluding to remain undecided a little longer. But now the time for indecision seemed altogether passed. The Christ Himself seemed present in that room awaiting an answer to the question he had inspired Bert to put. Never in all his life before had the issue between God and himself appeared so inevitable. He had evaded it more than once, but a decision could no longer be delayed. No sooner did he see this clearly than the powers of the strong, deep nature asserted itself. Brushing aside his tears, and looking right into Bert's expectant eyes, he seized both his hands, and, with a countenance almost glorified by the expression of lofty purpose the rays of the setting sun revealed upon it, said, in clear, firm tones:

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"Yes, Bert, I will love Jesus, and I will begin right away."

"Oh, Frank, I'm so happy!" murmured Bert, as he fell back on his pillow, for the stress of emotion had told hard upon him in his weak state, and he felt exhausted. He lay there quietly with his eyes closed for a while, and then sank into a gentle slumber, and before he awoke again Mrs. Lloyd had come into the room so that their conversation could not be resumed before Frank went away.

The next day Bert was decidedly worse. The suffering in his chest increased until he could hardly speak. With great difficulty he could get out a word at a time, and that was all. The fever showed no signs of abating, and he tossed upon his bed hour after hour, while with ice and fan and cooling applications Mrs. Lloyd and Mary strove hard to give him ease.

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Dr. Brown made no attempt to conceal his anxiety.

"The crisis is near at hand," he said. "There is nothing more that I can do for him. He has reached a point where your prayers can do more for him than my poor medicines."

Although her heart was torn with anguish unspeakable, Mrs. Lloyd's fortitude never for a moment faltered. So serene was her bearing in the sick chamber that Mary, from whom the gravity of her brother's case had been so far as possible concealed, had yet no thought but that he would infallibly win his way back to health.

As he grew weaker and his sufferings more intense, Bert evidently felt easiest when all three of his own household were with him at once, and when Frank was there also, his satisfaction seemed complete. He spoke but little, and then only a word or two at a time. Dr. Chrystal came to see him frequently, and was always greeted with a glad smile of welcome. Taking the Bible, he would, in his rich mellow voice, read some comforting passage, and then pray with deep trustful earnestness, inspiring and strengthening the anxious watchers, and leaving behind him an atmosphere of peace.

On Friday night the crisis came. After tossing and tumbling about feverishly all day, as the evening shadows fell, Bert sank into a deep stupor, and Dr. Brown, with a lump in his throat that almost choked his utterance, said plainly that unless he rallied before morning there would be no further hope. In an agony of prayer Mrs. Lloyd knelt by her darling's bedside, while in an adjoining room Mr. Lloyd, and Mary, and Dr. Chrystal, and Frank sat together, praying and waiting, and striving to comfort one another. The long hours of agonising uncertainty dragged slowly by. Every few minutes some one would steal on tiptoe to the sick chamber, and on their return met fond faces full of eager questioning awaiting them, only to answer with a sad shake of the head that meant no ray of hope yet.

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At length the dawn began to flush the east, and with crimson radiance light up the great unmeasured dome, putting out the stars that had shone as watch fires throughout the night. Mrs. Lloyd had risen from her knees, and was sitting close beside the bed, watching every breath that Bert drew; for who could say which one would be the last? The daylight stole swiftly into the room, making the night-light no longer necessary, and she moved softly to put it out. As she returned to her post, and stood for a moment gazing with an unutterable tenderness at the beloved face lying so still upon the pillow, a thrill of joy shot through her, for a change seemed to have taken place; the flushed features had assumed a more natural hue, and the breath came more easily. Scarcely daring to hope, she stood as if entranced. Presently a tremor ran through Bert's frame, he stirred uneasily, sighed heavily, and then, as naturally as a babe awaking, opened wide his big, brown eyes.

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Seeing his mother just before him, he gave a glad smile, lifted up his hands as though to embrace her, and said, without any apparent difficulty:

"You dear, darling mother."

Completely overcome with joy, Mrs. Lloyd threw herself down beside her boy and kissed him passionately, exclaiming: "Thank God! Thank God! He's saved;" and then, springing up, hastened out to tell the others the good news.

Dr. Brown, who had been resting in the study, was instantly summoned, and the moment he saw Bert his face became radiant. Turning to Mrs. Lloyd, he shook her hand warmly, saying:

"The worst is over. He'll come round all right now, and you may thank your prayers, madam, and not my medicines."

Great was the rejoicing in the Lloyd household. No words would express their gladness; and when school-time came Frank, utterly unable to contain himself, rushed off to Dr. Johnston's, and astonished the assembled pupils by shouting at the top of his voice:

"Hurrah, boys! Bert's not going to die. He'll soon be well again."

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CHAPTER XXX.

HOME MISSIONARY WORK.

Bert's recovery was as rapid as his illness had been sudden and severe. A fortnight after that memorable morning, when with the dawn came deliverance, he was as vigorous and lively as ever. He found the days of his convalescence not at all unpleasant. When the pain had passed, the long hours of suffering seemed like a dreadful dream, and the present, with its sweet relief and increasing strength, a blissful awaking. At his home all was joy and brightness: there were silence and anxiety no longer. Mrs. Lloyd and Mary went singing from room to room, Mr. Lloyd came back from his office whistling merrily, and sure to be ready with something to make Bert laugh. Frank ran in and out, the very type of joyous boyhood, and each day brought its stream of callers, with warm congratulations upon Bert's happy restoration to health.

It would be a queer boy that would not enjoy this, seeing that it all centred upon him, and Bert fully appreciated the important position he held for the time being. Then what could be more delightful than the sense of returning strength, of enlarging activity?—to find one's-self with a clearer head, a sharper appetite, and a more vigorous frame, as one glorious summer day succeeded another; while the birds sang blithely in the apple tree, and the blue waters of the ever-beautiful harbour rippled gently before the morning zephyrs, or were stirred into white caps by the afternoon breeze?

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Bert's illness left no trace behind so far as his physical nature was concerned, and yet he was not altogether the same boy as before it laid him low. Deep solemn thoughts had been his as he lay upon his bed, not knowing whether he should ever rise from it again. His life had been in many respects a more than ordinarily blameless one, and yet when he had little else to do save look back upon it, an almost overwhelming sense of his worthlessness came upon him, and he was filled with wonder that God could love him at all.

But that He did love him, and for His Son's sake had accepted him, he never for a moment doubted. Now that he was restored to health and strength, he did not seek to forget those feelings, nor would he allow his convictions of great obligations Godward to lead him nowhere. He resolved to do some definite work for his Divine Master, and to seize the first opportunity that presented itself.

His friendship with Frank passed into a deeper, stronger phase than ever before. It might with much truth have been said of them as it was of two friends of old, that the soul of Bert was knit with the soul of Frank, and that Bert loved him as his own soul. They had so much in common now, and they found it so delightful to strengthen one another's hands in the Lord by talking together of His goodness.

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There was one matter that troubled Frank deeply, and that formed the subject of many a long and earnest conversation. His father was a man about whose lack of religion there could be no doubt. He was a big, bluff, and rather coarse-grained man, not over-scrupulous in business, but upon the whole as honest and trustworthy as the bulk of humanity. By dint of sheer hard work and shrewdness he had risen to a position of wealth and importance, and, as self-made men are apt to do, laid much more stress upon what he owed to himself than upon what he owed to his Creator. In his own rough way, that is to say in somewhat the same fashion as we may suppose a lion loves his whelp, he loved the only child the wife long since dead had left him. He was determined that he should lack nothing that was worth having, and in nothing did Mr. Bowser show his shrewdness more clearly than in fully appreciating the advantage it was to Frank to be the chosen friend and constant companion of Lawyer Lloyd's son. He had manifested his satisfaction at the intimacy by having Frank make Bert handsome presents at Christmas time, and in other ways. In all this, however, his only thought had been for Frank. He made no attempt to cultivate intimate relations with the Lloyds on his own account. He thought them both too refined, and too religious for him, and accordingly declined so far as he civilly could, Mr. Lloyd's overtures toward a better acquaintance.

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Such a man was Frank's father; and now that the boy's heart was full of joy and light, because the peace that passeth understanding was his, he longed that his father should share the same happy experience.

"If father were only a Christian, like your father, Bert, I would be the happiest boy in all the world," said he, one day. "Oh, Bert, what can I do to make him interested in religion?"

"Why don't you ask Dr. Chrystal to go and talk with him?" inquired Bert.

"It wouldn't be a bit of use. He won't go to church to hear Dr. Chrystal, nor any other minister, and he wouldn't listen to them if they came to see him. He says he has no faith in parsons, anyway."

"Well, do you think he would listen to father?" suggested Bert.

Frank's face lighted up. He had been thinking of this himself.

"Perhaps he would, Bert," he said, eagerly. "I know he thinks a great deal of your father. I've heard him say that he practised better than many of the parsons preached."

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Bert flushed with pleasure at this frank compliment to his father.

"Then suppose we ask him to speak to your father about religion," he said.

"Oh, yes; let us," assented Frank. Accordingly, that evening the two boys brought the matter before Mr. Lloyd, who listened to them very attentively. Then he asked a question or two.

"Are you quite sure, Frank, that I am the very best person to speak to your father on this important subject?"

"Yes, Mr. Lloyd; I'm quite sure you are."

"Well, do you know, Frank, I don't agree with you. I think I know of somebody that can do it much better than I can," said Mr. Lloyd, with a meaning smile.

Frank's face fell. He had set his heart upon having Mr. Lloyd do it, and could not believe that anybody else would do as well. After a little pause, he asked:

"Who is this somebody else, Mr. Lloyd?"

"He's not very far away from us now, Frank," answered Mr. Lloyd, still with that curious smile.

"You don't mean Bert, do you?" cried Frank, looking a little bewildered.

"No; I don't mean Bert," responded Mr. Lloyd.

"Then——." He stopped short, a deep blush spread over his features; he caught his breath, and then, as if hoping that the answer would be in the negative, exclaimed: [Pg 330]

"Do you mean *me*?"

"Yes, I do mean just you; and nobody else, Frank."

Frank threw himself back in his chair with a despairing gesture, saying:

"Oh, I could never do it, Mr. Lloyd. I know I never could."

Mr. Lloyd looked at him with tender sympathy, and laying his hand upon his knee, said, gently:

"Do you remember the motto, Frank: 'Quit you like men, be strong'?"

Frank heaved a heavy sigh. "But how can I go about it, Mr. Lloyd?" he asked.

Mr. Lloyd thought a moment.

"I have an idea, Frank," he said, presently. "Suppose you were to start family prayer in the mornings. I believe it would be the means of doing your father good."

At first Frank could not be persuaded that such a thing was possible as his presuming to conduct family prayer in his father's presence, but they talked long and earnestly about it, and finally he went away promising to think it over very seriously.

As he turned the matter over in his mind, however, little by little his courage strengthened until at length he felt himself equal to the undertaking. It was a Sunday morning that he chose upon which to make the venture. So soon as breakfast was finished, and his father had moved away from the table, wishing to himself that there was a paper published on Sundays as well as upon other days, for he had time to read it comfortably, Frank took up his Bible, and said, very hesitatingly: [Pg 331]

"Father, do you mind if we have family prayers?"

"Eh! What's that? What do you mean?" asked Mr. Bowser, looking up as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"Why, father," answered Frank, timidly, "you know they have prayers at Mr. Lloyd's every morning, and I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind our having them, too."

Mr. Bowser scanned his son's face with a hard searching gaze, but Frank looked back at him with so much love and respect in his clear, brown eyes, that all suspicion was banished from his mind, and his heart melted not a little.

"Who's going to have the prayers? You don't expect me to, do you?" he asked, gruffly.

"Well, father, if you don't care to, I'll try, if you've no objection," replied Frank, modestly.

Mr. Bowser was silent for a moment. He had noted a change in Frank of late, and had been impressed by the increased interest he took in church and Sunday school as proven by the regularity and punctuality of his going off to the services. Had Frank become a Christian like Mr. Lloyd? He would not be sorry if he had, although it was rather a pity that he had not waited until he had had his fling first, sowed a few wild oats, seen something of the world, and then settled down. Here was a good chance to find out. So with some relaxing of his gruffness, Mr. Bowser said: [Pg 332]

"All right, my boy. I've no objections so long as you're not too long-winded. Go ahead."

Thus encouraged, Frank, with beating heart and trembling lips, proceeded to read one of the Psalms; and then, kneeling down, offered up a simple, fervent, faith-filled prayer.

Mr. Bowser did not kneel. He sat sturdily upright in his chair, looking straight before him. But he could not prevent strange emotions awaking within him as he heard his boy, whom he was still inclined to look upon as hardly more than a child, though he was now sixteen years of age, address himself in reverent, earnest tones to the Great Being that he had so utterly neglected

himself.

When Frank had finished, his father rose and left the room without saying a word. That evening Frank took tea with Bert, and they went to church together. Shortly after the service began Bert happened to glance about the church, and his eye fell upon somebody that caused him to give a little start of surprise, and then nudge Frank violently. On Frank's turning round to see what Bert meant, he too started, and an expression of joy that was beautiful to witness came over his countenance, for there, in a pew not far behind him, and evidently trying hard to look entirely at his ease, sat Mr. Bowser, this being his first appearance in church for many long years.

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Dr. Chrystal preached one of his very best sermons that night, and all the time he was speaking Frank was praying that his earnest words might go straight home to his father's heart. That was the beginning of the good work. Thenceforward every Sunday evening found Mr. Bowser an attentive listener; and Frank, continuing the morning prayers faithfully, was surprised and delighted when one day his father brought home the finest family Bible he could find in the city, and handing it to him, said, in his kindest manner:

"Here, my boy, if we're going to have family prayers, we may just as well do it in proper style."

Frank joyfully reported all this to the Lloyds, who rejoiced with him over the prospect there was of his prayers for his father being fully answered ere long, and Mr. Lloyd was therefore not at all surprised when one evening Mr. Bowser called, and in an agitated, confused way begged the favour of an interview with him in the privacy of his study.

It was as Mr. Lloyd anticipated. Frank's simple, but sincere efforts at home missionary work had been crowned with success. His father's hard, worldly nature had been stirred to its depths. A longing the world could not appease had been awakened within him, and he had come to Mr. Lloyd as one in whom he placed implicit confidence, that he might guide him toward the light. The conversation, which Mr. Bowser found wonderfully helpful to him in his bewildered, anxious state of mind, was followed by many others, and the result was made evident when, ere that year closed, Mr. Bowser publicly united himself with the Church; and there were few who were familiar with the circumstances that could restrain a tear of sympathetic joy when Dr. Chrystal made the event the occasion for a beautiful and inspiring sermon upon the place of the young in the vineyard of the Lord.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

NOT DEAD, BUT TRANSLATED.

Mr. Bowser was not a man to do anything by halves. When he was worldly, he was worldly out and out, and now that he had broken with the world and entered into the service of God, he took up the business of religion with a thoroughness and ardour that was entirely characteristic. He found himself wofully ignorant of the simplest Scripture truths. Until his conversion, he had not opened his Bible since he left his mother's care. He, therefore, determined to become a scholar. So one Saturday he asked Frank:

"Frank, what is it you do at Sunday school?"

"Well, father, we sing, and pray, and study the Bible, that's about all," answered Frank, wondering to himself what his father had in mind.

"Do any grown-up people go there, Frank?" inquired Mr. Bowser, innocently.

Frank smiled, partly at his father's lack of knowledge, and partly because he thought he caught a glimpse of his purpose.

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"Why, of course, father," he exclaimed, "lots of them. Mr. Lloyd goes there, and Mr. Silver, and ten or twelve other gentlemen."

"Does Mr. Lloyd go to Sunday school?" asked Mr. Bowser, eagerly. "Why, what does he do there?"

"He teaches, father. He has charge of the men's Bible class."

"So Mr. Lloyd has a Bible class there," mused Mr. Bowser aloud; then, turning again to Frank, "Do you think, Frank, he would mind if I joined it."

Frank could not help smiling at the idea of Mr. Lloyd being otherwise than glad at having a new member in his class.

"Indeed, he won't. On the contrary, he'll be mighty glad, I'm sure," he answered, warmly.

"Very well, then, Frank, I'll go with you to Sunday school to-morrow. I don't know anything about the Bible, and I think there's no better place for me to learn," said Mr. Bowser, as he went off, leaving Frank so happy at the prospect of having his father go to school with him that he could hardly contain himself.

Very deep was Mr. Lloyd's pleasure when on Sunday afternoon burly Mr. Bowser walked into his

class room and took his seat in the most remote corner. He went up to him at once, and gave him a cordial greeting.

"I've come as a learner, Mr. Lloyd," said Mr. Bowser. "I know little or nothing about the Bible, and I want you to teach me." [Pg 337]

"I am sure I shall be most happy to do anything that lies in my power, Mr. Bowser," responded Mr. Lloyd, heartily, "and there are others in the class that you will find will help you also."

And so Mr. Bowser, putting aside all foolish notions about pride or self-importance, became one of the most faithful and attentive attendants of the Bible class. Rain or shine, the whole year round, his chair was rarely vacant, until Mr. Lloyd came to look upon him as his model member, and to feel somewhat lost, if for any reason he was compelled to be absent.

But Mr. Lloyd was not his only guide and instructor. Dr. Chrystal had attracted him from the very first. The sermon he preached on that eventful Sunday evening, when, yielding to an impulse which seemed to him little better than curiosity, he had attended church for the first time in so many years, had been followed by others, each one of which met some need or answered some question springing up in Mr. Bowser's heart, and his admiration and affection for the eloquent preacher had increased with a steady growth.

In truth, Dr. Chrystal was a man of no common mould. He united in himself characteristics that might seem to have belonged to widely different natures. He was deeply spiritual, yet intensely alive to the spirit of the times. He was as thoroughly conversant with modern thought as he was with the history of God's ancient people. Although a profound student, he was anything but a Dr. Dry-as-Dust. On the contrary, the very children heard him gladly because he never forgot them in his sermons. There was always something for them as well as for the older folks. Indeed, perhaps one of the best proofs of his singular fitness for his work was the way the young people loved him. Boys like Bert and Frank, for instance, probably the hardest class in the congregation for the minister to secure to himself, while they never for a moment felt tempted to take any liberties with him, yet, on the other hand, never felt ill at ease in his presence, nor sought to avoid him. He made them feel at home with him, and the consequence was that the proportion of boys belonging to his church exceeded that of any other church in the city. [Pg 338]

Dr. Chrystal had of late been causing his friends no small concern by showing signs of failing health. His heart began to give him trouble. So much so, indeed, that now and then he would be obliged to pause in the midst of his sermon, and rest a little before resuming. His physician told him he had been working too hard, and that what he needed was to take things more easily, or, better still, to lay aside his work for a season, and recuperate by a good long vacation.

At first he would not listen to any such proposition. There seemed so much to be done all around him that would be undoubtedly left undone unless he did it himself, that he felt as if he could not desert his post. But it soon became clear to him that the warnings he had received must be heeded, and ere long he was able to make up his mind to follow the physician's advice, and indulge himself with an ocean voyage, and prolonged vacation in Europe. [Pg 339]

As the time for his temporary separation from his congregation drew near there was a marked increase of fervour and loving earnestness on the part of Dr. Chrystal toward his people. It was as though he thought he might perhaps never return to them, and it therefore behoved him not only to preach with special unction, but to lose no opportunity of saying to each one with whom he came in contact something that might remain with them as a fruitful recollection in the event of its proving to be his last word to them. Meeting Bert upon the street one day, he linked his arm with his, and entered at once into a conversation regarding the boy's spiritual interests. Bert felt perfectly at home with his pastor, and did not hesitate to speak with him in the same spirit of frank unreserve that he would with his father.

"I have been thinking much about you, Bert," said Dr. Chrystal, in tones of warm affection, "and saying to myself that if, in the providence of God, I should never come back to my work, I would like to leave something with you that would linger in your memory after I am gone." [Pg 340]

"But you're coming back again all right, Dr. Chrystal," said Bert, looking up with much concern in his countenance, for he had never thought of its being otherwise.

"I am sure I hope and pray so with all my heart," replied Dr. Chrystal, fervently. "But there are many things to be considered, and God alone knows how it will be with me a few months hence. I am altogether in His hands."

"Well, God knows right well that we couldn't have a better minister than you, sir, and so there's no fear but He'll send you back to us all right," returned Bert, his eager loyalty to his pastor quite carrying him away.

Dr. Chrystal smiled sympathetically at the boy's enthusiasm.

"There are just as good fish in the sea as have ever yet been caught, Bert," he answered.

"I thoroughly appreciate your kind, and I know sincere, compliment, but it was not to talk about myself that I joined you, but about yourself. I have been thinking that it is full time you took up some definite work for your Heavenly Master. Don't you think so, too?"

"Yes, I do, sir; and so does Frank, and we're both quite willing to make a beginning, but we don't

just know what to go at."

"I have been thinking about that, too, Bert, and I have an idea I want to discuss with you. You know the streets that lie between the north and south portions of our city, and how densely they are packed with people, very few of whom make any pretensions to religion at all. Now, would it not be possible for you and Frank to do a little city missionary work in those streets. The field is white unto the harvest, but the labourers are so few that it is sad to see how little is being done. What do you think about it?"

Bert did not answer at once. He knew well the locality Dr. Chrystal had in mind, and the class of people that inhabited it. For square after square, tenement houses, tall, grimy, and repulsive, alternated with groggeries, flaunting, flashy, and reeking with iniquity. The residents were of the lowest and poorest order. Filth, vice, and poverty, held high carnival the whole year round. In the day time crowds of tattered roughs played rudely with one another in the streets, and after dark, drunken soldiers, sailors, and wharf men, made night hideous with their degraded revelry or frenzied fighting.

And yet these people had souls to save, and even though they might seem sunken in sin beyond all hope of recovery, they had children that might be trained to better ways and a brighter future. It was these children that Dr. Chrystal had in mind when he spoke to Bert. A union mission school had lately been established in the very heart of this unattractive district, and it was sorely in need of workers.

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Both Bert and Frank were quite competent to undertake work of this kind, did they but give their minds to it, and Dr. Chrystal was anxious to have their interest in it thoroughly aroused before he went away.

After a few moments' silence, during which his brain had been very busy with conflicting thoughts, Bert looked up into his pastor's face, and said, in a doubtful way:

"Don't you think, sir, that is rather hard work to put us at at first?"

Dr. Chrystal gave him a tender smile. "It is hard work, I know, Bert," said he. "I would not for a moment try to argue that it is anything else, but I am none the less desirous of seeing you engaged in it. You and Frank would make splendid recruiting sergeants for the little mission school, and you could be very helpful in keeping order, or even in teaching at the morning session. By doing this you would not interfere with either your church-going or your own Sunday school in the afternoon. I wish you would talk the matter over with Frank, and, of course, consult your parents about it."

Bert readily promised that he would do this, for although he, as was natural enough, shrank from undertaking what could not be otherwise than trying and difficult work, yet he felt that if his father fully approved of it, and Frank took it up heartily, he would be able at least to give it a trial. Dr. Chrystal was evidently well pleased with the result of the conversation, and in parting with Bert took his hand in his, and pressing it warmly, said:

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"God's best blessings be upon you, Bert. You are fitted to do good work for Him. May you ever be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

Little did Bert imagine that these would be the last words Dr. Chrystal would address to him personally, or that, as he turned away with a seraphic smile upon his face, he would see him but once more alive.

The following Sunday was the last that Dr. Chrystal would spend with his congregation previous to his going away, and as he appeared before them at the morning service it was the general opinion that his abstention from work was taking place none too soon, for he certainly seemed to sorely need it.

In spite of evident weakness, he preached with unabated eloquence and fervour. Indeed, he was perhaps more earnest than usual, and his sermon made a profound impression upon the congregation that thronged the church. In the afternoon he visited the Sunday school, and said a word or two to each one of the teachers as he passed up and down the classes. The evening service found the church filled to its utmost capacity, and a smile of inexpressible love and sweetness illuminated the pastor's pale face as he came out from the study, and beheld the multitude gathered to hear the Gospel from his lips.

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"Doesn't he look like an angel?" whispered Bert to Frank, as the boys sat together in their accustomed place.

"He doesn't simply look like one. He is one," Frank whispered back, and Bert nodded his assent.

The service proceeded with singing, and prayer, and Bible reading, and then came the sermon. Dr. Chrystal was evidently labouring under strong emotion. His words did not at first flow with their wonted freedom, and some among his listeners began to think it would have been well if he had not attempted to preach. But presently all this hesitation passed away, and he launched out into an earnest impassioned appeal to his people to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Although he did not say expressly that this might be the last time he would ever speak to them from the pulpit, there was something in his manner that showed this thought was present in his mind.

He had got about half through his sermon, and every eye in that congregation was fixed upon him, and every ear attent to his burning words, when suddenly he stopped. A deadly pallor took possession of his face; he pressed his left hand with a gesture of pain against his heart, while with the other he strove to steady himself in the pulpit. For a moment he stood there silent, and swaying to and fro before the startled congregation; and then, ere Mr. Lloyd, who had been watching him intently all through the service, could spring up the steps to his side, he fell back with a dull thud upon the cushioned seat behind him, and thence sank to the floor.

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When Mr. Lloyd reached him, and bending down lifted him in his strong arms from the floor, Dr. Chrystal opened his eyes, looked upon his friend with a smile that seemed a reflection from heaven, breathed softly the words: "The Lord be with you," and then, with a gentle sigh, closed his eyes to open them again in the presence of the Master he had served so well.

It is not possible to describe the scene that followed, when all present became aware that their beloved pastor had gone from them upon a journey from which there could be no returning. They were so stunned, saddened, and bewildered that they knew not what to do with themselves. The men and women sat weeping in their seats, or wandered aimlessly about the aisles to speak with one another, while the children, not realising the full import of what had happened, looked on in fear and wonder. It was some time before the congregation dispersed. Dr. Chrystal's body was tenderly carried into the study, and there was nothing more to do; and yet they lingered about as if hoping that perhaps it might prove to be only a faint or trance, after all, for it seemed so hard to believe the dreadful truth.

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As Bert and Frank walked home together, with hearts full to overflowing and tear-stained faces, Mr. Silver caught up to them, and pushing them apart, took an arm of each. For a few steps he said nothing; and then, as if musing to himself:

"'God buries His workmen, but His work goes on.' Our pastor has gone. He is not—because God has taken him—not dead, but translated. Upon whom will his mantle fall, boys?"

"I am sure I don't know, Mr. Silver," replied Bert. "But this I do know, that we can never have a better minister."

"No, I suppose not—according to our way of thinking, at all events; but we must not let that thought paralyse our energies. The vacant pulpit has its lesson for each one of us, boys," returned Mr. Silver.

"Yes, it means work, and it seems so strange that Dr. Chrystal should have spoken to me as he did the very last time he saw me," said Bert. And then he proceeded to repeat the conversation concerning the city mission work.

"I am so glad he spoke to you about that," said Mr. Silver. "I had intended doing so myself, but it has been far better done now. You will do what you can, both of you?"

"Yes, we will," replied Bert and Frank together, in tones of unmistakable purpose.

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"Perhaps, then," said Mr. Silver, reflectively, "the question I asked a moment ago may yet be answered by you, dear boys. Would you like to think that Dr. Chrystal's mantle should fall upon you, and that in due time you should take up the glorious work he has just laid down? To what nobler career can a man aspire than that of being one of the Master's shepherds?"

The boys were silent. The thought was new to them, and altogether too great to be grasped at once. And Mr. Silver wisely did not press them for an answer before he bade them "Good-night, and God bless you both."

But his question remained in their minds. It proved a seed thought that in the case of one of them was later on destined to find itself in good ground, and to spring up and bear goodly fruit.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

A BOY NO LONGER.

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Frank and Bert put their hearts into the city mission work, just as they did into everything else that they undertook, and it was well they did. For surely nothing save genuine zeal, and fidelity to a strong purpose could have carried them through the experiences that awaited them. The mission school was still small and struggling. But for the almost heroic energies of its superintendent, a clerk in a city banking house, it could not have been carried on at all. He was a small, slight, fragile-looking man, but he had a heart big enough for a giant, and having consecrated his spare hours to this most unattractive of all phases of Christian work, he carried it on with a self-denying earnestness that no difficulties could dampen, nor obstacles appal. He was as ready with his purse, to the extent of its slender ability, as he was with his Bible, and his splendid unselfishness was so well appreciated by the dangerous degraded beings among whom he toiled, that alone and unprotected he might go among them at any hour of the day or night, and meet with nothing but respect and rude courtesy.

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Such a man was David McMaster, under whose direction Bert and Frank lost no time in placing

themselves; and a right glad welcome they had from him, his pale, thin face fairly glowing with pleasure at the addition to his force of two such promising recruits. With him they went the rounds of squalid tenements, hideous back alleys, and repulsive shanties, the tattered children gazing at them with faces in which curiosity was mingled with aversion, and their frousy parents giving them looks of enmity and mistrust, no doubt because they were so clean and well dressed.

But apparently noting nothing of this, Mr. McMaster led the way from one rookery to another, introducing his new workers to their wretched inhabitants with an easy grace that disarmed all suspicion, and made them feel that so long as he was the presiding genius of the school, they had nothing to fear in the worst locality.

The following Sunday morning they began work on their own account. The school was held at ten o'clock, closing just in time to permit the teachers to get to church, and the part assigned to Bert and Frank was to go out into the highways and byways, and invite the children playing in the dirt to come to the school, or else to go to the homes, if such they could be called, of those whose names were already upon the roll, and secure their attendance at the service.

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Then when the school opened they found plenty to do, distributing the hymn books, helping in the singing, keeping a sharp look-out for unruly behaviour, watching the door lest any scholar should take it into his head to bolt, insuring an equitable division of the picture papers, and so on until the hour came to close the school, and they turned their steps churchward, feeling with good reason that they had really been doing work for God, and hard work, too.

They soon grew to love Mr. McMaster as much as they admired his zeal. He was in many ways a quaint, curious character. His body seemed so small and insignificant, and his spirit so mighty. He knew neither fear nor despair in the prosecution of his chosen work, and it was impossible to be associated with him without being infected by his unquenchable ardour. For some time no special incident marked their work, and then Bert had an experience that might have brought his part with it to an end had he been made of less sturdy stuff.

In company with Mr. McMaster he was making the usual round previous to the opening of the school, beating up unreliable scholars, and had entered a damp, noisome alley, lined on either side with tumble-down apologies for houses. Mr. McMaster took one side and Bert the other, and they proceeded to visit the different dwellers in this horrible place. Bert had knocked at several doors without getting any response, for the people were apt to lie in bed late on Sunday morning, and then his attention was aroused by sounds of crying mingled with oaths, that came from the garret of a villainous-looking tenement. He could hear the voices of a woman and of a child raised in entreaty and terror, and without pausing to consider the consequences, sprang up the broken stairs to the room from which they issued.

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On opening the door a scene presented itself that would have stirred the sympathies of a man of stone. Pat Brannigan, the big wharf labourer, had devoted the greater portion of his week's wages to making himself and his boon companions drunk with the vile rum dealt out at the groggery hard by. At midnight he had stumbled home, and throwing himself upon his bed sought to sleep off the effects of his carouse. Waking up late in the morning with a raging headache, a burning tongue, and bloodshot eyes, he had become infuriated at his poor, little girl, that cowered tremblingly in a corner, because she would not go out and get him some more drink. Half-crazed, and utterly reckless, he had sprung at the child, and might have inflicted mortal injury upon her had not the mother interposed, and kept him at bay for a moment, while she joined her shrieks to those the girl was already uttering.

It was just at this moment that Bert entered the room. As quick as a flash he sprang to Pat Brannigan's side, and seized his arm now uplifted to strike down the unhappy wife. With a howl of rage the big brute turned to see who had thus dared to interfere. He did not know Bert, and his surprise at seeing a well-dressed stranger in the room made him hesitate a moment. Then with an oath he demanded:

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"Who may you be, and what's your business here?"

Bert looked straight into his eyes, as he answered, quietly:

"I heard the noise, and I came in to see what was the matter."

"Then you can just be taking yourself off again as fast as you like," growled the giant, fiercely.

Bert did not stir.

"Be off with you now. Do you hear me?" shouted Brannigan, raising his clenched fist in a way there was no mistaking.

Still Bert did not move.

"Then take that," yelled Brannigan, aiming a terrible blow at the boy. But before it could reach him the poor wife, with a wild shriek, sprang in between them, and her husband's great fist descended upon her head, felling her to the floor, where she lay as though dead.

At this moment, Mr. McMaster rushed in through the open door. Pat Brannigan knew him well, and when sober held him in profound respect. Even now his appearance checked his fury, and he stood swaying in the centre of the room, looking with his bleared, bloodshot eyes, first at Mr. McMaster, and then at the motionless heap upon the floor at his feet.

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Advancing a step or two, Mr. McMaster looked into Brannigan's fiery face, and asked, sternly, as he pointed to the insensible woman lying between them:

"Is that your work?"

The giant quailed before the fearless, condemning glance of the man who seemed like a pigmy beside him. His head fell upon his breast, and without attempting a reply, he slunk over to the other end of the room, flung himself into a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"Come, Bert, let us lift her up on the bed," said Mr. McMaster, and between them Mrs. Brannigan was lifted gently, and placed upon the miserable bed.

"Now, Katie, get us some cold water, quick," said he, turning to the little girl, who watched him with wondering eyes. As if glad to get out of the room, she sped away, and presently returned with a tin of water, with which Mr. McMaster tenderly bathed Mrs. Brannigan's forehead, and soon the poor sufferer recovered consciousness. Mr. McMaster and Bert then went away, the former promising to look in again after school was over, and see if further help might be required.

When Bert told of the morning's experience at home, his mother became very much agitated, and seemed strongly inclined to oppose his continuing the work. But Mr. Lloyd was not of the same opinion at all. He thought it a very admirable training for Bert, and Bert himself had no disposition to give it up. Accordingly, he went on as though nothing had happened, meeting with many discouragements, and few real successes, yet sustained by a steady impulse to willing service, strengthened by a real interest in the work itself.

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The days of Bert's boyhood were rapidly passing by. The time was approaching for him to enter college, and once enrolled as an undergraduate he could of course be counted a boy no longer. Not indeed that he was growing old in the sense of becoming too prim or particular to indulge in boyish sports and pranks. There was nothing premature in his development. He was in advance of many boys of his age, it is true, but that was only because he strove to be.

He was not content unless he stood among the leaders, whether in study or sport. He looked forward to college with ardent expectation. Ever since the days of Mr. Garrison's school he had been accustomed to see the students in their Oxford caps and flowing black gowns going to and from the university which had its home in a handsome free-stone building that stood right in the heart of the city, and he had felt impatient for the time to come when he might adopt the same odd and striking costume.

During the past year his studies had been directed with special reference to the matriculation examination. As regards the classics, he could not have had a better teacher than Dr. Johnston, and his progress in knowledge of them had been sure and steady. In mathematics, however, he was hardly up to the mark, partly because they were not taught with the same enthusiasm at Dr. Johnston's, and partly because he did not take to them very kindly himself. Mr. Lloyd accordingly thought it wise to engage a tutor who would give him daily lessons during the mid-summer holidays.

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Bert, as was quite natural, did not altogether relish the idea of mingling work with play in this fashion in the glorious summer weather when the days seemed all too short for the enjoyment that was to be had; but when Frank, who was of course to go to college also, entered heartily into the plan, and Mr. Scott, the tutor, proved to be a very able and interesting instructor, full of enthusiasm about the university, in which he was one of the most brilliant students, Bert's indifference soon disappeared, and the three lads—for Mr. Scott was still in his teens—had a fine time together that summer, studying hard for two hours each morning, and spending the rest of the day in boating, or cricket, or some other pleasant fashion.

As the heat of summer yielded to the cool breezes of autumn, and the time for the opening of the college drew near, Bert grew very excited. There were two scholarships offered at each matriculation examination, one open to those coming from the city, the other to those from the country. He had fixed his ambition upon the city scholarship, and determined to do his best to win it. He had caught some of his tutor's enthusiasm, and fully appreciated the importance of a brilliant beginning. Accordingly, he gave diligent heed to the good advice Mr. Scott delighted to give him, as well as to the studies he set for him, and looked forward hopefully to the approaching examination.

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Toward the end of October the examination took place. It was the boys' first experience of a written examination, and it is little wonder if they felt nervous about it.

With Mr. Scott as guide they made their way to the university building, where he led them along the echoing stone corridors to a door inscribed, "Library;" and then, wishing them the best of fortune, bade them enter and try their fate. They found themselves in a large bright room whose floor was covered with desks, and the walls lined with bookcases, and having at one end a baize-covered table, around which sat several spectacled gentlemen attired in long black gowns, and chatting busily with one another. They took no notice of the two boys, who sat down at the nearest desk, and awaited developments. They were the first candidates in the room, but others presently came in until more than a score had gathered.

All evidently felt more or less nervous, although some tried very hard to appear unconcerned. They varied in age from Bert, who was undoubtedly the youngest, to a long-bearded, sober-

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visaged Scotchman, who might almost have been his father; their appearance was as different as their ages, some being spruce, well-dressed city lads, and others the most rustic-looking of youths, clad in rough homespun. They each sat down in the first seat they could find, and then stared about them as if they would like very much to know what was going to happen next.

They had not long to wait in uncertainty. A short, stout, pleasant-faced professor disengaged himself from the group at the table, and stepping up to the platform, said, in a smooth voice, with a strong Scotch accent:

"If you are ready to begin, gentlemen, will you please arrange yourselves so as to occupy only every alternate desk."

There was a little noise and bustle as this order was being carried out, and then they settled down again, with a vacant desk between each pair as a precaution against whispered assistance. The next proceeding was to distribute paper to the candidates, they being expected to supply their own pens and ink. And then came what all were awaiting with beating pulse—viz., the examination paper. Each one as he received his paper ran his eye eagerly down the list of questions, his countenance growing bright or gloomy according as, to this hasty survey, the questions seemed easy or difficult.

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Bert scanned his list rapidly, gave a great sigh of relief, and then turned to Frank with a meaning smile, which said more plainly than words:

"I'm all right."

Frank smiled back, in token that he was all right, too, and then the two boys bent to their work.

They did not get along very fast at the start. It was their first written examination, and this, added to their natural nervousness, kept both their ideas and their ink from flowing freely. But after a few minutes they forgot themselves in their eagerness to commit to paper the answers to the questions before them, and for an hour or more they scribbled away until the first paper, which was upon the classics, had nothing unanswered left upon it.

Bert finished first, and the professor, noticing him unemployed, brought him another paper, this time the mathematical one. As he expected, he did not do quite as well with it. But he felt sure of being right in his answers to six out of the ten questions, and very hopeful about two others, so that altogether he was well satisfied.

The third and last paper was upon the English branches—history, grammar, geography, and so forth, and he polished this off with little difficulty, making a clean sweep of the dozen questions. All this took until after one o'clock, and when he laid down his pen with his task finished, he felt pretty tired, and anxious to get out and stretch himself. Frank, however, was not quite through, so he waited for him, and then the friends hurried off to compare notes, and estimate their chances.

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The results would not be declared for two days at least, and Bert found it very hard to keep his impatience in check. He could think of nothing else than those examinations. Having answered so many questions, he felt not the slightest uneasiness as to passing; but the scholarship—ah! that was the point. Mr. Scott had made it very clear what an important position a scholarship winner held in his class. It gave him the lead at once, and was in every way an honour to be highly coveted.

Well, the longest days have their ending, and the two days of excited uncertainty dragged themselves past, and on Friday morning with a heart beating like a trip hammer, Bert hastened to the university. The results would be posted up on a huge blackboard that hung in the central corridor, and on entering he found an eager crowd thronging about this board, through which he had some difficulty in making his way. But by dint of pushing and elbowing, he soon got near enough to make out what was written on the long sheets of paper that occupied the centre of the board, and then—how shall be described the bound of wild delight his heart gave, when he read: "*The City Scholarship*—CUTHBERT LLOYD."

Then underneath the word "*Passed*," in large letters, the name "CUTHBERT LLOYD," and a few names lower down "FRANK BOWSER," while below them were the rest of the candidates.

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Frank was beside him, and by a common impulse of joy the two friends threw their arms about each other, and hugged one another like two enthusiastic young bears. Then they ran off as fast as their legs could carry them to tell the good news.

There was not a happier, prouder family in all Acadia that night than the Lloyds. Mr. Bowser and Frank came in to exchange congratulations, and they rejoiced together over the boys' success. Mr. Bowser was as delighted over Frank's passing as Mr. Lloyd was over Bert's scholarship. Like many men of defective education, he had very vague views about college. It was all a mystery to him, and that Frank, whom he was just finding out to be something more than a boy, should so easily penetrate these mysteries, and take a good place among the candidates for admission, was a source of unbounded satisfaction to him.

After the first exuberance of joy had subsided, the conversation sobered down somewhat, and they began to talk about the future.

"Now, young gentlemen—for I suppose I dare not call you boys any longer," said Mr. Lloyd,

smilingly—"you should soon be making up your minds as to what part in life you intend to take, because, once you have decided, your studies at college should be carried on with that end in view. Don't you think so, Mr. Bowser?"

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"I most certainly do, sir," replied Mr. Bowser, promptly.

"Well, of course, it is not a question to be decided off hand," continued Mr. Lloyd," nor one which we should decide for you, unless you turn it over to us. So we will leave it with you for a while, if you like."

"I don't think that's necessary, father," spoke up Bert. "Frank and I have pretty well made up our minds already—that is, of course, if there is no objection."

"And what is your choice, Frank?" asked Mr. Lloyd.

"I would like to follow my father's business, if he will have me, sir," answered Frank, giving his father a look of inquiry.

Mr. Bowser's face flushed with pleasure. He rose from his chair, and crossing the room to where his son sat, he put his big hand upon his shoulder, and said, in his heartiest tones:

"Ay—that I will, my lad, and all that I have shall be yours when I am gone."

"I hope that won't be for a long time yet, father," said Frank, looking up affectionately into his father's beaming face.

"So do I, my boy, so do I; but when it does happen, God knows what a comfort it will be to me to leave such a son behind me." And the tears slipped down his broad cheeks as he went back to his chair.

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There was a moment's silence, for all had been affected by this touching little scene; and then, Mr. Lloyd, turning to Bert, inquired of him:

"And what is your choice, Bert?"

"Well, father, if you think I can ever become fit for it, I would like to be a minister," he answered, modestly.

It was now Mr. Lloyd's turn to become radiant.

"My darling boy, you could not have delighted me more," he cried. "It has been my desire and prayer for you, that this should be your choice, but I have said nothing to you, because I wanted you to be perfectly free and unbiassed by any thought of pleasing me. I see clearly now that this is the Lord's doing, and my heart is full of overflowing with joy. God bless you both, my boys. I am sure that the hope and prayer of us all is that in your manhood may be fulfilled the promise of your boyhood that has been so bright, and to which you have now bidden farewell."

THE END.

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